



Student Accessibility Handbook

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Mission Statement

The Accessibility Services Program promotes the development of an inclusive and welcoming environment by ensuring that all qualified students with disabilities are given equal access to educational resources. Recognizing that each individual has unique needs, the staff of the Accessibility Services Program works to provide a student-centered approach to reasonable accommodations that will lead to not only academic success, but also to personal empowerment and professional advancement.

Description

The Accessibility Office supports the mission of Maria College by providing assistance to students with disabilities in a supportive campus environment. The Accessibility Services Program provides services that help students to overcome potential barriers to education and to provide equal access to all educational programs on campus. Through partnership with the students, faculty, and staff members the Accessibility Office works to promote a student's independence, self-advocacy, and personal growth. Accessibility Services is an entity within the Department of Student Affairs, located in Mercy Hall's Frank E. O'Brien Jr., Student Support Center. Administrative oversight for Accessibility Services falls under the purview of the Associate Vice President for Student Affairs.

Overview of Laws

Rehabilitation Act of 1973

Prohibits federal agencies and their grantees and contractors from discriminating against people based on disability in employment, programs and activities.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (ADA/504)

A federal statute that guarantees the rights of disabled people to equal opportunity in all programs and activities that receive federal financial assistance. It prohibits discrimination against qualified individuals solely on the basis of disability. Section 504 regulations apply to state education agencies, elementary and secondary school systems, colleges and universities, libraries, vocational schools and state vocational rehabilitation agencies.

Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990

Signed into law to protect individuals with disabilities against discrimination in employment; in programs operated by city, county, and state entities; public and private transportation, public accommodations and telecommunication services.

In enacting the ADAAA, Congress made it easier for an individual seeking protection under the ADA to establish that he or she has a disability within the meaning of the statute. Congress overturned several Supreme Court decisions that Congress believed had interpreted the definition of "disability" too narrowly, resulting in a denial of protection for many individuals with impairments such as cancer, diabetes, and epilepsy. The ADAAA states that the definition of disability should be interpreted in favor of broad coverage of individuals.

Section 508

Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, requires that when colleges develop, procure, maintain, or use electronic and information technology, individuals with disabilities have access to and use of information and data that is comparable to the access and use by

individuals without disabilities.

Title II

Title II requires that colleges receiving government funding give people with disabilities an equal opportunity to benefit from all of their programs, services, and activities

Disability Law and Academic Accommodations for Accessibility

Higher education institutions adhere to different disability laws than high schools. At the college level, accommodations are only provided when the student has self-identified as having a functional impairment that substantially limits major life functioning. Students attending high school are protected by IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act), which allows schools to make curricular changes for students with disabilities. At the college level, all students with disabilities must be “otherwise qualified”; therefore, they are required to meet the academic and technical skills for their respective program. It is important that all students understand that Maria College will not modify exams or curriculum, and standards for grading are determined by the instructor. The Americans with Disabilities Act and Amendments governs the decisions pertaining to accommodations for disabilities at Maria College.

For more information on the transition process from high school to college, please refer to the document, Transition from High School Information, located at the end of this handbook.

Standard Accommodations¹

Disabilities vary on how they impact a person’s major life functions. Due to the varying differences in disabilities, the program can only provide academic accommodations based on the history of the disability, reported limitations, and/or respective documentation from a qualified professional. There must always be a correlation between the impact of the disability and the requested accommodation. Accommodations are adjustments, changes or alterations to a program, service, activity or policy, in order to permit equal access.

Appropriate and reasonable accommodations should insure that academic evaluations measure student achievement rather than unnecessarily reflecting the impact of the disability. They are not designed to give students with disabilities unfair advantages over other students. Maria College is obligated to make reasonable accommodation only to the known limitations of an otherwise qualified disabled student.

The language used in the ADA focuses on an accommodation being reasonable as long as it does not pose an “*undue hardship*” when compared to *the entity’s total operating budget*, size of facility, number of employees, etc. Court decisions and agency rulings have held that requests of students need not be provided and are *not reasonable* under the following circumstances:

¹ For information on temporary accommodations that can be issued to support students during the COVID-19 pandemic, please see page 19 of this document for guidance on eligibility, supporting documentation, and the registration process.

- the student is not qualified when compared to other applicants/participants in a program;
- the accommodation would result in a fundamental alteration of the program or a dilution of standards;
- the institution is being asked to address a personal need (like attendant care);
- the accommodation would impose an undue financial or administrative burden on the organization when compared with its total operating budget; or
- the accommodation poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others.

Please note: personal services such as private tutoring, personal aides, or assistance in bathing, grooming, food preparation, housekeeping, and assistance ambulating are not deemed reasonable accommodations. Additionally, individually prescribed devices, such as hearing aids, glasses, braces, wheelchairs, and other mobility devices are to be purchased by the student.

Registering with Accessibility Services

New Students

Students who wish to receive accommodations at Maria College must register with the Accessibility Services Office. A student may access the [Standard Accommodations Registration Form](#) through the [Accessibility Services Webpage](#)². Following submission of the Registration Form, the student will be contacted by the Coordinator of Accessibility Services to schedule an In-Take Interview. This interview will take approximately 30 minutes, during which:

1. The Coordinator of Accessibility Services will review all medical documentation provide by the student to ensure it meets ADA standards and provide an overview of Accessibility Services.
2. The student will be given the opportunity to discuss their specific needs in detail and ask any questions related to registration.

Once students have completed the registration process, the Coordinator of Accessibility Services will generate Accommodation Agreements to be reviewed and signed by the Coordinator and the student.³ Once signatures have been obtained, the Coordinator will provide the student with an electronic (.pdf) version of the final document. It is the student's responsibility to submit his/her Accommodation Agreement to all instructors either in hardcopy or email. **No accommodations can be provided until this process has been completed in its entirety.**

If you have questions regarding this process, you may request an appointment by emailing accessibilityservices@mariacollege.edu.

Returning Students and Accommodation Adjustments

² Please see the Accessibility Services webpage as well for access to helpful links, forms and other documentation.

³ Accommodations Agreements will generally be available within three (3) business days of the completion of the In-Take Interview.

Students must obtain an updated Accommodation Agreement each semester by completing a [Standard Accommodations Registration Request](#) online. A request should be made at least one week prior to the start of the academic semester. Once received, the Coordinator of Accessibility Services will contact the student via email to arrange a time to meet, review and sign off on revised agreements.⁴ Maria College faculty are not required to provide a student with accommodations unless the student has provided an appropriately dated accommodation letter.

If you would like to make changes to your letter, please schedule an appointment with the Coordinator of Accessibility Services by emailing accessibilityservices@mariacollege.edu.

Criteria for Appropriate Medical Documentation

Students with mobility, visual and hearing disabilities; chronic medical conditions; psychiatric disabilities; cognitive disabilities, and substance abuse/recovery must provide documentation, which adheres to the criteria indicated below:

1. The credentials of the evaluator/s

The best quality documentation is provided by a licensed or otherwise properly credentialed professional who has undergone appropriate and comprehensive training, has relevant experience, and has no personal relationship with the individual being evaluated. An appropriate match between the credentials of the individual making the diagnosis and the condition being reported is expected (e.g., an orthopedic limitation might be documented by a physician, but not a licensed psychologist).

2. A statement identifying the disability

Acceptable documentation includes a clear diagnostic statement that describes what the condition is and how it was diagnosed. While diagnostic codes from the Diagnostic Statistical Manual of the American Psychiatric Association (DSM) or the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) of the World Health Organization are helpful in providing this information, a clinical description will also convey the necessary information.

3. A description of the diagnostic methodology used

Quality documentation includes a description of the diagnostic criteria, evaluation methods, procedures, tests and dates of administration, as well as a clinical narrative, observation, and specific results. Where appropriate to the nature of the disability, having both summary data and specific test scores (with the norming population identified) within the report is recommended. Diagnostic methods that are congruent with the particular disability and current professional practices in the field are recommended. Methods may include formal instruments, medical examinations, structured interview protocols, performance observations and unstructured interviews. If results from informal, non-standardized or less common methods of evaluation are reported, an explanation of their role and significance in the diagnostic process will strengthen their value in providing useful information.

⁴ Accommodations Agreements will generally be available within three (3) business days of the submission of the Registration Request.

4. A description of the current functional limitations

Information on how the condition(s) currently impacts the individual provides useful information for both establishing a disability and identifying possible accommodations. A combination of the results of formal evaluation procedures, clinical narrative, and the individual's self-report is the most comprehensive approach to fully documenting impact. The best quality documentation is thorough enough to demonstrate whether and how a major life activity is substantially limited by providing a clear sense of the severity, frequency and pervasiveness of the condition(s). While relatively recent documentation is recommended in most circumstances, common sense and discretion in accepting older documentation of conditions that are permanent or non-varying is recommended. Likewise, changing conditions and/or changes in how the condition impacts the individual brought on by growth and development may warrant more frequent updates in order to provide an accurate picture. It is important to remember that documentation is not time-bound; the need for recent documentation depends on the facts and circumstances of the individual's condition. In most cases, documentation should be current within the past 3-5 years; however some documentation that is older may also be relevant. In some cases, previous or more recent documentation may be requested to draw connections between the student's condition and the accommodation being requested.

5. A description of the expected progression or stability of the disability

It is helpful when documentation provides information on expected changes in the functional impact of the disability over time and context. Information on the cyclical or episodic nature of the disability and known or suspected environmental triggers to episodes provides opportunities to anticipate and plan for varying functional impacts. If the condition is not stable, information on interventions for exacerbations (including the individual's own strategies) and recommended timelines for re-evaluation are most helpful.

6. A description of current and past accommodations, services and/or medications

The most comprehensive documentation will include a description of both current and past medications, auxiliary aids, assistive devices, support services, and accommodations, including their effectiveness in ameliorating functional impacts of the disability. A discussion of any significant side effects from current medications or services that may impact physical, perceptual, behavioral or cognitive performance is helpful when included in the report. While accommodations provided in another setting are not binding on the current institution, they may provide insight in making current decisions.

7. Recommendations for accommodations, adaptive devices, assistive services, compensatory strategies, and/or collateral support services

Recommendations from professionals with a history of working with the student provide valuable information for review and the planning process. It is most helpful when recommended accommodations and strategies are logically related to functional limitations; if connections are not obvious, a clear explanation of their relationship can be useful in decision making. While the College has no obligation to provide or adopt recommendations that would fundamentally modify the course or degree requirements. Those accommodation recommendations that are congruent with the programs, services, and benefits offered by the

College may be appropriate.

Generally Accepted Documentation

As indicated above, all students who register with Accessibility Services at Maria College are required to meet individually with the Coordinator of Accessibility Services to review the student's medical documentation and construct an individualized Accommodation Agreement based on the student's diagnosis. Students have a responsibility to provide appropriate and timely disability-related documentation to the Coordinator in order for accommodation plans to be developed. This documentation can be provided by fax at (518)730- 9628 or in person.

Generally accepted forms of documentation include, but are not limited to:

- Individualized Education Plans (IEP)
- 504 Plans
- Summary of Performance (SOP)
- Aptitude Tests (The Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale-Third Edition (WAIS-III), The Woodcock- Johnson Psychoeducational Battery III (W-J-III): Tests of Cognitive Ability or the Stanford- Binet Intelligence Scale: Fifth Edition.)
- Academic Achievement Tests (Assessment of academic ability in the areas of reading, writing and math. Suggested instruments include: Woodcock-Johnson Psychoeducational Battery III: Tests of Achievement (W- J-III); Wechsler Individual Achievement Test (WIAT-II); Stanford Test of Academic Skills (TASK); or a combination of tests in specific skill areas such as the Test of Written Language-IV (TOWL-IV); the Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests-Revised; the Nelson Denny Reading Test; the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test; or the Stanford Diagnostic Mathematics Test.)
- Psychosocial Evaluations
- Maria College Medical Documentation Form (See Helpful Information on the [Accessibility Services webpage](#).)

Provisional Accommodations

Provisional accommodations (extending for a period of 30 days) can be provided to students under the following circumstances with the understanding that medical documentation adhering to the criteria listed above is to be submitted. Failure to submit the appropriate documentation within the 30-day period will result in an immediate revocation of all accommodations:

1. Medical documentation is provided and indicates the accommodations to be provided, but does not meet all seven criteria as stated above.
2. Student provides an Accommodation Agreement from a previous institution.

Under no circumstances will students be provided accommodations or modifications without first presenting some form of medical documentation to affirm their diagnosis⁵.

⁵ Unless the disability is visibly evidenced, i.e. the student is in a wheel chair.

Limitations to Accommodations

Lab Practicals

No accommodation will be provided if the accommodation would impose an undue financial or administrative burden on the organization when compared with its total operating budget. As a result, lab practicals for Anatomy & Physiology and Microbiology cannot be changed or modified in any way because to do so would place undue burden on faculty and staff operating with limited resources.

Technical Skills Assessments

No accommodation will be provided if the accommodation would result in a fundamental alteration of the program or a dilution of standards or would impose an undue financial or administrative burden on the organization when compared with its total operating budget. Like all students, students receiving disability services will have to be able to meet the essential requirements of the program/ course(s) that they are enrolled in. As a result, Dosage Exams, i.e. Safe Medicate, and Competency Exams in Nursing and Occupational Therapy cannot be changed or modified in any way because to do so would irrevocably change the nature of the assessment. These assessments represent technical skills assessments and are designed to evaluate the student's skill level regarding a particular task in a particular environment and under specific circumstances to reflect a real-world environment. Thus, they must be administered uniformly to each student without alteration.

Typical Accommodations⁶

Currently, the following accommodations are supported and/or provided by Maria College on a routine basis⁷:

- Extended Testing Time (Time and ½ or Double Time)
- Distraction-Reduced Testing Environment (Callaghan Room)
- Copy of Professors Notes (when applicable)
- Earplugs
- Preferential Seating in classroom and lab settings
- Electronic copies of textbooks

If other accommodations are required, the Coordinator of Accessibility Services will work with faculty and staff (within the bounds of reasonability) to address the student's needs.

Assistive Technology

Text-to-Speech Software: Students registered with Accessibility Services presenting a diagnosed need for text-to-speech software support, will be provided access to Read & Write Gold. This software is available on all campus computers and may be used during tests so long

⁶ These accommodations also apply to an online classroom environment.

⁷ This should not be treated as an exhaustive list.

as supporting documentation is provided. All students electing to use this software during examinations must first schedule a training session with the Coordinator of Accessibility Services

Audio Recorders and LiveScribe Pens: Accessibility Services at Maria College currently does not provide students with this form of assistive technology. However, they can be used during class and lab so long as: 1. the student presents supporting documentation for such a device, and 2. the faculty member agrees to have class or lab recorded. No recording should take place without these two criteria being met. Students should speak with the Coordinator of Accessibility Services if they run into any difficulties in utilizing this accommodation.

Noise Cancelling Headphones: While Accessibility Services does not provide these to students, use of personally owned headphones may be used if supporting documentation is provided.

E-Texts: Student requiring electronic versions of textbooks and other required class materials will need to first provide the Coordinator of Accessibility Services with proof of purchase as well as the publication information of all requested texts. (This should be done as soon as possible as it can take up to 2-3 weeks for the order to be fulfilled.) Once received, the Coordinator will then request electronic copies through [Bookshare](#) or the [AccessText Network](#).

Support Animals

Although Maria College is a non-residential institution we seek to be inclusive of all reasonable accommodations. Therefore, Maria College has developed a comprehensive policy to review the need for animals on campus using a case by case approach and according to the understanding of the following information from the Federal Government, "...under the Fair Housing Act (FHAct), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504), and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) with respect to animals that provide assistance to individuals with disabilities. The Department of Justice's (DOT) amendments to its regulations for Titles II and III of the ADA limit the definition of 'service animal' under the ADA to include only dogs, and further define 'service animal' to exclude emotional support animals."⁸

Service Animals

"Service Animal" is defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) as dogs that are individually trained to do work or perform tasks for people with disabilities. Examples of such work or tasks include guiding people who are blind, alerting people who are deaf, pulling a wheelchair, alerting and protecting a person who is having a seizure, reminding a person with mental illness to take prescribed medications, calming a person with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) during an anxiety attack, or performing other duties. Service Animals are working animals, not pets. A service animal is welcomed and will be documented with the campus Coordinator of Accessibility Services at the time of intake for all students receiving services and accommodations through the Student Support Center. Students must follow these procedures before accommodations can be offered.

- The student must contact the Coordinator of Accessibility Services to notify them of the need for a Service Animal.

⁸ https://www.hud.gov/sites/documents/SERVANIMALS_NTCFHEO2013-01.PDF

- The student must provide the Coordinator with documentation of disability and need in order for the Coordinator to determine if a service animal is an appropriate accommodation. The student will also be asked to provide certification of training for the service animal.
- The student must meet with the professor or administrative personnel to inform them of their accommodations, preferably at the beginning of the semester as well as inform them of the presence of the service animal.
- A Maria College representative may ask a student accompanied by an animal presenting on campus whether that animal has been registered with the Coordinator of Accessibility Services, and if not, the student may be directed to do so. Staff will not inquire regarding the status of the individual and or ‘handlers’ disability status or certification status of the animal.

Emotional Support Animals (ESA)

An Emotional Support Animal (ESA) is an animal whose sole function is to provide emotional support, comfort therapy, or therapeutic benefits to a student with a documented disability. ESA’s are not trained to assist an individual with disabilities in an activity of daily living and are, therefore, not considered a Service Animal under the ADA (ADAAA) and do not qualify for the same legal protections. An ESA must belong to an owner who has been approved for an accommodation by the Coordinator of Accessibility Services. A person qualifies for a reasonable accommodation on a case by case basis if the following conditions are met.

- The person has established with the Coordinator of Accessibility Services that he or she has a documented disability that requires the assistance of an ESA.
- There must be a relationship between the disability and the assistance the ESA provides to its owner.

Students in need of an ESA on campus will need to provide the same procedure for registering a service animal above.

Grounds for Removing an Animal

Any Maria College representative may ask that the student/handler remove an animal from campus for the following reasons:

- *Out of control animal:* A service animal that has been registered with the Coordinator of Accessibility Services may be asked to leave a Maria College facility, campus grounds, or program if the animal’s behavior is out of control and the handler does not take effective action to control it. If the improper animal behavior happens repeatedly, the handler may be prohibited from bringing the animal into any Maria College space until the handler can demonstrate to the Coordinator that he/she has taken significant steps to mitigate the behavior.
- *Non-housebroken animal:* A handler may be directed to remove an animal that isn’t housebroken.
- *Direct threat:* A handler may be directed to remove an animal that Maria College staff determines to be a substantial and direct threat to the health (e.g., allergies, emotional distress, etc.) and safety of individuals. This may occur as a result of a very ill animal, a

substantial lack of cleanliness of the animal, or the presence of an animal in sensitive areas, such as certain campus areas and laboratories, mechanical, or industrial areas.

- *Unregistered animals:* Any animal who is not registered with the Coordinator of Accessibility Services can be removed from campus until the time that the animal has been properly registered for on campus use.

Steps for Scheduling Tests

All students qualifying for extended test time and/or a distraction-reduced environment will need to register his or her exam **at least three (3) days in advance** of the scheduled examination date if it is to be taken on campus. (Tests taken online do not need to be scheduled through Accessibility Services given that instructors will make the necessary adjustments to the testing time in Blackboard.) All tests will be taken in the Callaghan Room, Student Support Center, unless extenuating circumstances render the room inaccessible. Students should adhere to the following procedure when scheduling accommodations testing:

1. Students should complete a [Testing Accommodations Request](#) via the Accessibility Services webpage. (See www.mariacollege.edu -> Student Support -> Accessibility Services -> Schedule for Testing.)
2. After submitting a Testing Accommodations Request, the student should notify the course instructor to email the testing materials to the Coordinator of Accessibility Services at accessibilityservices@mariacollege.edu.
3. Upon receipt of the Testing Accommodations Request and exam materials, the Coordinator will notify the student of their test day and time via email. (The test will be issued on the same day as the rest of the class. Alterations to the test date must first be approved, in writing, by the course instructor.)
4. The student should arrive to the Callaghan Room approximately 5-10 minutes in advance of the scheduled testing time. They will be required to place all personal belongings (including cell phones, smart watches, bags, and jackets) in the demarcated storage areas while testing.

Accommodations Testing Policies

Proctoring & Video Monitoring: Tests taken in the Callaghan will be surveilled using CCTV cameras. A proctor will also be present to maintain the academic integrity of the testing space. Should a proctor suspect that a student is cheating on an examination, they will notify the Coordinator of Accessibility Services immediately. The Coordinator will then speak with the student regarding the claims made by the proctor and review footage of the event. Any allegations of cheating supported by evidence will result in the submission of a Student Misconduct Report and the instructor will be notified of the event.

Cell Phones & Smart Devices: All cell phones and smart devices must be silenced and surrendered prior to beginning any examination in the Callaghan Room. They may be stored in the personal storage spaces provided.

Lateness/Absence/Rescheduling: Lateness will be accommodated only if a proctor can remain to monitor the student. If this is not possible, the student will only be allowed the time that remains. Students who are absent from a scheduled exam will need to speak with the course instructor

prior to the test being rescheduled. Rescheduling a test will only occur if the Coordinator receives explicit, written permission from the course instructor.

Sanitization: Students will be required to wash and/or sanitize their hands prior to entering the testing space. Additionally, they will be asked to wipe down their workstation with a disinfectant cloth before and after completing their assessment.

Face Coverings and Social Distancing: If testing on campus in the Callaghan Room, students will be required to maintain appropriate social distance (6 feet) and wear a face covering that covers both nose and mouth at all times.

Testing Room Protocol

This set of protocol apply to the Callaghan Room. Students are expected to comply with, at all times, Maria College's Student Code of Conduct and Academic Integrity Policy. Failure to comply with these regulations gives the test administrator (proctor) the right to collect test materials and return them to the instructor.

Before Beginning to Test

- Students must have previously registered for academic accommodations through the Accessibility Services Office.
- Students must have their Maria College Photo ID for testing purposes.
- Students must sign in and out to take their tests.
- Students will need to wipe down their designated testing area prior to beginning.

Technology Policy

- No electronic devices are allowed while testing. Cell phones and all other electronic devices must be turned off and checked in with the test administrator (proctor).
- If students are taking an online test or using assistive technology (e.g. Read and Write Gold), students will be required to use the Callaghan Room computers and will not be allowed to use their own laptop computers. Note: It is required that students register to be trained in the college provided text to speech technology if they plan to use this for testing. This must be done prior to exam day. that students familiarize themselves with Read and Write Gold prior to taking the examination.

During the Test

- Proctors should access the camera system and begin recording.
- Read instructions carefully before students begin their tests (if applicable). If a student is not sure of directions, he or she should check with the test administrator (proctor). Tutors cannot be used as test readers at any time. (instead the school provides text to speech software that a student will need to be trained on)
- Students are responsible for monitoring their own time for an exam.
- Talking to other students in the Callaghan Room is cause for an accusation of cheating. And will be subject to the penalties of such activity.
- There should be no access to Blackboard during exams unless the test is given in this format (i.e. the PNC nursing exam). Should a student be caught accessing Blackboard at

any time during their test, they will be subject to the penalties of the student code of conduct for cheating.

Notes and Scrap Paper

- Any resources to be used during the exam must be arranged by your instructor with the Office of Accessibility Services.
- Any test(s) which permit the use of notes must *not* be stored on an electronic device.
- All scratch paper must be turned in with the exam.
- Students may not write down any information from the test and take it out of the Testing Center.

Leaving the Callaghan Room

- Once students receive their tests, students will not be allowed to leave the Callaghan Room.
- Once a test is handed in, it cannot be returned to the student for any reason.
- If students leave the room without permission of the test proctor, their exams will be considered complete and must be turned in.
- *Restroom breaks are not permitted during a test.* Please use the restroom before entering the Callaghan Room.
- Tests will be collected five minutes before closing time.
- The student will need to wipe down the testing station following the exam.

ACCES-VR

The Accessibility Services office collaborates with Adult Career and Continuing Education Services-Vocational Rehabilitation (ACCES-VR) to ensure student are provided the resources they need to succeed. This program is utilized by many of our students for financial and technological support which assist them in their college level programs on campus. Our students have benefitted from some of the following services provided by ACCES-VR:

- Vocational Counseling and Guidance
- Assessments and Evaluations
- Rehabilitation Technology
- Special Transportation
- Tuition Assistance (including fees and textbooks)
- Tutor, Reader and Note Taker services

If you would like to know more about this program, please call them directly (518-474-3852) or visit their website at www.acces.nysed.gov/vr.

All students currently receiving assistance through ACCES-VR should notify the Coordinator of Accessibility Services to ensure effective coordination of resources and supports.

Appeals Regarding Accommodations

If, at any time, a student perceives that his or her accommodations are not being fully recognized by faculty or staff, he or she should speak with the Coordinator of Accessibility Services. The Coordinator will assist the student in addressing their needs.

Transition from High School to College

Maria College follows the guidelines of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Once enrolled in college, students move from the protection of Public Law 94-142 (I.D.E.A.) to protection under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. The following chart highlights the differences.

HIGH SCHOOL	COLLEGE
<p>Applicable Laws:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals with Disabilities Educational Act (IDEA) • Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 <p><i>These laws are sometimes referred to as “success laws” because they require high schools to provide all possible accommodations to help ensure a student’s success. Supports may include modifications to curriculum, modifications to homework, the assignment of personal classroom aides, and shorter tests.</i></p>	<p>Applicable Laws:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) • Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 <p><i>Laws that apply to colleges and universities, sometimes referred to as “access laws,” require institutions to make accommodations ensuring that students with disabilities have full access to programs and activities. A student with a disability, however, must be “otherwise qualified” to undertake a given course or program, meeting the same academic and skills- based requirements that apply to students without disabilities.</i></p> <p><i>For example, a school may offer testing accommodations by way of extended time or in an</i></p>
<p>Required Documentation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual Education Plan (IEP) • 504 Plan • School provides evaluation at no cost to the student. • School conducts evaluations at prescribed intervals. 	<p>Required Documentation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Varies according to the disability. • I.E.P. and 504 plans alone are not sufficient. • Documentation must include a written report describing the impairment, a diagnosis, and all test results and/or medical information used to arrive at the diagnosis. If the documentation is incomplete or not current, the student is responsible for obtaining and submitting additional documentation.
<p>Student Role:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student is identified and supported by parents/teachers. • Primary responsibility for accommodations belongs to the school. 	<p>Student Role:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student must self-identify to the Office of Disability Services (ODS). • Students wishing to request accommodations must follow ODS policies and procedures.
<p>Parental Role:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents have access to student records and participate in the accommodation process. • Parents advocate for students. 	<p>Parental Role:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is the student’s responsibility, not the parent’s responsibility, to request and arrange his or her own accommodations. Students advocate for themselves, with support of the ODS as
<p>Teachers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers may modify curriculum and/or alter pace of assignments. • Teachers use a multi-sensory approach. • Weekly quizzes, midterms, finals, and frequent graded assignments provide students with an on-going indication of their academic progress. Teachers arrange regular parent/teacher/student conferences to report on and discuss student’s progress. • Attendance is taken and reported but a disability may potentially excuse some absences. 	<p>Instructors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructors are not required to modify the fundamental nature of program. • Instructors tend to rely on lecture and may or may not use a multi-sensory approach. • Grades are generally based on fewer tests and assignments, and students must independently monitor their learning in the course on a frequent and regular basis. Students are responsible for requesting and arranging individual conferences with their instructors. • Responsibility for class attendance rests with the individual student, and since regular and punctual class attendance is expected of all students, the student must accept the consequences of failure to attend class/classes.
<p>Grades:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grades may be modified based on curriculum accommodations. 	<p>Grades:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grades reflect the quality of work submitted.

Frequently Asked Questions

Is there a separate admissions process for students with disabilities?

No. Regardless of the disability, a student must meet the same admissions criteria. A student is not asked about a disability; however, a student may wish to disclose that they have a disability to explain certain situations.

Does Maria College have a specialized program for students with disabilities?

No, degree requirements are the same for everybody, but Maria College does offer a wide range of services for students with disabilities. The Accessibility's Office can provide academic accommodations such as extra time on exams and an alternate testing location. Maria College offers tutoring and writing support for all students as well as study skills tutoring and workshops.

How are accommodations arranged?

Accommodations in college are arranged through an interactive, individualized process with each student. Usually there are three main parts to the process: a conversation with the student, review of documentations provided by the student as requested by the college, and a determination of the student's current needs (which may change from semester to semester).

What are accommodations?

Accommodations are adjustments to policy, practice, and programs that "level the playing field" for students with disabilities and provide equal access to Maria College's programs and activities. This adjustment must be made without altering fundamental goals of a course, lowering the standards in a class, or cause an undue financial burden on the college.

What does "student's needs" mean?

"Student's needs" means that accommodations will vary from course to course, teacher to teacher and semester to semester. Section 504 requires 'reasonable accommodation' which means that the accommodation must be effective. This does not necessarily mean that it will be exactly what the student requested or what the student received in high school or at another college.

What does "appropriate documentation" of a disability mean?

Documentation of a disability means providing information about the student's disability from a qualified professional. (The Clinician and Medical Provider Form) The documentation has two purposes.

1. To verify that the individual has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life functions.
2. To substantiate that the impairment/condition currently requires modifications, academic adjustments or services in order to compensate for or accommodate the disability.

Keep in mind that some students have been declassified from special education in the K-12 environment, and no longer are receiving services under IDEA. Schools will often write 504 plans for these students so they can continue to receive accommodations such as extended time for tests in the K-12 environment. Just as an IEP is generally not "appropriate documentation of a disability" in and of itself, neither is a 504 plan.

The K-12 school's decision to declassify a student from special education does not negate the existence of a disability in the K-12 learning environment. It only means that the student is being changed to a less restrictive learning environment than an Individual Education Plan (IEP) provides.

It is important that, when the K-12 school declassifies a student, the school has up-dated documentation is in place both to justify the declassification and to assist the student in the transition to the postsecondary learning environment.

Who can write the documentation?

Documentation must be from a professional source who is qualified to diagnose or make determinations about the disability. For example, a student with a hearing impairment would generally need to provide a copy of an audiogram from a licensed audiologist. A student with a learning disability generally would be asked to provide a recent psychological evaluation by a psychologist. It is important to note that the students are responsible for providing current appropriate documentation to the DSO. The college or university has the right to request further information from the student if what is presented is insufficient.

Documentation must be on our own Clinician or Medical Provider form located on our web site or on professional letter head and include the diagnosis and current status of the disability as well as the professional's name and credentials.

It is extremely important to contact the Student Disability Services office on campus to determine what specific documentation the student will need to provide. Documentation is the basis for determining what accommodations, services, etc. the student is eligible to receive.

How much will services cost?

Section 504 and the ADA require colleges to provide reasonable accommodations and services at no cost to eligible students with disabilities. Colleges base their decisions about the nature and extent of reasonable accommodations on a case-by-case basis with each student. The cost of these services may be paid for by many sources. These resources include, but are not limited to: colleges, rehabilitation agencies such as the ACCES-VR [<http://www.acces.nysed.gov/vr>], and/or the New York State Commission for the Blind [<https://ocfs.ny.gov/main/cb/contact.asp>] other local support agencies. Students who want services — beyond what the college decides is reasonable—are responsible for these costs.

Colleges may request or recommend that students apply to ACCES-VR, NYSCB, etc. but cannot refuse services to students who do not apply or who are denied by these agencies. Students must apply directly to agencies to find out if they are eligible for sponsorship to college.

My high school bought a special computer and keyboard for me because I can't use a standard keyboard and monitor. Will the college do that?

The college is not responsible for purchasing personal use devices such as wheelchairs, hearing aids, or specialized technology for a specific individual. The college is responsible for providing access to the same extent as is available to non-disabled students.

A student with such specific needs should contact either the NYS Commission for the Blind (NYSCB) or the Adult Career and Continuing Education Services - Vocational Rehabilitation (ACCES-VR) office. These two state agencies are charged with training or retraining qualified individuals with disabilities for employment and can often assist with the purchase of specialized personal equipment or other needs if the student meets eligibility criteria.

Who on campus will know I have a disability if I choose to register and avail myself of office of accessibility services?

Only the staff of the Accessibility Office and anyone the student chooses to tell. All information the student or student's parents provide to the office is considered confidential and kept in a secure location.

Do I have to tell all my professors that I have a disability?

No, only in the classes in which students would like to use their accommodations. It is the responsibility of each student to reach out to their professors regarding the need for accommodations and the identification of a disability.

Does the College pay for evaluations or reevaluations of disability?

No. It is the student's responsibility to provide verification of disability and to pay for evaluations or reevaluations of disability. However, we have suggestions on how to get tested for a disability and maintain a list of local professionals qualified to administer the tests.

What role do my parents play in the process?

If the student is 18 years or older he or she is legally recognized as an adult. The student will be responsible for her or his own accommodation requests and disability related decisions. However, parents are a wonderful source of support and students are encouraged to have open communications with their parents or other significant family members.

Where is the office of accessibility located?

Our office is located in Mercy Hall in the Student Support Suite. The office hours are Monday through Friday, 8:30 am-4:30 pm.

COVID-19 Temporary Accommodations

Temporary accommodations are available to members of the College campus community who are experiencing significant impacts to their educational and/or employment experience at Maria College as a result of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The nature and period of time for which accommodations are issued will vary depending on the circumstances at hand and will take into consideration mandates and/or recommendations issued by an appropriate medical practitioner or governing health authority, as relevant. As with standard accommodations, students will need to register with Accessibility Services and present suitable documentation prior to the issue of any accommodations. Individuals eligible for temporary accommodations include, but are not limited to:

- Individuals recovering from surgery, serious injury, or major illness
- Individuals mandated or recommended to quarantine and/or self-isolate in accordance with orders or guidelines set forth by State or local public health officials
- Individuals who are identified by their medical provider as being at increased risk for contracting COVID-19 and/or at increased risk for severe illness or complications from COVID-19 as defined by the CDC⁹
- Individuals who live with a household member who is at increased risk for severe illness due to COVID-19 as defined by the CDC

Individuals qualifying for temporary accommodations will be provided reasonable accommodations that allow for the online delivery of their classes and/or other College programming whenever possible.¹⁰ Student accommodations will be communicated to the faculty via the student's Accommodation Agreement.¹¹ Faculty may, at any time, contact the Accessibility Services Office via email at accessibilityservices@mariacollege.edu for assistance in addressing the student's needs. Reasonable accommodations issued under this policy may include, but are not limited to:

- Modified class schedules, work schedules, and/or assignments
- Live webcasting of lectures/labs via BB Collaborate
- Downloadable video recordings
- PowerPoints with Voiceovers
- Electronic delivery of tests and other assessments
- Asynchronous peer-review of assignments via email exchange
- Other modifications to the Maria College educational and/or employment experience or to other aspects of College programming and activities, as deemed appropriate by College officials

In cases where accommodations were provided due to a mandated or recommended quarantine period or self-isolation period, once an individual is safely able to return to campus, all temporary accommodations provided under this policy will expire. The Accessibility Services Coordinator will notify the individual (and, as applicable, the relevant faculty member) of the expiration of any

⁹ See CDC guidelines regarding individuals at increased risk from COVID-19 here: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-at-increased-risk.html>

¹⁰ Except when to do so would result in a fundamental alteration of the program/assessment or a dilution of standards.

¹¹ Accommodation Agreements will be provided to student electronically. It will be the student's responsibility to send the Agreement to his or her instructors via email.

accommodations in writing. Individuals may request that accommodations being extended past their expiration and/or be renewed for a given period of time. In all cases, extension or renewal of any temporary accommodation must be supported by documentation originating from an appropriate healthcare provider and/or governing health authority. New accommodation agreements will be issued if an extension is deemed warranted.

Registering for Temporary Accommodations

Students who wish to receive temporary accommodations at Maria College must register with the Accessibility Services Office. A student may access the [Temporary Accommodations Registration Form](#) through the [Accessibility Services Webpage](#)¹². Following submission of the Registration Form, the student will be contacted by the Coordinator of Accessibility Services to schedule an In-Take Interview. This interview will take approximately 30 minutes, during which:

1. The Coordinator of Accessibility Services will review all medical documentation provided by the student to ensure it meets Maria College standards and will provide the student with an overview of the role of Accessibility Services and the supports available.
2. The student will be given the opportunity to discuss their specific needs in detail and to ask any questions related to registration.

Once students have completed the registration process, the Coordinator of Accessibility Services will generate Accommodation Agreements to be reviewed and signed by the Coordinator and the student.¹³ Once signatures have been obtained, the Coordinator will provide the student with an electronic (.pdf) version of the final document. It is the student's responsibility to submit his/her Accommodation Agreement to all instructors either in hardcopy or email. **No accommodations can be provided until this process has been completed in its entirety.**

If you have questions regarding this process, you may request an appointment by emailing accessibilityservices@mariacollege.edu.

Documentation to Support Requested Accommodations

In all cases where accommodations are sought under this policy, individuals must provide the College with documentation that clearly justifies the need for the accommodations requested. In most cases under this policy, appropriate documentation will include a medical note from the individual's own medical provider stating that the individual is (as applicable) ill with and/or recovering from COVID-19, or at increased risk of contracting or suffering more severe illness or complications from COVID-19.

Where individuals are seeking accommodation on the basis of being a household member at increased risk, appropriate documentation may include a medical note from the household member's medical provider, as well as reasonable proof that the individuals share a household (such as official mail addressed to the same home address).

¹² Please see the Accessibility Services webpage as well for access to helpful links, forms and other documentation.

¹³ Accommodations Agreements will generally be available within three (3) business days of the completion of the In-Take Interview.

Where individuals have been mandated and/or recommended to quarantine or self-isolate, appropriate documentation may include (as applicable) a copy of any applicable guidelines, directive, or court order imposed by State or local health officials (either against an individual or the public at large) and/or other proof that supports such basis for accommodations as deemed appropriate in the judgment of Maria College (such as proof of travel to a State or geographic area currently subject to isolation orders upon return).

Questions regarding this policy should be directed to the Office of Accessibility Services:

Jonathan Collier-Takahashi
Director of Student Support and Opportunity Programs
Assistant Dean of Students
Email: accessibilityservices@mariacollege.edu
Phone: 518-861-2502

Accessibility Services Student Responsibility Agreement

Every student receiving accommodations agrees to the following.

1. It is expected that every student review the Maria College Student Handbook and comply with all College academic policies, procedures and the student code of conduct contained therein. The Student Handbook is available online at www.mariacollege.edu/student-support.
2. It is expected that every student regularly monitors their Maria College student email for correspondence and important information from the Accessibility Services Office.
3. It is expected that every student abide by testing room protocol which can be found in the Student Accessibility Services Handbook. (See www.mariacollege.edu/student-support/academic-support/accessibility-services)
4. *Request for accommodations* must be made at the beginning of each semester via the Accessibility Services webpage.
5. *First Time Student Registration* (An initial intake appointment with the Assistant Dean of Students is required. Once the student registers online, he or she will be contacted by email to make that appointment.)
6. *Returning Student Registration* (Student will need to complete online registration form and meet briefly with Assistant Dean to review and sign a new Accommodation Agreement.)
7. *Temporary Accommodation Registration*: Such accommodations will be issued for an appropriate amount of time depending on the nature of the disability and as recommended by an appropriate medical practitioner or governing health authority. As with standard accommodations, students will need to register with Accessibility Services and present suitable medical documentation prior to the issue of any accommodations.
8. *Clinical Skills Assessments* cannot be modified nor can students receive accommodations for these exams since such modifications and/or accommodations would result in a fundamental alteration of the assessment. This includes, but is not limited to, dosage (SafeMedicate) and competency exams in the Nursing and Occupational Therapy Programs.
9. It is expected that each student receiving their accommodation agreement by email will forward a copy of this accommodation agreement to all their professors at the beginning of each semester.
10. If testing in the Callaghan Room, it is expected that students will schedule their exam/test *at least three days* in advance according to their faculty approved exam dates and location. Exams can be schedule through the Accessibility Services webpage.
11. It is expected that each student will keep the Assistant Dean of Students informed of any changes to his/her disability or personal information.
12. It is expected that all documents related to your disability are provided to the Assistant Dean of Students before services begin. Information can be emailed to jcoller@mariacollege.edu or faxed to 518-730-9628.
13. Each student is responsible to provide the Assistant Dean of Students with the contact information of her or his case manager or counselor such as ACCES-VR and provide a signed consent to share information as needed.
14. If students are approved for alternate format of textbooks, students should request the books as soon as they register for classes. Getting textbooks in alternate format can take a long time.

Student Signature _____

Date _____

Copy of **Student Responsibilities** given: Yes No

Date _____

