

Eligibility to Connect with Disability Services

Scope

This policy applies to all currently enrolled students requesting disability accommodations, as well as to faculty, staff, and administrators involved in evaluating accommodation eligibility and implementation.

Policy Statement

George Mason is committed to ensuring equal access to its programs, services, and activities for qualified students with disabilities. Eligibility for accommodations is determined based on evidence of functional limitations, not on the nature of the diagnosis alone. Accommodation decisions are made in accordance with federal and state laws, including the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, [University Policy 1201](#), [University Policy 1203](#), and [Virginia Code § 23.1-401.3](#).

Definitions

- **Qualified Student with a Disability:** A student who meets both the academic and technical standards of a program and has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities; has a record of such impairment; or is regarded as having such impairment.
- **Major Life Activities:** Functions such as learning, reading, concentrating, communicating, seeing, hearing, walking, breathing, caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, or the operation of major bodily systems.
- **Reasonable Accommodation:** Adjustments or modifications in policies, practices, or the environment, or provision of auxiliary aids, that permit equal access without fundamentally altering the nature of the service, program, or activity.
- **Documentation:** Current, objective evaluations or reports prepared by a qualified professional that describe the diagnosis, functional limitations, severity, and need for accommodations.

Eligibility Determination

Accommodation requests are considered on a case-by-case basis. Disability Services makes determinations for eligibility and accommodations. To determine eligibility for services and fully evaluate requests for accommodations, Disability Services follows a transparent, individualized process that includes:

1. **Review of Documentation**
 - Students may be asked to provide reasonable and current documentation of the reported impairment, condition, or disability.
 - Documentation should establish the presence of a disability, describe the functional impact, and support the need for accommodations.

- Clear [documentation guidelines](#) are published on the Disability Services website.
 - The purpose of requiring documentation is to establish that a student has a qualified disability that substantially limits one or more major life activities.
 - This documentation, provided by a licensed healthcare professional, is essential for verifying the nature and extent of the disability and determining appropriate, individualized accommodations.
- 2. Student Input and Interactive Process**
- Disability Services engages in a conversation with the student to understand how the condition creates barriers in the academic or campus environment.
 - The purpose of this process is to ensure individualized assessment, alignment with applicable laws, and equitable access to academic programs and services
 - Both documentation and the student's description of their lived experience are considered when determining eligibility and accommodations.
 - Disability Services will explore the nature of the disability, past use of accommodations, current barriers, and potential strategies to ensure access.
- 3. Assessment of Substantial Limitation**
- Disability Services evaluates whether the impairment substantially limits one or more major life activities or major bodily functions.
 - Mitigating measures (such as medication, assistive devices, or learned coping strategies) are not considered when determining if a condition is substantially limiting.
 - Conditions that are episodic or in remission are assessed based on their impact when active.
- 4. Eligibility Decision**
- Based on the review and assessment, Disability Services determines whether the student is eligible for accommodations under the ADA and Section 504.
 - Disability Services evaluates requested accommodations in light of program requirements, effectiveness, and reasonableness
 - Students are notified in writing of the outcome. If eligible, the student receives an official Academic Accommodation Letter listing approved accommodations.
 - The interactive process is continuous. Students are encouraged to contact Disability Services if accommodations are not effective, if circumstances change, or if new barriers arise.

Confidentiality

All disability-related information is confidential and handled in accordance with applicable privacy legislation (e.g., FERPA).

Legal & Policy Authority

This policy is informed by and intended to comply with:

- [The Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\)](#)
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act
- [Virginia Code § 23.1-401.3](#)