



Transition Guide for Students with Disabilities

Welcome! The Disability Services Office at Western Nebraska Community College works to ensure students who experience disability have an equal opportunity to participate in educational and co-curricular offerings. We do this by Facilitating the Accommodation Process through an individualized student-centered approach and promoting Best Practices through collaboration and engagement within the community.

This Transition Guide is designed to meet the needs of WNCC students enrolled in on campus classes, online learning courses, and students enrolled in both online learning and on campus courses.

Role & Purpose of Disability Services

The Disabilities Services Office is available to:

- Problem solve issues relative to disability access
- Provide equal access for individuals with disabilities
- Facilitate the development of reasonable accommodations for students
- Provide services and accommodations to qualified students with disabilities
- Serve in an advisory and supportive capacity to faculty and staff

The Vice President of Student Services has designated Mr. Norm Stephenson to serve as the Disability Services Officer (DSO). As DSO, he meets in person, by phone, email or other electronic media, such as SKYPE or Blackboard Collaborate, with students with disabilities to verify eligibility for specific academic adjustments referred to in this guide as accommodations. His office is located in the SWBC building on the Scottsbluff Campus. He is available to meet individually with a student in person at any of our campuses, by phone, by SKYPE or Blackboard Collaborate. Call or email him to set up an appointment (308.635.6050 or stephens@wncc.edu). Many of those adjustments are then coordinated by staff both within Disability Services (DS) and across WNCC (Educational Services, On-line Learning, or Student Services).

What does the law require?

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973

Congress passed Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act in 1973. It is considered the first “civil rights” legislation for persons with disabilities on the national level. It is designed to prevent discrimination against individuals with disabilities and provides that:

No otherwise qualified individual with a disability in the United States... shall, solely by reason of his/her disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance...

The Americans with Disabilities Act

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was signed into law in July 1990. It is patterned after Section 504 but it extends the civil rights protections of Section 504 to persons with disabilities in private sector employment, all public services, transportation and telecommunications.

Confidentiality and Records

Western Nebraska Community College employees have an obligation to maintain confidentiality regarding a student's disability. To that end, the Disability Services Officer (DSO) will provide information to Western Nebraska Community College staff and faculty only when necessary in evaluating and/or facilitating accommodations, auxiliary aids and/or services. Except where permitted by applicable law, disability information will not be shared with non-Western Nebraska Community College employees without the student's express written permission. Students' files, containing disability documentation and a record of accommodations requested will be maintained with all appropriate privacy and confidentiality as required by law. Such information will be shared with institutional personnel only as necessary to insure access to services and support, and will not be released to agencies/individuals outside the institution without written authorization from the student.

Glossary of Terms

A Person with a Disability is someone with a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities.

Physical Impairment means any physiological disorder or condition, cosmetic disfigurement, or anatomical loss affecting one or more of the following body systems: neurological, musculoskeletal, special sense organs, respiratory (including speech organs), cardiovascular, reproductive, digestive, genitor-urinary, hemi, and lymphatic, skin and endocrine.

Mental Impairment means any psychological disorder, such as mental retardation, organic brain syndrome, emotional or mental illness, and traumatic brain injuries.

Learning Disability means a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations, including conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia.

Substantially Limits means unable to perform a major life activity, or is significantly restricted as to the condition, manner, or duration under which a major life activity can be performed, in comparison to the average person or to most people; the availability of some mitigating measure (such as a hearing aid) is not to be considered when determining if the disability substantially limits the individual.

Major Life Activity means functions such as caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing learning, and working.

Individuals Who Are Current Illegal Users of Drugs are not protected under the ADA; however, addiction is considered a disability. Therefore, a person who is addicted to drugs, but is not actively using drugs, is considered a person with a disability and is protected by law.

Qualified individual with a disability: "An individual with a disability who, with or without reasonable modifications, meets the essential eligibility requirements (e.g., any academic and/or technical standards required for admission or participation in the educational program or activity) for the receipt of services or the participation in programs or activities provided by a public entity".

An **accommodation** is an adaptation, designed to help the student display knowledge around the learning barriers caused by the disability.

Auxiliary Aids and Services may include but are not limited to note-takers, readers, braille or large print materials, and mobility training for students with visual impairments; sign language interpreters, real time captioning, and note-takers for students who are deaf or hearing impaired; and typists and scribes for students with manual impairments. (This is not an exhaustive list.) Devices or services of a personal nature such as personal attendants, individually prescribed devices, or readers for personal use or study are not provided.

Service Animals: The mandate to make reasonable modifications in policies includes the general necessity of altering existing rules to allow for the presence of service animals. A service animal is usually a dog that is individually trained to work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability. Service animals are working animals, not pets. The work or task a dog has been trained to provide must be directly related to the person's disability.

Differences Between High School and College

Although these differences primarily apply to on campus students, many of these differences are applicable to the online learner as well.

High School

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Services are provided under IDEA or Section 504• School district responsible for identifying & evaluating disability at no cost to the student or family• Instruction is more experimental• Students learn by doing and experiencing• Most classes meet every day• Tasks are more structured• Step-by-step instructions are given• Grades are based on a variety of activities• There are fewer responsibilities• Career decisions are not expected• Students are assisted with decisions• Limits are set for students by parents and teachers• Attendance and progress are well monitored• Student's time is structured by home and school• Services are provided under IDEA or Section 504• School district responsible for identifying & evaluating disability at no cost to the student or family• Instruction is more experimental | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students learn by doing and experiencing• Most classes meet every day• Tasks are more structured• Step-by-step instructions are given• Grades are based on a variety of activities• There are fewer responsibilities• Career decisions are not expected• Students are assisted with decisions• Limits are set for students by parents and teachers• Attendance and progress are well monitored• Student's time is structured by home and school• Special education teacher liaison between student, other teachers, administrators, and parents• Help is readily available• Students need not seek out help• Students are labeled as "special education"• Student possibly served separately from other students• Personnel talk freely with parent about student progress and planning• There is a lighter workload, slower pace, and less stress |
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College

- Services provided under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act
- Student must self-identify and provide documentation of disability
- Student must pay cost of evaluation
- College is responsible for most, but not all costs involved in providing accommodations and/or essential auxiliary aids based on documentation of disability
- Instruction is often provided via lecture, or in an online learning environment
- Lecture and online learning may cover different information than the textbook
- Faculty members rarely suggest ways to learn material
- Effective reading comprehension skills are more important
- There are fewer visual and study aids
- Identifying main ideas are more important
- Effective communication skills are more important
- Student must independently seek additional and supplementary resources and information
- Student must initiate requests for help
- Paying attention in class is more important
- Student needs to self-monitor progress
- Studying is much more important
- Courses meet less often; online learning can occur 24/7
- Much less direct faculty member contact
- There is less time in the classroom. In the case of online learning, the coursework is more self-directed
- Tasks are less structured
- Student held responsible for developing a method to complete tasks
- Grades are based on fewer tasks or larger projects
- Harder work required for earning a grade of A or B
- Simple completion of an assignment often earns a grade of C or lower
- Term grades are sometimes based on two or three test scores
- Student progress is usually not monitored by faculty members
- There are more major writing assignments.
- Students must be flexible and learn at a pace established by the faculty members
- More independent living (car, insurance, gas, etc.)
- Student is expected to know career goals
- Increased number of decisions
- Student is expected to make independent decisions
- More self-evaluation and monitoring required
- More independent reading and studying is required
- Student is more responsible for managing time commitments
- Student established and attains own goals
- Student determines when they need help
- Interest in learning is generated by student
- Motivation to succeed is generated by student
- Student responsible for attendance and awareness of progress or lack thereof
- Student manages own time
- Student responsible for self-advocacy
- Students must independently seek help using effective communication skills
- Student is not labeled or served separately from other students
- Other students and faculty will not know about student's disability unless the student elects to reveal such information
- Faculty is only notified of required accommodations
- Personnel cannot discuss student without student's written permission
- There is an increased workload and faster pace, more stress

Should I Disclose my Disability?

You are never required to disclose your disability, but you may choose to disclose your disability in order to request reasonable accommodations. The Disability Services Officer is the individual designated by the college who determines which accommodations are appropriate for each student's needs. He considers specific accommodation requests based on your documentation of a disability and past experience with using the accommodation. In some situations, you may request an accommodation you have never used before. This may occur in cases where the accommodations were not available in your previous education setting, or you may not have attended an educational institution since being diagnosed with a disability.

How Do I Request Accommodations?

The steps to request accommodations from WNCC for on campus, online and students enrolled in both on campus and online learning courses are as follows:

1. Apply and be accepted for admission to WNCC
2. You will need to take the ACCUPLACER assessment to help determine your courses. Contact Norm Stephenson, Disabilities Services Officer at 308.635.6050 or at stephens@wncc.edu to arrange to take ACCUPLACER.
3. To request accommodations, print out and complete the "Request for Accommodations, Auxiliary Aids and/or Services Form" found enclosed in this packet or online at <https://www.wncc.edu/student-life/student-success/disability-services>. After completing the form, return it by mail, fax or email it as an attachment to Norm Stephenson, Disability Services Officer, WNCC, 1601 East 27th Street, Scottsbluff, NE 69361; fax: 308.635.6732, email stephens@wncc.edu.
4. Contact Norm Stephenson, Disability Services Officer at 308.635.6090 or 308.635.6050 or via stephens@wncc.edu to schedule an appointment.
5. Provide the Disability Services Officer with documentation of your disability by sending it by mail, fax or emailed as an attachment to Norm Stephenson, Disability Services Officer, Western Nebraska Community College, 1601 East 27th Street, Scottsbluff, NE 69361; fax (308.635.6732), email stephens@wncc.edu . (see page 9 below for details)
6. Reasonable accommodations, auxiliary aids and/or services and/or modifications to academic requirements are determined following an individualized assessment of each request and discussion with the Disabilities Services Officer. Among the factors considered in determining reasonable accommodations, auxiliary aids and/or services and/or modifications of academic requirements for students are:
 - a. The nature of the student's disability
 - b. Accommodations, auxiliary aids and/or services that have worked for that student in the past
 - c. Whether the requested accommodations, auxiliary aids and/or services will allow the student effectively to access and participate in the course or program
 - d. Whether the requested accommodation, auxiliary aids and/or services and/or modifications of academic requirements will alter the essential requirements of the course or program

- e. Western Nebraska Community College is not required to alter or modify a course or program to the extent that it changes the fundamental nature of that course or program. Although most auxiliary aids and services are decided upon and provided by the Disabilities Services Officer, accommodation decisions are often made in collaboration with program/school administrators and relevant faculty. Modifications of Academic Requirements are always made in collaboration with Educational Services. Recommendations made by the Disability Services Officer are not implemented until this collaboration has occurred.
7. Once a determination has been made that you are eligible for reasonable accommodations, you will receive an “Eligible Academic Accommodation” (EAA) letter that you will need to discuss with your faculty member for each course you intend to request accommodations in. Each of your faculty members will have an advance copy of the EAA letter. It will be your responsibility to contact the faculty member in person, by phone or email to set up an Implementation Conference to discuss your needs and the accommodations you are eligible for. The Implementation Conference can be in person, by phone, email, SKYPE or Blackboard Collaborate.

Late Identification

A student who chooses to identify a disability after the beginning of the semester may experience a delay in receiving timely accommodations. This is in no way a reflection of the intent of the Disability Services Office, but simply the inability to respond in a reasonably timely manner.

Note: Western Nebraska Community College is not required to provide accommodations to students who have failed to self-identify and have not provided documentation of disability.

Student Rights and Responsibilities

Colleges have an obligation under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to provide qualified students with disabilities access to their programs and services. Institutions also have an obligation to provide reasonable accommodations. **HOWEVER, students** also have equal, if not greater, responsibilities to be partners with educational institutions in meeting their needs.

The qualified student has the responsibility to:

- Be a self-advocate for his/her needs
- Formally request Accommodations with the Disability Services Office and follow the procedures.
- Provide current documentation
- Discuss accommodation needs with disability services officer
- Discuss the Eligible Academic Accommodation letter with faculty members in the courses you desire the accommodations during an Implementation Conference
- Communicate with faculty and the Disability Services Officer as needed

A student has the right to:

- Not be discriminated or retaliated against because he/she has a disability
- Participate in and enjoy the educational programs and services offered by the institution the student has chosen to enroll, attend and participate in
- Appropriate accommodations
- Have information about his/her disability kept confidential
- Expect that other departments of the College will work cooperatively with the disability services office and

- the student in providing accommodations and addressing legitimate needs
- Choose not to self-identify with disability services or request accommodations

Faculty Responsibilities

Each member of the faculty plays an important role in the implementation of accommodations to students with disabilities. Although providing reasonable accommodations are not negotiable; the way the accommodations are provided may be negotiable, and in keeping with that role. . .

Faculty has the right to:

- Expect students with disabilities to actively participate in the course; for on campus students abide by attendance and participation requirements and for online learners to meet participation requirements.
- Expect students to observe the code of conduct
- Expect that students will adhere to the academic integrity policy
- Determine the curricula for their courses
- Determine student progress and assign grades
- Provide input regarding the accommodations employed in their courses
- Question accommodations that would fundamentally alter the academic standards or compromise the mastery of essential competencies
- Receive a letter of notification about accommodations (known as the EAA Letter) a student is entitled to receive
- Provide timely notification of specific needs

Faculty has the responsibility to:

- Provide an atmosphere in which all students can learn course material
- Include a Reasonable Accommodation statement on the syllabus for each course taught
- Provide accommodations in a fair and timely manner
- Contact the Disability Services Office with questions or suggestions regarding the appropriateness of an accommodation
- Grade students based on their performance, without counting off for reasonable accommodation
- Make academic adjustments in instruction as appropriate
- If Internet resources and other technologies are used, then these resources must also be as accessible to students with disabilities as they are for other students
- To participate in the implementation planning by meeting by in person, by phone or in the case of online learners through other electronic media with the student for an Implementation Conference

Guidelines for Communicating with Faculty Members

- Call or email your faculty members as soon as you receive the “Eligible Academic Accommodations Letter” in order to discuss the eligible academic accommodations you want to implement in your course. You need to meet in person, by phone, email, SKYPE or Blackboard Collaborate with your faculty member for an “Implementation Conference”. Your faculty member will have an advance copy of your “Eligible Academic Accommodations Letter”, so will be expecting your call.
- If you have questions or concerns about the course or your performance, make an appointment to speak to them during your faculty member’s office hours. Be punctual for the appointment (whether the appointment is in person, phone, or through an electronic media such as SKYPE or Blackboard Collaborate and address your faculty member with courtesy. E-mail your faculty members if you have questions that are less complex.

- Faculty members have different policies for exams, due dates, and attendance. It is your responsibility to study each faculty member's syllabus. Adhering to your faculty members' policies will benefit you.
- E-mail your faculty members in advance if you need to be absent from /or if you are on online learner there will be a period of time you will not be participating your course.
- Be ready to problem solve with your faculty member. If any conflicts arise, devise potential solutions to propose to your faculty member.
- Contact your Disability Services Officer, Norm Stephenson if you need support or practice in talking with a faculty member.

Advocating for Yourself

Communicating your needs effectively involves a number of factors. Students with disabilities who succeed in college generally possess the following characteristics:

- Ability to articulate one's talent and abilities clearly
- Knowledge of the nature of one's disability, and the kinds of teaching strategies, tools, and services which best help one compensate
- Ability to explain both talents and needed compensatory strategies, clearly and frankly to others
- Maturity and initiative to assume the greater share of one's own advocacy
- Adherence to effective, routine study habits to whatever degree is necessary for success
- Initiative to seek assistance for academic and other problems as appropriate
- Acceptance of the idea that it may take longer to graduate than one's friends, and that he/she may have to study harder than friends do.
- Recognition of the concept that postsecondary education is meant to be a challenge and that temporary frustrations are a part of the normal growth process.
- Regular, frequent communications with parents, friends, faculty members, academic advisors and support service personnel are all part of taking responsibility for one's ultimate success

It has been observed that the college-level student with a disability must be self-reliant and able to cope with ever-changing challenges of daily living. Students with disabilities who have come to rely heavily on both parents and teachers to direct them and manage their lives may have difficulty adjusting to the demands of college. Thus, as a student, the task is to find ways to work with the chosen institution that will permit the student to stretch and develop talents, interests, and abilities while at the same time being respectful and supportive of needs.

ONLINE LEARNING AND STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students with disabilities sometimes decide that taking online courses will be the solution to their accommodation needs. You may be considering online study for the same reasons. Please be aware that studying online can create the need for a completely different set of accommodations. You should enroll in an online course only after you have taken the time to carefully consider the requirements of the study and your strengths and weaknesses.

Ask yourself these questions:

How well do I manage my time?

The independent nature of online study requires a firm grasp on the ability to manage your time. You will be required to set a regular study schedule, keep track of assignments and due dates, as well as participate in

online discussions. This may be more difficult without in-person reminders from a faculty member. This requires discipline and self-motivation to ensure that the course is not forgotten in your day-to-day activities.

Does my disability affect my ability to process and comprehend written information?

For individuals with certain disabilities, managing the content, directions and discussion in an online course becomes increasingly difficult. Information in an online course is frequently delivered via written material on the course management system. The faculty member will not be immediately available to deliver the information auditory or to provide clarification for any misunderstood concepts or assignments.

Will I need to utilize assistive technology to complete this course?

For some students with disabilities, the use of assistive technology is necessary. This can pose a challenge if some aspects of the online course management system are not compatible with the assistive technology you are using. Try to use your assistive technology with the sample course to identify any challenges that you will encounter while engaged in online study.

How comfortable am I with computers and technology?

It is important to be aware of your current comfort level with technology and computers. Are you already accustomed to working with computers? If you have not already mastered at the very least some basic computer skills, your course material can seem much more mysterious and confusing. Accessing all course information and instruction in an online format can be intimidating and stressful for some students. Knowing your comfort level with computers and technology will allow you to determine whether or not online study is for you.

What do I expect of an online course?

It is important to be aware of your expectations of online courses. No two courses (or faculty members) are exactly alike! What kind of interaction are you expecting from the faculty member? Are you expecting a lot of personal interaction or a little? Do you think that you will have a lot of writing to do or not as much? What information are you basing your expectations on? Before the course begins, consider contacting the faculty member to find out as much as possible about the format of the course, the expectations the faculty members have of you, and what you need to do to successfully complete the course. The more information you learn about the study prior to enrolling and beginning the study, the better you can determine if online study is for you.

Request for Reconsideration of a Determination in the EAA Letter of Accommodation, Auxiliary Aid and/or Services

If a student requesting an accommodation, auxiliary aid, and/or services **disagrees** with the determination of eligible accommodations, auxiliary aid and/or services communicated by Disabilities Services Officer in the "Eligible Academic Accommodations Letter", the student may within three (3) weeks after receipt of said determination file a written request for reconsideration with the Compliance Officer at the Office of Human Resources for WNCC. The Compliance Officer shall conduct an informal, but thorough investigation, offering all interested persons and their representatives, if any, an opportunity to submit evidence relevant to the reconsideration. The Compliance Officer shall determine within fourteen (14) days of receipt of said Request for Reconsideration the approval of accommodations, auxiliary aids, and/or services necessary to provide equality of access for students with disabilities in compliance with applicable state and federal laws. The decision of the Compliance Officer shall be final.