

**Office of Academic Accessibility  
(OAA)  
Handbook and Policy Manual**

**Ferrum College  
Ferrum, Virginia 24088**

Director: Nancy S. Beach  
nbeach@ferrum.edu

## Welcome

Welcome to the Office of Academic Accessibility (OAA) website. Ferrum is a supportive community with caring faculty and staff who want you to be successful in learning more about yourself, moving toward a career path, and becoming an independent adult. There are many resources on campus including the Office of Academic Accessibility to help you reach your goals. By reading the individual links, you will gain a better understanding of how this office can help you. Please **contact the OAA** if you have questions or need advice. We are glad you are here.

Nancy Beach, Director  
Office of Academic Accessibility Services  
[nbeach@ferrum.edu](mailto:nbeach@ferrum.edu)  
(540) 365-4262

## **Rights and Responsibilities**

Under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (1990), individuals with disabilities cannot be denied access to programs of higher education because of disability. Students with disabilities, as all students, must comply with the stated admissions procedures and policies as stated in the catalog. These policies are used to determine if a student will be accepted into the college.

## **Eligibility**

Once a student is accepted to Ferrum, there are various services or accommodations for which the student may be eligible if he/she has documentation of a disability. In order to receive these services or accommodations, students must show a need based on documentation. Documentation typically consists of a psycho-educational evaluation usually including an intelligence assessment as well as an academic skills assessment. Following are the guidelines for this documentation.

## **GENERAL DOCUMENTATION GUIDELINES FOR FERRUM COLLEGE**

Documentation of disability usually consists of an evaluation by an appropriate professional. Included should be a clear statement of the diagnosis, the basis for the diagnosis, and the current impact of the disability as it relates to the accommodation request. As appropriate to the disability, the documentation should include the following elements:

1. A diagnostic statement identifying the disability, date of the most current diagnostic evaluation, and the date of the original diagnosis.
2. A description of the diagnostic tests, methods, and/or criteria used including specific test results (including standardized testing scores) and the examiner's narrative interpretation.
3. A description of the current functional impact of the disability. This may be in the form of an examiner's narrative, and/or an interview, but must have a clear relationship to diagnostic assessments. For learning disabilities, current documentation is defined using adult norms.
4. A statement indicating treatments, medications, or assistive devices/services currently prescribed or in use, with a description of the medicating effects and potential side effects from such treatments.
5. A description of the expected progression or stability of the impact of the disability over time, particularly the next five years.

6. A history of previous accommodations and their impact.
7. The credentials of the diagnosing professional(s), if not clear from the letterhead or other forms. Please note that diagnosing professionals shall not be family members or others with a close personal relationship with the individual being evaluated.
8. Documentation prepared for specific non-educational venues (i.e. Social Security Administration or Department of Veteran's Affairs, etc.) may not meet these criteria.
9. An IEP or 504 plan may not be considered sufficient documentation unless accompanied by a current and complete evaluation.

### **Services and Accommodations**

Accommodations are services, opportunities, and/or technologies that help students with disabilities. Accommodations are often found to be important in the student's success in college. With appropriate documentation, as well as student desire, many services and accommodations are available at Ferrum. These include but are not limited to:

- Extended time for tests and in-class assignments
- Alternative settings (quiet area) for your tests and in-class assignments
- Use of a computer for spelling check
- Use of a word processor to write essay or short answer tests
- Use of reading software
- Access to digitally formatted textbooks for purchased textbooks
- Assistance with study skills and time management upon request
- Assistance, upon request, with talking to professors about your needs
- Specialized advising by appointment
- Consultation by appointment

### **Receiving Accommodations Each Semester**

#### **Students Enrolled in On-line Programs and Hybrid Programs**

Students who are enrolled in on-line, hybrid, or electronic courses or programs and who are not accessing services on campus must, **each semester**, contact the director of OAA by email ([nbeach@ferrum.edu](mailto:nbeach@ferrum.edu)) to submit documentation and discuss accommodations. When needed or desired, the student is also invited to arrange, by email, for a time to talk with the director in person or by phone. When accommodations are needed, the student must make the director aware of the needed accommodation.

## **Students Enrolled in Traditional On-Campus Programs**

Once a student is eligible for services through the Office of Academic Accessibility (OAA), he or she will discuss appropriate accommodations supported by the documentation. Accommodations are tailored to each individual and will not necessarily be the same for every student. Once accommodations are established, those specific accommodations (supported by the initial documentation) will stay in place for the remainder of the student's stay at Ferrum. However, it is the student's responsibility to contact OAA and register for use of the accommodations **every** semester the student wishes to use his or her accommodations. They are not automatically granted from one semester to the next; instead, the student must sign a release so that professors can be notified that the student may be seeking accommodations through OAA. Following are the procedures a student must follow to ensure that accommodations are received every semester.

### **Each Semester**

- **Make an appointment** with the accessibility support director by meeting with the director in her office (Stanley Library, Lower Level, Office 110), e-mailing [nbeach@ferrum.edu](mailto:nbeach@ferrum.edu) or calling 540 365 4262.
- In the meeting, you can **sign a release of information** indicating which professors you would like to have notified regarding your eligibility for services. You will also have the opportunity discuss the available accommodations and how to access those accommodations.
- According to the release of information, a letter of verification will be sent to each indicated professor sharing that you may be seeking specific academic accommodations, and that you will work through OAA to receive the accommodations.
- Academic accommodations must be sought pro-actively. Such accommodations include: taking tests or completing in-class assignments with extended time, taking tests or completing in-class assignments in locations other than the classroom, having a test read or written for a student, and other such accommodations. The procedure for requests such as these is outlined below.

### **Taking Tests or Completing In-Class Assignments**

Accommodations for tests or in-class assignments will be administered in OAA. The following procedures must be followed for **every** test or in-class assignment you choose to take in the accessibility services area.

*When possible, two days before the test or in-class assignment:*

- See Ms. Beach in Lower Stanley, Office 110, or Ms. Winge, the office manager, in Lower Stanley, Office 109 to arrange an appointment to take the test.
- When you make the appointment, you will be given a testing accommodation form. When possible, at least two working days before the test, you should give this form to the instructor from whom you are taking the test.
- Once you have given your instructor the test form, he or she will bring the test to OAA, and we will work with the instructor to return the completed test. You typically will not pick-up or deliver the test.
- On the scheduled date, you will see Ms. Winge in office 109 to take the test.
- You may be entitled to alternative academic accommodations **BEFORE** the test has been distributed. If you are eligible, you must make arrangements in a timely manner as described above. When a student does not give the two-day notification for taking tests in accessibility services, it is up to the instructor to determine if the test can still be taken with accommodations, and up to the director of accessibility services to determine if the appropriate staff is available for administering the accommodation.
- If meeting in person to make arrangements for specific testing accommodations will be difficult for you, meet with Ms. Beach to discuss alternative arrangements.

### **Proctored Exams**

All exams taken in the OAA Testing Lab are proctored (monitored), usually through work-study students who are supervised by the office manager who works with OAA. Some general rules that apply follow.

- You will schedule a time with OAA to take your test. You must arrive at the time you have scheduled. If you do not arrive during time allotted for class, you must then arrange to make-up the test with the professor. The professor may choose to award you a zero for the assignment and not allow you to make-up the work. Be diligent about arriving on time to take the tests.

- If you are late arriving for your test, your test ending time may not change. If beginning the test later than the arranged time is because you did not arrive at the designated time, your start time for the test remains the same, regardless of when you start.
- For purposes of security, when you arrive to take your test or complete an assignment, you will be required to leave all of your books, technological devices, and materials (cell phone, I-Pod, PDA's, etc.) not needed for the test in the designated area of the testing room. Once you leave the testing area, you are not allowed to re-enter the area. At that time, you must submit your test or assignment to the testing monitor to be sent to your professor.
- You will put all of your materials in the testing envelope and seal the envelope before giving it to the proctor. The sealed envelope will be returned to the professor. The proctor will not see your test or test materials.

The test monitor (proctor) will be available for questions for all testing situations. If you have questions during the testing session, please let the monitor know. The monitor cannot answer questions about the test, but can see that OAA personnel are available for your question.

### **Alternative Formatted Texts**

Students with a disability that clearly indicates that alternative texts would be appropriate may work through OAA for the alternative format. Students requesting digitally formatted textbooks must provide proof of purchase of the textbook to OAA. At that point, OAA will request a digitally formatted textbook from the publisher. If the publisher is unable to provide the alternative format, OAA will have the textbook scanned and saved digitally for the student.

### **Course Substitution Process**

A student who requests a course substitutions based on a specific documented disability must use the established course substitution process, and must include information about the documented disability provided by the Office of Academic Accessibility (OAA). The policy for making a request parallels the process used for any student who wishes to request a course substitution. If the student wishes to have his/her disability documentation considered as a basis for the request, the student must work through the Office of Academic Accessibility (OAA) for guidance and to substantiate the justification for the request.

#### **Student Meets with OAA Director**

1. The student will meet with the director of OAA to review documentation previously submitted and/or to submit new/additional information. The director will discuss with the student whether the request is warranted as related to the documentation submitted. (Students enrolled in on-line,

hybrid, or electronically delivered programs may meet with the director via email or phone rather than in-person).

If the documentation provides a basis that justifies the student's request, the director will create a justification document using information from the disability documentation to substantiate the request.

After a discussion between the adviser and the OAA director, the document created by the OAA director will be provided for the adviser via an email attachment.

#### Student Meets with Academic Advisor

2. If the OAA director can substantiate the request for a course substitution, the student will begin the formal request for course substitution by meeting with his/her academic advisor after the OAA director has provided documentation information to the advisor.

The advisor will include the justification provided by OAA when submitting the course substitution through the I-Assistant process. The advisor will use the cut/paste process for including this justification if a document attachment feature is not available.

The advisor is encouraged to interact with the OAA director as needed in making the request.

#### Program Coordinator and School Dean and Decision Results

3. The submitted request is reviewed by the program coordinator and the School Dean and is approved or denied. The student, the advisor, and the registrar are notified via email of the decision. The OAA director is not notified. The student is responsible for sharing the decision with the OAA director if he/she chooses to share the information.

#### Appeals Process

4. If the student has questions or concerns about the decision, he/she may choose to schedule individual meeting(s) with the adviser, school dean, and/or OAA director to further discuss the situation to ask for clarification of the decision.

Students who are not granted the requested course substitution can appeal the decision of the program coordinator and school dean by submitting a written request to the Dean for Academic Programs and Faculty Development. The appeal must be received by the Dean for Academic Programs within five business days, excluding any holidays.

The appeals packet must include a) a copy of the request; b) a copy of the response; and c) a letter detailing the justification for the appeal.



Justification for an appeals request must satisfy at least one of the following criteria: i) process not followed in the formulation or submission of the request; or ii) extenuating circumstances or documentation not available during the request.

The Dean for Academic Programs may consult with the student, the program coordinator(s); the school dean(s); the OAA director; and/or others as deemed necessary in making the decision about the appeal.

For appeals, Dr. Kevin P. Reilly, Assistant Vice President of Academic Affairs, can be contacted by email at [kpreilly@ferrum.edu](mailto:kpreilly@ferrum.edu). The appeal must be a) submitted in written form; b) signed by the student; and, c) received by the Assistant Vice President of Academic Affairs within five business days (excluding holidays) of the date the course substitution decision is emailed.

#### Timeline for Requesting a Course Substitution

5. A student who is interested in pursuing a course substitution request should begin the process no later than one-full academic year before he/she plans to graduate (typically by the start of the junior year). Preferably the student should begin this process in his/her freshman or sophomore year to allow for adequate planning in the event your request is not fulfilled. The student's request must be in a timely manner to be considered.

### **Working with Professors**

Your accommodations are designed specifically for you, based on the documentation that you submit. Ferrum College professors are typically very helpful and willingly make arrangements to meet students' needs for accommodations. However, when talking with a professor about an accommodation that you are requesting, if you, at any time, feel uncomfortable or that you are not being heard, you can excuse yourself from the conversation and see the OAA director immediately. The director will help you to resolve the issue.

#### **I. Disability Defined**

An individual with a disability is defined as any person who (1) has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities; (2) has a record of such impairment; or (3) is regarded as having such an impairment. An individual satisfying this definition shall be referred to as "qualified."

## **II. Reasonable Accommodation Defined**

Any qualified student is entitled to receive a reasonable accommodation that satisfies the following standards: A qualified student is entitled to receive a reasonable accommodation that allows for his or her full participation in Ferrum College's educational and extra-curricular activities. A reasonable accommodation for a qualified student may include modified testing procedures, course load reduction, or use of auxiliary aides in the classroom, such as sign language interpreters or digital recorders. However, Ferrum College is **not** obligated to provide *personal* aids and services such as attendants, individually prescribed devices such as wheelchairs, readers for personal use or study, or other devices and services of a personal nature.

## **III. Requesting Accommodations**

Qualified individuals who wish to request reasonable academic accommodation may contact:

Nancy Beach, Director

Tel: (540) 365-4529

E-mail: [nbeach@ferrum.edu](mailto:nbeach@ferrum.edu)

It is a student's responsibility to alert the Office of Academic Accessibility Director of the existence of a disability if a student desires an academic accommodation.

## **IV. Provision of Accommodations**

Upon receipt of a request for an accommodation by a qualified individual, the Office of Academic Accommodations Director shall engage in the interactive process with the individual making the request. This shall be an informal process designed to determine the nature of the limitations resulting from the disability and the appropriate accommodation that will overcome this limitation. Prior to providing an accommodation, Ferrum College reserves the right to require documentation prepared by an appropriate professional, including, but not limited to, a diagnosis of the disability, a statement regarding how it affects a major life activity, and a recommendation of a reasonable accommodation. If the accommodation as initially provided is insufficient, upon receipt of notice of the insufficiency, the Office of Academic Accommodations Director shall implement any appropriate additional measures necessary to overcome the qualified individual's limitations.

Students should make known to the OAA director the accommodations needed so the stakeholders can engage in an interactive process to find appropriate accommodations for documented disabilities.