




Accessible Courses by Design

Imagine that a person who uses a wheelchair approaches a building where the only way to enter the building is via a set of stairs that lead to the only entrance. No ramp. No ground floor entry. The person who uses the wheelchair cannot get into the building. Is it that person's fault that entry is not possible or is the issue with how society designed that building? **What is the real barrier here?**

Why is access so important? Disabled students must be able to engage in the same activities, access the same information, and enjoy the same services, benefits and experiences as a person without a disability, in an equally effective and integrated manner, with substantially equivalent ease of use.

When SAS must collaborate with professors and students to facilitate an accommodation for a course, the accommodation is a reactive response to an aspect of the course not designed with full access from the outset, *much like a building with no ground level or ramp entry*. Accessible course design from the outset is best practice. Accommodations are a necessary but less-than-ideal last resort.

Equality	Equity	Justice
		
<p>The assumption is that everyone benefits from the same supports. This is equal treatment.</p>	<p>Everyone gets the supports they need (this is the concept of "affirmative action"), thus producing equity.</p>	<p>All 3 can see the game without supports or accommodations because the cause(s) of the inequity was addressed. The systemic barrier has been removed.</p>

It is impossible to make every course fully accessible at all times. For example, there will always be the need for sign language interpreters when a deaf student fluent in sign language is present in the class. However, intentional course design can reduce the need for reactive accommodations.

While by no means an exhaustive list, the following access ideas and considerations can create a better experience for all students and reduce accommodation needs for students with disabilities by proactively making a course accessible and inclusive. SAS is a resource for you to assist with accessible course design. Please contact us if want to explore further.

Course Notes Access

- ❖ Identify a student or a rotation of students in the class to provide a copy of course notes for all students after each lecture. With this resource, a student with a disability does not have to seek a specialized resource through SAS. The resource benefits all students.
- ❖ Consider providing PowerPoint slides to students in advance of the class to assist with note-taking during class.

Auditory & Reading Access

- ❖ Only use videos where full, accurate captioning is an option.
- ❖ Offer syllabi in advance of the class starting on the webcourse so that students can read, review and process, if interested, prior to the day it is discussed.
- ❖ Ensure all handouts and other course materials are accessible. It is common for professors to send out PDF scans of articles but these cannot be read by speech to text software or a screen reader.
- ❖ When adopting required reading materials, such as textbooks, confirm with the publisher that electronic text (e-text) formats are available for purchase. For supplemental reading materials, ensure that these can be read by text-to-speech software. Ask SAS if you need assistance with such a search.



Test, Quiz and Other Assessment Access

- ❖ Consider inclusive alternatives to pop, short in-class, and iClicker quizzes. Facilitating extra time on quizzes generally requires students to come to SAS or meet with their professor right before or after class in order to get the extra time.



- ❖ Design tests with multiple means of assessment (multiple choice, true/false, essays, problems, etc. when aligned with content).
- ❖ Take-home exams, where students are allowed multiple days to complete the work, most often eliminate the need for extra time for tests.
- ❖ Online exams are often easier to accommodate and allow for a more inclusive test experience than paper exams. A simple time extension to the student's online test allows the student to test in the same online environment as everyone else in class.
- ❖ Consider offering multiple assessment options when possible, such as allowing students to do a presentation, a video, or write a paper to fulfill the same course objective.

Course Activity Access

- ❖ Reconsider exercises or assignments that require a response based on an individual's sensory abilities. What barriers may be created for different students when these abilities are being assessed?
- ❖ Consider the question, to what extent is course attendance truly essential to the learning objectives? Any course policies should be directly connected to the specific course learning objectives.
- ❖ When feasible and practical, identify ways in which the course policies can be adjusted and flexible for case-by-case student needs. Some course policies, such as absolutely no make-up exams, can be significant barriers that limit a student's ability to truly demonstrate academic understanding.

