

Access Guide for the A-State Community

Sample Access Statement

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities or other conditions requiring accommodations to ensure access in this course are encouraged to contact Access and Accommodation Services (AAS) as early as possible at 870-972-3964 or dservices@AState.edu. All information will be treated confidentially, and every reasonable effort will be made to provide appropriate accommodations. To receive accommodations, students must be registered with A-State's Office of Access and Accommodation Services.

Those requiring testing accommodations are responsible for scheduling their exams through AAS in advance on the same date and time that the exam is administered to the rest of the class.

In cases where a scheduling conflict (such as an overlapping class) prevents the use of an approved extended-time accommodation during the scheduled exam time, the student must obtain prior approval from the instructor to arrange an alternative exam date and/or time.

Classroom Considerations

- Many accessibility suggestions for campus events (tips found below) also hold true for the classroom and are required to be written into syllabi. This includes things such as a clear communication policy and captioning on all videos. For the full A-State captioning procedure, please visit AAS on the A-State Knowledge Base.
- Thoroughly review all emails from AAS regarding student accommodations. While questions and discussions are always welcome, accommodations are not subject to negotiation with the student, and faculty should not attempt to modify, reduce or deny approved accommodations without speaking to the AAS office and participating in a collaborative, interactive process. This protects both the instructor and the university from potential violations of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). AAS is available to address questions, concerns, or to engage in collaborative discussions and information sessions to support the implementation of accommodations. Our shared goal is to ensure that accommodations are facilitated appropriately and equitably, without creating the impression that they are discouraged, burdensome, or likely to be denied.
- Implement a specific policy that permits students to leave and return to the classroom as needed. You may wish to outline reasonable limitations within this policy — for example, distinguishing between expectations during exams and regular class sessions. This is important in fostering a supportive classroom environment. It can be particularly

beneficial for students with diabetes, who may need to have a snack or adjust medication; students with anxiety or processing disorders, who may require short breaks to re-engage effectively; and students with gastrointestinal or other medical conditions, who may need to leave the classroom more frequently.

- Have a short form syllabus that is separate from your course calendar/schedule that succinctly documents your course policies. This helps students clearly see the path for the class and increases the inclusivity of your class. Simple syllabus helps with this!
- Have your syllabus available in multiple modes to increase access. For example, a simple text-based syllabus with no charts, tables, or graphics is best for screen readers, whereas an infographic syllabus or a syllabus that has media can be both more engaging and more accessible to students with processing disabilities. A large-print syllabus can also enhance access. This may sound like a lot more labor, but once you've done one of each style, you can easily tailor your syllabi so that they are accessible for all students.
- Having paper copies of slides enhances access for some populations of students. Many professors do not like to share their slides for a variety of valid reasons. You can decide based on the needs of your students and their accommodations each semester. You can also contact AAS about registered note takers or other similar options that could increase access.
 - Please note that the AAS note-taking program is solely volunteer based, so there is no guarantee that note-takers will be found for every class that a student may need access for. Therefore, this resource may not be equitable to other options like slides or recording class lectures.
- Don't assume everyone can hear you, especially if you are in a larger lecture hall or auditorium. If needed, using a microphone is a great way to make your lecture more accessible. It may feel uncomfortable initially, but you will soon adjust.
- Make sure your course files are screen-reader friendly. This can be complicated in classes that require graphs and charts. Alt text that describes images may already be included in your course materials if you are using materials from a publishing house. If they do not provide image or video descriptions, ask them to implement these access tools.
- Use at least 14-point font for all communication with students.

Cultural Considerations

- Discuss accommodations as important aspects of higher ed early in the semester. Ideally, you will have a syllabus statement about AAS prominently displayed in your course policies. Students take their cues from you – if you let them know access and inclusion are important to you, they will value them too.
- Never discuss a student's disability or accommodations in front of the class.
- Never ask a student in public or in private if their disability will cause disruption or be a problem for class.
- Include disabled authors/scientists/activists in your course materials and make sure your students know that these individuals you are including have disabilities. This representation helps improve inclusion.
- Minimize or eliminate the use of language that dismisses or belittles the experiences of people with disabilities. Words and phrases such as "retarded," "blind as a bat," and

“dumb” have no place in our classrooms. The R word should not be used, nor any derivative. We can find alternatives that fit our colloquial habits such as “willfully ignorant,” “if it were a snake, it would have bit me,” and “silly” instead of the historically ableist phrases. Even phrases like “handicapped” can be seen as outdated or offensive. So, try to be culturally sensitive as much as possible.

- Generally, it is best to use person-first language. An example would be saying, “a person who is hard of hearing” or “an individual with a mental health condition.” There are suggestions that disability-first language is acceptable (which is why you see some examples of that in this guide), but generally, you want to use person-first language.

Tips from the Harvard Accessibility Guide for Faculty

Meet privately with your student to discuss their accommodations in the context of your course. During your conversation, ask how you can support your student’s learning and accommodation needs. Be mindful that students may not feel comfortable sharing health information and/or a diagnosis with you and they are not required to do so. Examples of ways you can rephrase questions without asking for health information are included below.

Possible Questions with Alternative Phrasing

Instead of saying...	Try the phrase...
How severe is your hearing loss?	What types of environments or class discussions may be inaccessible for you?
Do you have class participation accommodations because you are autistic?	How is class participation most accessible for you?
Why can’t you hand-write notes?	Let’s discuss how you will use technology in class for your note-taking accommodations.
You can tell me more about your disability after class.	Let’s discuss how we will implement your accommodations during office hours.

What Disability/Neurodivergence Might Look Like in Your Classroom

- Students may appear inattentive or bored
- Repetitive behaviors
- Intense focus on topics of interest
- Unexpected emotion when stressed
- Difficulty with organization
- Difficulty with group work
- Poor awareness of body space
- May misread social cues or facial expressions
- Social interactions/group work may be stressful
- Stress-relieving activities may make others uncomfortable

- Sensory perceptions can interfere with learning
- Nebulous sense of time (can impact multi-tasking)
- Have difficulty with changes and transitions

Accessible Classroom Strategies

- Clear Communication: Try not to use sarcasm, euphemisms or implied messages.
- Clear expectations around classroom behavior and what “good work” looks like. Give examples, if possible.
- Make materials available in advance.
- Deliver content through multiple/hybrid methods.
- Allow or facilitate the recording of teaching or meetings.
- Scaffold Assignments: Break down large papers into smaller tasks throughout the semester until it adds up to the final paper.
- Scaffold Reading: Providing a list of key ideas that you want students to take away from a reading assignment.
- Rethink your idea of “paying attention.”
- Supplement Your Syllabus with a one-page “syllabus breakdown” that includes crucial due dates, policies, and requirements, as well as perhaps some assessment details.
- Posting A Schedule creates predictability that will ease anxiety and help avoid distraction.
- Post Learning Objective(s). This will help students determine if they’ve comprehended the content knowledge for the week/lesson/unit.
- A Daily Reflection/Exit Ticket: At the end of each class, a quick reflection can clarify if the variety of different learners in the class understood the subject matter taught. The question should measure the student’s understanding of the posted explicit learning objective of the day.
- Use Varied Assessments: Variation in assessments increases success and accessibility for all learners while maintaining high standards.

Accessibility Tips When Hosting Meetings

- Choose an accessible location. Think about: distance if a person must walk but has mobility or health issues, if it requires driving because some people don’t drive or have transportation, if there is a ramp and elevator, etc.
- Hybrid meetings are most accessible, but make sure the people online can equally participate and engage.
- When sharing meeting information, don’t just share the meeting link. Share dial-in information too.
- Keep cameras optional.
- Mute all participants upon entry.
- Make use of the chat or questions features online. Not everyone processes information or communicates most effectively verbally.
- Ask meeting invitees what they need to fully participate in the meeting.
- When presenting materials with images and graphs, explain and describe all that is shown on the screen, even if they are decorative. Images should also include captions/alt text.

- During meetings, announce your name before speaking, even if a virtual meeting displays your name.
- Use an accessible virtual background.
- Share the meeting agenda in advance.
- Use a microphone when talking to a large crowd. Consider those who may be hard of hearing.
- If you are the speaker, always face the crowd when speaking. Some people may rely heavily on lip reading.
- If meeting in person, think about space. Can someone with a mobility device or mobility challenges easily move around?
- If you are using PowerPoint or presenting any kind of documents, provide hard copies.
- If providing food at meetings, have some gluten-free, dairy-free, and peanut-free options. Also, think about cross-contamination.
- Use 14-point font minimum. While 12-point font is "standard", it is often still too small for people with visual impairments.
- Don't rely on color to emphasize information. Think about those who may be color blind.
- Try to avoid places that have strong smells, loud noises, bright lights, etc. Also, try to avoid wearing strong perfumes, jewelry that makes a lot of noise, etc.
- Record meetings if they are virtual.
- Provide a summary of the meeting or meeting notes after.

Accessibility Actions to Consider for Events

- Provide an obvious point of contact for feedback regarding accessibility before, during and after the event.
- Leave spaces open in community rooms for people with mobility issues to access materials. Wheelchair users need more space to maneuver. This is also a good tip to ensure that in case of an emergency, everyone can get out safely.
- Consider food allergies and dietary restrictions by providing clear food labels. Ensure that a knowledgeable person is available to answer questions or address any concerns about ingredients and food preparation.
- Avoid flashing lights. Quick flashing lights are known to cause seizures and can also bring on headaches/migraines.
- Avoid loud noises when possible. In large groups of people, it is hard to avoid a noisy environment, but many people with disabilities are sensitive to loud noises.
- Have easy-to-access seating around the event space.
- Provide seated queuing options for people who struggle to stand in a queue for the required durations.
- Limit fragrances. Fragrances can make spaces inaccessible for those who are fragrant sensitive. Certain smells can trigger headaches, allergic reactions, or even asthma attacks.
- Provide location maps that make accessible routes clear, including elevators and spaces that would be clear of foot traffic and obstacles.
- Incorporate inclusive and safety initiatives into events. Don't make inclusive spaces too separate or distant from the main attraction.

- Ensure that any materials featuring a color-coded key (such as maps or programs) are accessible to people with color blindness. In addition to using color, include labels or other visual indicators to convey the information clearly.
- Provide roaming microphones rather than relying on standing microphones so that people with mobility issues can still engage with talks.
- Have sign language interpreters and live captioning for talks, and roaming interpreters so people can interact with people on booths or stalls, at networking gatherings, etc.
- Ensure there are spaces for service animals to eat, drink and relieve themselves.
- Invite a variety of people from different backgrounds to join committees so that your inclusive, belonging, and accessibility initiatives are meaningful.
- Let people know about the initiatives that have been implemented so that people can reassess whether they are now able to attend your event and can plan accordingly.
- Have policies around touching (hugs, handshakes, etc.), social interactions, and the taking and sharing of photos. Make these transparent.
- Make explicit, inclusive rules visible in spaces like tabletop game areas at gaming events, so everyone feels welcome at the table.
- Provide clear standards for visual aids and slides during panels and talks to ensure they are accessible to the audience, including color contrast and font size.
- Make accessibility and inclusivity information clear, transparent, and obvious on event material (websites, brochures, flyers, programs, emails, etc.).
- Use the Web Accessibility Guidelines and the A11y Project to assist with making your website more accessible.
- Ensure content and trigger warnings are included on talks that cover sensitive topics so audience members can make decisions about whether to view content. Provide these ahead of time so individuals can choose not to attend, rather than needing to leave part-way through (often in front of an audience).

Accessibility Considerations When Serving Food at Meetings/Programs/Events

- Label all food items clearly by including ingredients and noting if an item contains gluten, contains dairy, or was prepared in a shared kitchen. This takes out a lot of guesswork and reduces anxiety for many people.
- Offer at least one gluten-free and dairy-free entrée if an entrée is offered at the event. This shouldn't just be sides. This ensures staff with allergies or health-related concerns can enjoy the full experience like everyone else present.
- Prevent cross-contamination at serving stations by using separate utensils, separate serving lines when possible, and avoid placing allergen-free items next to foods containing gluten or dairy. This may mean you always have a monitor at the table and that you brief them to ensure nothing is getting mixed up or placed in the wrong area.
- Create a designated "allergen-safe zone." This could be a table where only gluten-free and dairy-free items are placed, with monitored utensils.
- Choose pre-packaged or sealed allergen-safe items when possible. This is the safest option when we cannot guarantee kitchen controls.
- Brief volunteers on safe serving practices. A quick reminder about glove changes, utensil separation, and avoiding shared surfaces can go a long way.

- Ask caterers direct questions to confirm whether they can provide gluten-free/dairy-free options and what steps they take to prevent cross-contact.
- Communicate options in advance: People often decide whether to go to certain places or attend certain events/programs based on whether they can safely.

Foods That Often Contain Gluten:

Fried chicken: breaded flour coating

Alternative: grilled chicken, smoked chicken, rotisserie chicken

Baked beans: some brands use sauces with wheat

Alternative: labeled gluten-free baked beans or simple seasoned beans

Pasta salads: wheat-based pasta

Alternative: gluten-free pasta salad or quinoa salad

Sauces, marinades, and dressings: some contain wheat, barley, or rye

Alternative: simple dry rubs or labeled allergen-free sauces

Rolls, buns, cornbread mixes: many cornbread mixes contain wheat

Alternative: certified gluten-free buns, plain corn tortillas, lettuce wraps, or meat with no buns that's in a separate area from the bread.

Cookies, brownies, cakes: wheat flour

Alternative: gluten-free cookies or fruit-based desserts

Foods That Often Contain Dairy:

Mac & cheese: cheese, milk, butter

Alternative: dairy-free mac made with plant-based cheese

Mashed potatoes: butter and milk

Alternative: mashed potatoes made with olive oil or broth

Cream-based salads: coleslaw, potato salad, ranch dips

Alternative: vinegar-based slaws or dairy-free dressings

Sauces, marinades, and dressings: some contain dairy

Alternative: simple dry rubs or labeled allergen-free sauces

Desserts like banana pudding or cobblers: milk, butter, cream

Alternative: dairy-free puddings or fruit crisps made with plant-based butter

Foods With High Cross-Contamination Risk:

Buffet-style fried foods: shared fryers with breaded items

Alternative: baked or grilled versions

Shared utensil dishes: pasta, casseroles, desserts

Alternative: individually packaged servings

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