

Online Learning Accommodation Policy For Undergraduate Students with Documented Disabilities after Covid-19

I. INTRODUCTION

While Goucher College remains a residential, in-person campus, the COVID-19 pandemic has made it necessary to make occasional exceptions to this requirement. Due to temporary changes that Goucher College has made to its programs as a result of the pandemic, students with disabilities may be permitted to take some classes remotely through the Office of Accessibility Services (OAS) as a reasonable accommodation. Approval of this request allows the student to take their courses online for the entire academic semester, unless the need for accommodation ends prior to the end of the semester. This accommodation may not be deemed reasonable for every course and OAS assesses each course individually. Reasonable accommodations are made for individuals on a case-by-case basis. Factors such as employment, extracurricular activities, family/personal obligations, failure to use appropriate academic accommodations, or poor class attendance are not acceptable reasons for an online learning accommodation under this policy. This policy only applies while COVID-19 continues to pose a risk to public health.

II. RESPONSIBILITIES

Students seeking an accommodation in the form of online learning must submit a request in accordance with this policy. The OAS Coordinator works with a committee to review the requests for online learning. Committee members are from offices such as the Student Health Center, OAS or the Academic Center for Excellence (ACE), and/or the director of the Center for the Advancement of Scholarship and Teaching (CAST) which will serve as the faculty representative. All official accommodations are delivered through OAS. OAS implements accommodations in conjunction with the faculty of each course.

III. DEFINITIONS AND PROCEDURES

- A. **Fundamental Alteration:** a change that is so significant that it alters the essential nature of the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages, or accommodations offered.
- B. **Reasonable Accommodation:** modifications or adjustments to the tasks, environment, or the way things are usually done that enable individuals with disabilities to have an equal opportunity to participate in an academic program.
- C. **In-Person Attendance as an Essential Element:** Reasonable accommodations cannot compromise an essential element of a course or make a fundamental alteration to a course or program. With the college's transition back to in-person learning, there are courses in which in-person attendance is

essential. Essential elements of a course are assessed through an interactive process between OAS, the faculty of the course, and the program head. If it is determined that a course cannot be taken virtually, the student is encouraged to take the course later when they can safely return to face-to-face learning.

Examples of courses that have in-person attendance as an essential element:

1. Science-based courses with lab components
2. Studio art courses with hands-on components

- D. **Documentation:** Students requesting the online learning accommodation from OAS must submit recent documentation completed by a licensed professional in a field relevant to their diagnosis. The documentation should identify the disability, address how the impairment substantially limits a major life activity, describe why the student is unable to attend class in person and describe how attending class is a reasonable accommodation.

The student's provider must complete Goucher's [Treating Provider Form for Students with Medical and Physical Disabilities](#) and provide any supplemental documentation that supports their request. Examples of supplemental documentation are:

1. Medical records
2. Letter elaborating on information on the treating provider form
3. Assessments from health care providers

Please note: Letters or assessments must be written on official letterhead and signed by the treating professional.

- E. **Temporary Accommodation:** Because the status of the COVID-19 pandemic is ever-changing, students must reapply for this accommodation before the start of each semester. Updated documentation needs to be presented at the time of the request.

IV. REQUEST PROCESS

Requests for online classes under this policy must be made to OAS with supporting documentation **as soon as possible and no later than four weeks before the first day of classes** for the semester in which this status is sought. Requests must be submitted online in one of the following ways:

1. Students who already have accommodations set up with OAS must submit a [“supplemental \(additional academic and/or housing & meal plan\) request”](#) via their Accommodate account.
 2. Students who have never made an accommodation request through OAS must submit a request via the [Accessibility Services Request Form](#).
- A. OAS evaluates the documentation to determine the impact of the disability on the student's ability to participate in Goucher's in-person classes.
- B. If a student's application is approved, the student works interactively with their advisor, faculty, and OAS to determine if the accommodation can be applied to all of their enrolled courses.

- C. If it is determined that the accommodation would fundamentally alter a course, the student works with their advisor to drop the course and find an alternative.
- D. If a student's application for online courses is denied, the student may appeal the decision through the standard [appeal](#) procedures outlined on the OAS website.

V. RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL

The official responsible for implementing and updating this policy is the Coordinator of OAS. For more information or for questions about this policy, please contact access@goucher.edu.

VI. HISTORY

[Created June 2021]