

Houston Community College System Ability Services Student Handbook



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I. Introduction

The following statements summarize policies and procedures specifically related to students with disabilities. The official "Policy and Procedure" should be consulted for detailed information. Each qualified person shall receive appropriate accommodations to ensure equal access to educational opportunities, programs and activities in the most integrated setting appropriate.

II. Federal and state laws

This policy is consistent with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which states that no recipient of federal financial assistance may discriminate against a qualified handicapped individual solely because of handicap. This policy is also consistent with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and its Amendments and the Texas Handicappers' Civil Rights Act (as amended). The policies and procedures that follow are the means by which faculty, staff, and students of the Houston Community College endorse and will apply the conditions of Section 504 and the Americans with Disabilities Act to students.

III. Services for Students with Disabilities

Ability Services offers selected student services that are not provided by other college offices or outside organizations. Staff in Ability Services assist students in negotiating disability-related barriers to the pursuit of their education. They strive to improve access to programs, activities, and facilities. They promote increased awareness of disability issues on campus. Services from Ability Services are free of charge.

The decision to use services is a matter of individual choice. Our experience has been that students achieve higher levels of academic and personal success when they demonstrate initiative and assertiveness.

Admissions

Applicants should remember they are working with a process that involves several offices and many people. Prospective students should begin the application process early in their senior year or the semester before they plan to enroll at Houston Community College. Transfer applicants are also welcome.

The Admissions Office staff considers all applicants equally. Houston Community College is an open-door admissions institution.

To become a student at Houston Community College, go to www.hccs.edu to complete the online application.

Reasonable accommodations for standardized placement tests

If special accommodation (such as extra time, cassette version, Braille copy, etc.) is needed to take the TSI Assessment, applicants should contact the Ability Services office, at the college where they plan to test, to request accommodations. Documentation of the qualifying disability will be required and accommodations will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

Financial Aid

An important consideration in applying for financial aid is time. Begin early! If you submit the paper work before the deadlines, you will be better able to work out any problems that occur.

If you plan to request financial assistance from the Division of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS), it is especially important that you complete this application process early. These agencies are a resource used in addition to funds that the student, parent or other sources could provide. Applications for financial aid (particularly the Pell Grant) must be made before the Division of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) can determine the nature and type of aid they will provide.

Some students with disabilities will be eligible to take a reduced course load without losing their financial aid. Speak to an ADA Counselor to see if you are eligible. **Keep in mind that Houston Community College, DARS, or tuition waiver for deaf/hard of hearing and blind students will not take care of the financial aid process.** You have the major responsibility to meet deadlines and be aware of the policies and procedures governing your financial assistance. For specific information about financial aid or assistance filling out forms, contact the Office of Financial Aid at your local campus or go to www.fafsa.ed.gov.

New Student Orientation

Accommodations are made upon request to meet specific needs during orientation. This includes placement testing. Call the ADA Counselor at the Ability Services Office in advance in order to make arrangements. Because the ultimate responsibility for selecting the proper courses and completing degree requirements lies with the student, all students should read and understand the information in the HCC Catalog and Time Schedule. In addition, the following

suggestions are made: Students with disabilities should begin planning their schedules well before registration. Students with visual impairments may need time to become oriented to a new building or to order taped textbooks. Deaf/Hard of Hearing Students are strongly encouraged to register in advance to guarantee interpreting or captioning services are arranged.

Classroom Accommodation Concerns

Students should speak with the instructor before or during the first week of class regarding any special needs. You must have an accommodation letter from the Ability Services Office at the college of attendance in order to receive reasonable accommodation. The letter verifies your disability and requests accommodations to meet your specific needs. If an instructor is unwilling to make a reasonable accommodation requested in your accommodation letter, contact the Ability Services office at the college of attendance for assistance as soon as possible.

Faculty is encouraged to modify, rather than waive, course or degree requirements. Requests for curriculum modifications should be brought to the attention of the Academic or Workforce Division Chair. We strongly do not encourage lowering academic standards for students with disabilities nor is it required.

Notetaking Assistance

Some students with disabilities will record lectures for reviewing later. Other students prefer a volunteer notetaker in the class to provide a copy of their notes in order to supplement the student's notes.

Notetakers will:

- Write down all relevant information including lecture notes, test and quiz dates, assignments, and important vocabulary.
- Attend all classes, be on time, and be prepared to take notes. (A notetaker who is unable to attend a class should inform the instructor.)
- Provide notes to the instructor for copying.

Students will:

- Write notes for themselves unless incapable of doing so.
- Use the notetaker's notes to fill in your own notes.
- Read their notes over to check for assignments and dates.
- Ask the Instructor about anything in the notes that is unclear.

Adaptive Technology

Ability Services provides adaptive equipment for use on campus. Equipment includes large print monitors, CCTV's, Comtek units, Jaws, and a variety of software packages. Limited training is provided by the Ability Services staff. For more information, contact Ability Services well in advance of the start of the semester.

Discrimination

The Office of Institutional Equity coordinates the college's compliance with Sections 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act and its amendments. The college does not discriminate against students with disabilities in recruitment, admission, or treatment after admission. In addition, the college makes reasonable accommodations to permit students with disabilities to fulfill academic requirements and provides auxiliary aids to ensure that they are not excluded from programs because of their disabilities. Students who believe that the college may not be meeting these responsibilities or who believe that they have been otherwise discriminated against based upon their disability may contact the ADA Counselor at the Ability Services Office.

IV. Services for Learning Disabilities (LD), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and Acquired Brain Injury (ABI)

The purpose of this section is to provide a description of the services available at Houston Community College and allow you to compare them to the services available at other campuses. All of the services described here are available for students with a LD, ADHD, or an ABI. However, eligibility for specific accommodations and/or services is always based on the strengths and weaknesses that are reported in the psycho-educational assessment or any other documentation that a student supplies to the Ability Services Office.

Taped Textbooks

We have services available through Recordings for the Blind and Dyslexic (RFB & D). The address to contact is:
Recordings for the Blind and Dyslexic (RFB & D) 20 Rozel Rd., Princeton, NJ 08540, (800) 221- 4792.

Equipment Loan

Ability Services loans out some equipment including handheld cassette recorders and Comtek units. To request equipment speak to your ADA Counselor.

V. Services with Visual Impairments

Students with a visual disability must plan their schedules well in advance of each term because support services such as textbooks on tape, special equipment or readers must be arranged before the term begins. Students should consult their instructors in advance about classroom accommodations, teaching techniques, and testing procedures.

Orientation and Mobility

Depending on the individual, it may be necessary for some students to receive orientation and mobility training. This is done through the Division of Blind Services or Lighthouse.

Division of Blind Services (DBS)

DBS is a state-federal program, which provides financial and other assistance to eligible blind or visually impaired students while they are in school. To be eligible for services, students must meet DBS requirements for certification as "legally blind."

Readers

Reader services will be available for Testing **ONLY**. Please contact your ADA counselor for further information. Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) and JAWS services are available.

VI. Services for Deaf and Hard of Hearing

We provide interpreting services and Computer-Aided Real time Captioning (CART). Contact the Supervisor of Interpreting Services at (713)-718-6333.

Assistive Listening Devices

Each semester Ability Services will lend FM amplification systems for eligible students to use in the classroom and other school related functions. If you plan to use a FM system on a long-term basis, it is suggested that you purchase your own FM system or ask your rehabilitation counselor to purchase one for you.

VII. Fire and Emergency Evacuations

The issue of safe evacuation in case of a fire or other emergency is an important concern on campus. The major problem is that during an emergency most elevators cease to operate for reasons related to smoke and electrical fires. Therefore, the best method for your evacuation in a particular situation becomes most important. You should consider the following guidelines when you are making an evacuation plan or are evacuating:

- If you have an attendant, the two of you should discuss emergency evacuation plans in advance.
- If you are unable to use the stairways independently, it may sometimes be advisable to remain near an elevator or major stairway to allow fire department or security personnel to locate you quickly.
- Keep as many closed doors as possible between you and the fire. Seal off the cracks with clothing.
- Call 911 to alert the fire department of your location.
- If you have a window to the outside, make sure the door is closed then open the window slightly and signal the fire fighters.
- Do not use elevators; as indicated above, they may be hazardous during fires. Only trained firefighters are qualified to judge the safety of using an elevator in a particular fire emergency.

These guidelines are offered as general suggestions and not an official plan of action. Your safety depends on your judgment and knowledge of general safety precautions.

VIII. Confidentiality

Ability Services professional staff is very sensitive to and respectful of both your rights to privacy and confidentiality. However, you may also want to remind your instructors of your right to confidentiality.