



FAS DISABILITY ACCESS OFFICE

Faculty Guide to Managing Academic Accommodations and Requests

Academic Year 2025–2026



TABLE OF CONTENTS

About this Guide	3
Accommodation Syllabus Statement	4
Privacy	5
Responding to Requests	6
Official Requests	6
Unofficial Requests	6
Decision Tree for Unofficial Requests	7
Implementing Common DAO Accommodations	8
Faculty Responsibilities	8
Audio Recording/Note-Taking	10
Test-Taking	10
Breaks During Class.....	13
ASL Interpreter/Speech to Text Captioning.....	13
Alternative Formats	14
Service Animals	15
Deadline and Attendance Adjustment.....	15
Alternative Participation	16
Use of a Cue Sheet/Memory Aid	17
Temporary Injuries/Illness.....	17
Communications Partner/Personal Care	18
Resources	19

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Faculty implement and facilitate academic accommodations determined by the Disability Access Office (DAO) and are critical partners in the accommodation process.

This guide covers how to:

- Manage academic accommodation requests for students in FAS courses.
- Implement common academic accommodations approved by DAO.

If you have any questions about the topics covered in this guide, please contact us. You can find the latest version of this guide and more resources for faculty at dao.fas.harvard.edu/faculty.

ABOUT THE DISABILITY ACCESS OFFICE (DAO)

DAO determines accommodations for students with disabilities and ensures legal compliance with non-discrimination for students with disabilities under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and The Americans with Disabilities Act (1990, and Amendments Act of 2008).

DAO works in collaboration with Harvard faculty, students, and staff to create equitable educational experiences through the promotion of universal design in learning, reasonable accommodations in inaccessible environments, and the reframing of disability as a valued aspect of the human experience.

Website: dao.fas.harvard.edu

Email: dao@fas.harvard.edu

Phone: (617) 496-8707

Address: 1350 Massachusetts Avenue, Suite 450, Cambridge, MA 02138

DAO is part of the FAS Office of Student Services (OSS), serving Harvard College, Harvard Griffin GSAS, and SEAS. OSS includes the following areas:

- FAS Disability Access Office
- FAS Registrar's Office
- Harvard College Housing Office
- Harvard College Office of Academic Integrity and Student Conduct
- Harvard College leaves of absence support

ACCOMMODATION SYLLABUS STATEMENT

We strongly encourage adding the following text to your syllabus. This will help students with disabilities feel welcome in your course and know how to request accommodations.

Harvard University values inclusive excellence and providing equal educational opportunities for all students. Our goal is to remove barriers for disabled students related to inaccessible elements of instruction or design in this course. If reasonable accommodations are necessary to provide access, please contact the Disability Access Office (DAO). Accommodations do not alter fundamental requirements of the course and are not retroactive. Students should request accommodations as early as possible, since they may take time to implement. Students should notify DAO at any time during the semester if adjustments to their communicated accommodation plan are needed.



This text is also available in the digital faculty guide at dao.fas.harvard.edu/faculty to copy and paste into your syllabus.

Help us improve this guide.

We've developed this resource to support you in creating an inclusive environment for all students. Your experiences and insights are essential for ensuring this resource truly meets your needs as instructors.

Please visit the URL below or scan the QR code to share your thoughts. Let us know what works well, what could be improved, and any suggestions. Your input will help us create a more effective tool for all of our instructors. Thank you!

<https://bit.ly/daofacultyguidefeedback>



FERPA vs. HIPAA in Accommodation Information

The confidentiality of students' accommodation-related information is protected under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), not the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). FERPA governs the privacy of educational records, including accommodation requests and approvals, whereas HIPAA pertains to certain medical records in clinical healthcare settings and generally does not apply to colleges or universities in this context.

How DAO Handles Accommodation Information

The DAO is not a confidential office. While we deeply respect our students' privacy, DAO staff and relevant faculty may share student accommodation information with Harvard personnel on a need-to-know basis in order to implement accommodations and support students appropriately. It is typically not necessary to share a student's disability or diagnosis in our communication with you.

Your Role as Faculty



Share information with Harvard employees involved in facilitating accommodations, including teaching assistants and teaching fellows.



Refer other parties to DAO if they are requesting student accommodation information.



Do not request medical documentation or diagnostic information from students.



Do not share accommodation information with anyone who does not have a role in implementing them.

RESPONDING TO REQUESTS

Official Requests

You will receive official accommodation requests from DAO via email.

After receiving approved accommodations from DAO, students must log in to the Accessible Information Management portal (AIM) and select eligible accommodations for each class. Once your student completes this process, you will receive an Accommodation Action Plan via email listing their accommodations.

Timing: Most Accommodation Action Plans are sent before or during the first few weeks of classes, but you can receive them any time throughout the semester. In accordance with ADA and Section 504 law, you cannot set a cut-off date for accommodation implementation. Students can request new accommodations or changes to existing accommodations, and accommodations are not retroactive.



After receiving your Accommodation Action Plan, complete the steps needed to implement the accommodation starting on page 8.

Unofficial Requests



Do not provide unofficial accommodations. DAO should determine and communicate all accommodations.

Unofficial accommodations, although often well intentioned, risk compromising academic integrity and/or prevent students from connecting with necessary supports. For equity reasons, all accommodations should be determined and communicated to you by the DAO.



Use the decision tree on the next page to redirect unofficial requests so that students can receive approved accommodations.

Decision Tree for Unofficial Requests

IS THE STUDENT REGISTERED WITH DAO?

If the request was not included in your Accommodation Action Plan, direct them to the appropriate office or person

YES

Direct the student to their DAO Accessibility Advisor

NO

Direct the student depending on their request and needs

REFER TO DAO

- Student disclosed significant mental or physical health condition or
- Student used accommodations in the past or
- Students identify disability as reason they struggle to complete assignments/ assessments

REFER TO OUR PARTNERS

Student's request is unrelated to a health condition or disability

HUHS

The student has a short-term illness such as a cold or flu

RESIDENT DEAN

Concern is unrelated to a health condition (e.g. personal issue)

REGISTRAR

The student needs an exam accommodation for a religious reason

Faculty Responsibilities

DAO recognizes that all courses have different learning objectives and formats. We rely on faculty to identify essential course requirements, and we will work with you and the student when navigating accommodations for your course.



Step 1: Review Accommodation Action Plan

- **Review all information on each student's Accommodation Action Plan.** Note that all plans are unique and some require additional steps.
- **If your student's approved accommodation does not seem aligned with your course requirement,** contact DAO before connecting with the student. We can provide further clarification and, if needed, identify a mutually acceptable solution.



Step 2: 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 on the next page.

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.



Step 3: Begin implementing approved accommodations.

- Your Accommodation Action Plan will specify which accommodations require a documented arrangement or coordination by you.
- The next few pages outline what is needed to implement common accommodations. This is not an exhaustive list of all possible DAO-approved accommodations. More information about accommodations is available at dao.fas.harvard.edu/services-overview/academic.
- If you receive a last-minute notification and have concerns about implementing the accommodation, we can help you navigate the request and determine if the request is reasonable.

Audio Recording/Note-Taking

Implementation responsibilities:

 Faculty	No further action is needed to implement this accommodation.
 DAO	We will coordinate and notify you if your student is using note-taking technology or a peer note-taker.

What faculty need to know:

- Students typically use DAO-approved note-taking apps that include audio recording and transcription. You may ask students to turn off recording apps/devices during sensitive class discussions if the content will not be assessed in the course, and if you also inform the class not to take written notes for that part of the class discussion.
- DAO handles the recruitment of peer note-takers.
- Students sign an educational-use agreement not to share, distribute, or post content that is recorded.

Test-Taking

Implementation responsibilities:

 Faculty	Submit an alternative testing agreement form in AIM to request proctoring assistance for term-time exams through the FAS Testing Center pilot. Instructions are located on page 11. Alternatively, teaching staff will proctor exams with all specified accommodations.
 Testing Center	Testing Center staff will proctor any term-time exams for faculty that complete the Alternative Testing Agreement.

What faculty need to know:

- **If you do not use the FAS Testing Center Pilot**, you will implement all testing accommodations for term-time exams in the classroom.
- **Final exams** will continue to be managed by the Exams Office in the FAS Registrar's Office and are not part of this pilot.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR USING THE TESTING CENTER

STEP 1: Instructor completes the FAS Alternative Testing Agreement and Exam Date Information

Click on the link located in a student's Accommodation Action Plan or log into the Accessible Information Management System (AIM) at: sierra.accessiblelearning.com/harvard/instructor.

Click on *Alternative Testing*.

- Alternative Testing Agreements should be submitted at the beginning of the semester, but no later than 5 days prior to the first exam.
- You only need to fill out one Alternative Testing Agreement for each course.
- **Exam Dates:** Fill in all information for your course's exams

STEP 2: Instructor uploads the exam(s)

- **Digital exams:** While completing the Alternative Testing Agreement, begin uploading exams in the section under exam dates. You may upload all exams at once or throughout the semester at least 3 business days before the exam.
- **Physical exams:** If you prefer to deliver physical copies of your exam, please email testingcenter@fas.harvard.edu to make an appointment. Exams should be dropped off at least 3 business days before the exam at the FAS Testing Center in the basement level of the Student Organization Center at Hilles (SOCH, 59 Shepard St) between 10:00am-4:00pm, Monday to Friday.

STEP 3: Student schedules their exam

Students decide if they wish to use their approved accommodations for testing. There also may be scheduling conflicts that affect their ability to take tests at the same time as the class. Therefore, students are also responsible for scheduling their exams at the FAS Testing Center, and must do so no less than 72 hours/3 business days before the test date. Students who do not schedule their exams within this time frame may be required to take the exam with the rest of the class and forgo using their accommodations.

Important: Every effort is made to ensure students take accommodated exams on the day of the main exam. However, we cannot guarantee that accommodated exams will always happen on the same day as the main exam, and we will work closely with faculty on these details.

Steps continued on next page.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR USING THE TESTING CENTER (CONTINUED)

STEP 4: Student takes exam at the FAS Testing Center

Students will arrive at the FAS Testing Center at the agreed upon date and time for their test. Proctors are on-site to monitor testing environment and assist with communication to faculty as needed.

STEP 5: Instructor picks up completed exams

The FAS Testing Center will email instructors when completed exams are ready for pick-up from the Student Organization Center at Hilles (59 Shepard Street), lower level. FAS Testing Center staff cannot deliver exams or send them electronically.



Visit the Registrar's Office website at registrar.fas.harvard.edu/testing-center-pilot to learn more about the FAS Testing Center Pilot.

Other test-taking information:

- Discuss with the student how short, in-class quizzes can be accommodated. You can give the student time before/after class to utilize accommodations.
- Do not offer to convert in-person tests to take-home tests unless the entire class has this option.
- Take home exams: If your exam is take-home that extends over numerous days, please consult with DAO.
- If you are proctoring your own exams, please contact the Assistive Technology Center at least 5 days in advance to request internet-disabled laptops, or you may allow students to use their own technology. The FAS Testing Center will have internet-disabled laptops on site.

Breaks During Class

Implementation responsibilities:

 Faculty	Discuss with the student how they can take breaks during class sessions with minimal disruptions.
 DAO	Once the accommodation is approved, we do not take further action to implement this accommodation.

What faculty need to know:

- Breaks should be non-disruptive and brief.
- Students are responsible for any content missed when exiting the room.
- Faculty may suggest seating areas in the classroom that create the least disruption.
- DAO is available to consult with you and the student if break coordination becomes disruptive.

American Sign Language (ASL) Interpreter or Speech to Text Captioning

Implementation responsibilities:

 Faculty	You may need to wear a wireless microphone to connect to remote captioning or interpreting services.
 DAO	DAO makes all arrangements for these services in advance and provides faculty and students with equipment to use.

What faculty need to know:

- It is important for all speakers in the class to use a microphone when possible. You may need to repeat any questions asked before answering if classroom microphones are not available to be passed around.
- The interpreter or captioner will relay everything spoken in class in signed or written form and treat information as confidential.
- Speak directly to the student, not to their interpreter or captioner. There is no need to change your speaking volume.

Alternative Formats

Implementation responsibilities:

 Faculty	Contact the Assistive Technology Center (ATC) at least 5 business days in advance to convert written materials into accessible formats (14 pt font, etc.).
 DAO	Once the accommodation is approved, we do not take further action to implement this accommodation.

What faculty need to know:

- Students may use their own laptop with technology that reads text aloud, converts to Braille, or enlarges the content.
- Vocalize words as you write them on the board and describe images.
- Additional information on working with students with visual impairment is available on the Faculty page of the DAO website at dao.fas.harvard.edu/faculty.
- Consult with the Assistive Technology Center (ATC) if there are concerns about timing, volume, or implementation of text conversion.

Materials/Slides Provided in Advance

Implementation responsibilities:

 Faculty	Provide digital copies of slides and written materials to students before the start of class.
 DAO	Once the accommodation is approved, we do not take further action to implement this accommodation.

What faculty need to know:

- Materials provided to students should be the same materials that all students have access to, such as Power Point slides.
- Personal lecture notes and preparation materials that are not shared with students are not part of this accommodation.

Service Animals

Implementation responsibilities:

 Faculty	No action is needed from the faculty.
 DAO	We will establish the need for service animals in classes.

What faculty need to know:

- Service animals are only dogs (or miniature horses) that are trained to perform specific tasks for a person with a disability and are not required to wear specific identification, a vest, or have certification.
- Service animals are trained to be non-disruptive and should not take away from the classroom experience. Please discuss any behavioral concerns with the DAO.
- Students who identify allergies to animals should be referred to DAO. Faculty and staff should work with their Faculty Affairs or Human Resources representatives.

Deadline and Attendance Adjustment (DAA)

Implementation responsibilities:

 Faculty	Course staff should document their DAA plan using the Flex Plan Module in AIM. If you do not submit a DAA plan, our default plan will be implemented. In-depth DAA guidelines and more information is available on the DAO website: dao.fas.harvard.edu/accommodations/deadline-attendance-adjustment-daa
---	---

What faculty need to know:

- This accommodation is intended to be used infrequently and only when there is a disability-related health event that prevents the student from attending class or completing work.

DAA (Continued)

- Consider additional flexibility: While courses that already include built-in flexibility benefit all students in managing unexpected life events, the DAA accommodation is designed to provide an extra measure of support—typically a limited number of additional absences or deadline extensions—for students whose disabilities may require it. Please consider what reasonable additional flexibility you can offer these students, beyond what is already available to the class as a whole.
- Grading, attendance, and extension policies are subject to the academic judgment of the faculty. In some situations, you may not believe that additional absences or extensions are appropriate due to the essential requirements of the course. In these cases, please contact DAO to discuss.

Alternate Participation

Implementation responsibilities:

✓ Faculty	Meet with the student in advance to discuss reasonable alternatives to class participation.
✓ DAO	DAO will reach out to you and the student to develop an individualized plan and document this in writing.

What faculty need to know:

- Alternate participation may include substituting individual work for group work, recording presentations in advance, writing reflections instead of participating in class discussions, or giving feedback in writing instead of speaking.
- This accommodation should not alter the essential requirements of the class.

Use of a Cue Sheet/Memory Aid

Implementation responsibilities:

 Faculty	You will need to approve the student's cue sheet/ memory aid in advance of the proctored assessment.
 DAO	DAO is available to consult with you about cue sheet content.

What faculty need to know:

- Cue sheets shouldn't contain core information being assessed, e.g. if you grade a student's ability to recall a formula rather than use it to answer a question, it is not appropriate to include it on the cue sheet.
- Cue sheets may contain drawings, symbols, or phrases that help with recall, but not word-for-word answers to test questions.
- All cue sheets must be reviewed and approved by faculty in advance, and students are required to submit their cue sheet at least five business days prior to the exam..

Temporary Injuries/Illness

Implementation responsibilities:

 Faculty	If your student has an injury or illness, implement the temporary accommodations in the same manner as standard accommodations.
 DAO	DAO will share accommodations related to an injury or illness with you.

What faculty need to know:

- DAO communicates temporary accommodations to faculty through the same email notification system as permanent accommodations.
- Students who have short-term, non-recurring illnesses such as the common cold or flu should be referred to HUHS and not to DAO.

DAO can assist students with accessible transportation if they have an injury that limits their mobility. Students must work with DAO to discuss options if they state that they cannot physically get to class.

Communication Partner/Personal Care Assistant

Implementation responsibilities:

 Faculty	No further action is needed
 DAO	We will make all arrangements related to this accommodation.

What faculty need to know:

- Personal Care Assistants can help unpack backpacks, set up equipment, and attend to physical/medical needs during class.
- Communication partners assist students who use alternative means of communication, such as letter boards, tablets, and apps. All communication is uniquely generated by the student.
- Both communication partners and personal care assistants are present only to perform these specific tasks, and they do not participate independently or give academic assistance to the student.

RESOURCES

Additional Disability Support at Harvard

Beyond DAO, there are many offices that provide accessibility-related resources:

Academic Resource Center (ARC)

academicresourcecenter.harvard.edu

The ARC works to empower students by providing resources and strategies to foster (among other things) more effective independent study. Students have the opportunity to meet with a full-time, Professional Academic coach to work on strategizing around academics, focusing on strengths and areas for development. The ARC hosts regular accountability groups, providing students with a time and place to hold themselves accountable, and Peer Tutoring. They also have a Learning Specialist on their staff who specializes in working with students who identify as having a mental health illness, learning disability, or neurodivergence.

Assistive Technology Center (ATC)

atc.fas.harvard.edu

ATC provides students with academic materials in accessible formats. DAO will work with the student, faculty, and ATC to review course requirements and establish a plan for collaboration when accessible formats are needed.

University Digital Accessibility Services (DAS)

accessibility.huit.harvard.edu

Toward meeting the University's commitment to accessibility, Harvard expects university information technology and university digital content to conform to applicable digital accessibility standards to the fullest extent possible. Digital Accessibility Services is a resource for ensuring that any digital materials you use meet these standards.

University Disability Resources (UDR)

accessibility.harvard.edu

UDR is the University's central resource on disability-related information, procedures, and services. In addition to overseeing the University's grievance policy and procedure, UDR offers community members resources, consultation on best practices, disability-centered events, and access to technology and equipment.



HARVARD
Faculty of Arts and Sciences
OFFICE OF STUDENT SERVICES

FAS Disability Access Office
dao@fas.harvard.edu
(617) 496-8707
dao.fas.harvard.edu