

Disability Services Office (DSO): Supporting Students with Disabilities at RIT

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Fall 2024 New Faculty Orientation

Our Mission

The DSO is dedicated to facilitating **equitable access to the full RIT experience** for students with disabilities. We value **disability as diversity** and work in collaboration with campus partners to foster a welcoming, diverse, and inclusive campus community. All enrolled RIT students with disabilities may register with the DSO and request accommodations.

Who does the DSO support?

Any enrolled RIT student who identifies as having a permanent or temporary disability is welcome to register with the DSO and request accommodations. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Lifelong or acquired disabilities
- Hidden disabilities (e.g. learning disabilities or mental health disabilities)
- Chronic illness
- Veterans with service-related disabilities
- Pregnancy-related disability
- Students of size
- Students with temporary disabilities (e.g. students with injuries or recovering from surgery)
- D/deaf and hard-of-hearing students (in partnership with NTID Access Services)

Please refer students to DSO anytime. Learn more about referring to DSO [here](#).

What is an Accommodation?

- Modification or adjustment to **remove an existing barrier** in the academic or co-curricular environment for a student with a disability
- Accommodations are a student's **civil right** per the ADA (as amended in 2008) and Section 504 and must be honored once approved
 - Ableism and inaccessibility have disparate impacts on students with disabilities. Accommodations **level the playing field**.
- Can be approved **at any time** while a student enrolled at RIT and **must be implemented once approved by the DSO and requested by the student** (faculty are notified whenever students request accommodations in their course)
- Involves **partnership** between faculty, student, and DSO when necessary (student conversations should be **private**)



Accommodations are NOT intended to:

- Reduce **academic rigor**
- Be **unreasonable**
 - Otherwise qualified
 - Undue burden
 - **Fundamental alteration**
 - Direct threat to the safety of self or others
- Be **retroactive**
- Be “**carte blanche**”
- Be offered as a **contingency**
- Mitigate **non-disability related** barriers

Example:

- Extended time on assignments and missed (new/accommodated) deadline
 - E-Forms and Student/Instructor agreements in MyDSO

What Students Want Faculty to Know...

- “I can’t leave my disability at the classroom door. It comes with me. And I am okay with that. What I hope for my fellow students and faculty members is that they can be okay with that too, and do their best to make class accessible for me. I got into RIT just like everyone else, on my own merits, and I want to be able to continue to learn and demonstrate my skills. **Sometimes, my environment poses barriers because of my disability**, and I am so appreciative when my RIT community can come together and help me access the RIT experience.”
- “Accommodations are what allow me to get into the classroom. Once I am able to access the materials and class, that is where my accommodations end. **They do not provide an “edge” or “advantage,” over other students, they simply allow me to get to access the class experience so I can learn and show you what I know**, just like all my peers without accommodations.”
- “[My accommodations] have provided me **ample opportunity to show my full capacities** unhindered by [my specific disability].”
- “This is not about making the work easier. It is about giving me a chance to show what I can really do.”
- “I’ve had many professors not believe me about my own health. When a student is telling you that they are ill or otherwise impaired and can’t make it to class, believe me, they’d much rather be in class if they could. **My disability is fluid**. Just because I “looked fine and healthy” to a professor one day, it does not mean that I am lying when I have a migraine or high levels of pain the following day.”

What's the Process? (Find more info [here](#))

1. Student applies for accommodations with DSO
2. Student submits documentation of disability to DSO
3. Student attends intake meeting with DSO
4. Student requests academic accommodations for specific courses in MyDSO
5. DSO sends out faculty notification letter (**typically within 1 business day of student request**)
6. Faculty formally acknowledge accommodation notification letter
7. Student and faculty communicate about access needs in specific courses (**it is okay to reach to to a student who has not reached out to you!**)
8. Faculty implement accommodations (DSO is always here to help!)
9. **Ally in MyCourses**

MyDSO Faculty Portal

- MyDSO contains both Student and Faculty Portals
 - The MyDSO Faculty Portal allows instructors to:
 - **Acknowledge** Faculty Accommodation Notification Letters (this is a requirement – DSO will follow up when incomplete)
 - **Access** your students' accommodation information (also emailed, but available centrally in Portal)
 - NOTE: Students request the specific accommodations they wish to use in each of their individual courses – this is what is reflected in your faculty accommodation notification
 - **Upload tests** for students using our Test Center
 - Test uploads and returns are remain fully electronic
 - Complete Alternative Testing Agreement

What is the faculty role in facilitating accommodations?

- Acknowledge student letters as they come in.
- Maintain confidentiality.
- Work with students to ensure all their accommodations are being met in your course.
- Complete agreements in the MyDSO faculty portal

Alternative Testing

- By far, the accommodation you will see most frequently
- DSO has a Test Center that can be utilized by students for their exams
- If a student is taking an exam with us, we need an Alternative Testing Agreement from the instructor
- A copy of the exam must be uploaded by 12pm one business day before the exam
- The exam file will be returned to faculty via the MyDSO faculty portal
- Students are not required to take exams in the Test Center, if they can be accommodated in class that is generally preferred

Flex Plan agreements

- Available for two accommodations
 - Flexibility in Class Attendance
 - Assignment Due Date Extensions
- Plans allow instructors to determine what is reasonable in their classes.
- Plans can be copied to every eligible student in the course.

Concerns About Specific Accommodations in Courses

- Accommodations can function differently in various contexts, and may be reasonable in some settings and not others. **DSO is here to problem solve in these situations!**
 - We warmly welcome faculty outreach whenever there are questions or concerns about accommodations.
- DSO staff hold ultimate responsibility to determine accommodation reasonableness.
 - Please discuss accommodation feasibility issues directly with DSO **before** engaging your student. Approved accommodations should not be adjusted or denied by faculty without DSO involvement (and related documentation).

RIT

Questions?

Please email anytime: cbldso@rit.edu