



Gwynedd-Mercy College

**DISABILITY SUPPORT SERVICES
MANUAL**

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Gwynedd-Mercy College Mission Statement

Gwynedd-Mercy College is a Catholic higher-education institution founded and sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy. Its mission is to create a learning community rooted in Gospel values and rich in the liberal arts.

In an atmosphere of inquiry and dialogue, the institution seeks to combine education for professional competency with the Mercy tradition of service to society.

Introduction

Disability Support Services (DSS) serves to coordinate the needs of students with documented disabilities with faculty, staff and administration to ensure equal educational access. The purpose of this manual is to provide information and guidelines about DSS policies, procedures and practices for students, faculty, staff and administration at Gwynedd-Mercy College.

Disability Support Services (DSS) are available through the Counseling Services office. At the time of a student's acceptance to Gwynedd-Mercy College, or anytime thereafter, a request can be made for accommodations for learning, psychological, and physical disabilities. DSS works collaboratively with the student, faculty, and other college resources to ensure that accommodations are provided for students with a qualified disability. Gwynedd-Mercy College is committed to collaborating with students, staff, and faculty to find reasonable accommodations to meet the specific needs of the student, which may, at times, include referrals to outside sources. Within the bounds of its resources, Gwynedd-Mercy College provides reasonable accommodations to meet those challenges and needs so that all students accepted into a program of study can have equal opportunity to reach their academic and personal goals.

Accommodations are assessed on a case-by-case basis and are individualized based on the students' unique needs. Examples of common accommodations include, but are not limited to, extended testing time, testing in a distraction reduced environment, note takers, and permission to record lectures.

Questions about this manual and its contents can be made to the Disability Support Services Coordinator (DSS Coordinator) in Counseling Services located on the Second Floor of the Griffin Complex or by phone at 215-646-7300 ext. 427.

Disability Law

Gwynedd-Mercy College is committed to providing equal educational opportunity for persons with disabilities in accordance with the Nondiscrimination Policy of the College in addition to compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and with Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and the American's with Disabilities Amendment Act (ADAA) of 2008. In general, these laws protect individuals with disabilities from discrimination, allow access to all programs and services, and give some direction as to whom these laws apply and under what conditions. Together, they define a qualified person as one... "who meets the academic and technical standards requisite to admission or participation in the education program or activity." Further, they stipulate that "[a] qualified (disabled) person may not be denied admission or recruitment on the basis of a disability." The laws also guide students in their responsibilities such as the responsibility to self-identify, provide documentation, and request reasonable accommodations.

Definition of Disability

A person with a disability includes... "any person (1) who has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities [including walking seeing hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, working caring for oneself, and performing manual tasks], (2) has a record of such an impairment, or (3) is regarded as having such an impairment."

The ADAA further expanded the definition of major life activities to include activities such as concentrating, sleeping, thinking, eating, and includes major bodily functions such as neurological, digestive, endocrine, and reproductive functions. A substantial limitation means that the person experiences a significant or total limitation on the activity as compared to other individuals engaged in the same activity. Only one major life activity needs to be substantially limiting, and the law also gives consideration to those conditions that are episodic. Episodic conditions or those in remission are considered disabilities if they would substantially limit a major life activity when active.

Reasonable Accommodations

Qualified students with disabilities are entitled to receive approved modifications of programs, appropriate academic adjustments, or auxiliary aids that enable them to participate in and benefit from all educational programs or activities. Gwynedd-Mercy College is required to provide reasonable accommodations for the known physical or mental limitations of a student with a disability so that they may participate in the programs and services (educational and otherwise) that are available at Gwynedd-Mercy College. Accommodations are considered unreasonable if they fundamentally alter the nature of the course or program of study. Accommodations are intended to guarantee access to programs and services but are not intended to guarantee success.

Policies and Procedures

At the time of a student's acceptance to Gwynedd-Mercy College, or anytime thereafter, a request can be made for accommodations for learning, psychological and physical disabilities. It is important for students to allow sufficient time for administrative processing of requests. Within the bounds of its resources, Gwynedd-Mercy College intends to provide reasonable accommodations to qualified students with disabilities to provide an equal opportunity and access to educational programs.

Eligibility

Each student requesting accommodations is assessed on a case by case basis. Accommodations are determined by an interactive and collaborative process between the student, the Disability Support Services Coordinator (DSSC), and other relevant experts. The student's individual needs, requested accommodations, documentation, disability, strengths, functional limitations, past supports used, recommended accommodations stated in and supported by the documentation, and available options and college resources are considered in during the application process. Students must complete this process before the College can make any accommodation. Gwynedd-Mercy College will collaborate with students to find reasonable accommodations to meet the specific needs of the student, which may, at times, include referrals to outside sources. Students must meet with the DSSC each semester and provide a copy of their course schedule which includes the course number and title, and the instructor's name.

For students determined to have a qualified disability, Gwynedd-Mercy College provides accommodations to ensure that all students have an equal opportunity to participate in all Gwynedd-Mercy programs, services, and activities. The purpose of an accommodation is not to ensure success, but to provide access.

1. Determination of eligibility and accommodations will be based on the following:
 - the documentation provided by the student
 - the completion of the Disability Support Services Accommodation Application
 - consultation with relevant parties including , but not limited to: student, appropriate experts, qualified professionals, and parents
 - the academic course, program, and requirements in question

2. Accommodations will not be provided retroactively.

Students who are approved to receive accommodations through Disability Support Services are eligible to receive those accommodations from the time that they are approved. To assure the use of accommodations, students are asked to give faculty reasonable notification of such eligibility, defined as a minimum of one week prior to the time of intended use of the accommodation. If faculty is notified in less time, and due to the many factors that may be involved, some accommodations may be delayed. However, involved parties will make a good faith effort to provide the accommodation in a timely manner. Course work completed before a student discloses a documented disability will not be reexamined even if the student can establish that they had a disability at the time of the course in question.

3. All accommodation requests may not be granted.

Gwynedd-Mercy College will provide reasonable and appropriate accommodations based upon the review of the factors described in the above section of eligibility. Thus a student may not necessarily be provided with all the accommodations recommended in their documentation. Some reasons why an accommodation may not be approved include:

- Providing the accommodation would fundamentally alter the program, course or activity.
- The accommodation being requested is not supported by the documentation, or is unreasonable.
- Providing the accommodation would pose a direct threat to the student or others.
- Providing the accommodation would constitute an undue administrative or financial burden pursuant to criteria established under the ADA and/or Section 504.

4. Students must supply the eligibility requirements.

It is the responsibility of the student requesting the accommodations and services to document the disability. As such, the cost of the evaluations required pursuant to this Manual is to be borne by the student.

5. The Disability Support Services Coordinator will only share your actual documentation with those professional staff assisting in evaluating your accommodation requests.

General Procedures

A student who self-identifies as having a disability and requests accommodations is responsible for submitting appropriate documentation and following the procedures as listed below. No accommodation can be made by the College without completing this process. Through an interactive process, the College will make every effort to collaborate with students in finding reasonable accommodations to meet specific needs, which may include referrals to community based resources.

Application Procedures for accommodation requests

1) Student will fully complete and submit to the Disability Support Services Coordinator:

- Disability Support Services Accommodation Application
- Supporting Documentation for identified disability
- Course schedule for current semester (if available)

2) Student will meet with the Disability Support Services Coordinator (minimum of 1-2 meetings or interviews):

- Review application, supporting documentation and accommodation request(s)
- Review College Disability Policy including Grievance Policy and student responsibilities

- Review Letters of Accommodation
 - Receive information regarding campus resources
 - Receive information regarding off-campus resources, as needed
- 3) Student will meet with Disability Support Services Coordinator every subsequent enrolled semester:
- Provide course schedule for enrolled semester
 - Review accommodation needs
 - Receive Letters of Accommodation

Documentation Requirements for Students

Each request is reviewed on a case-by-case basis. **All** documentation should be reflective of the current, functional impact of the condition or impairment. Testing and evaluations should have been completed within the past three years. Updated documentation may be requested in some circumstances where documentation is outdated or when ongoing treatment is being provided. Interviews with the student and other involved persons are viewed as an important part of the process and can provide valuable information to augment the documentation.

Documentation for Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, Physical, Neurological or Psychological disabilities require:

- Health Care Professional Form found in the Disability Application OR an original letter from the evaluating professional that includes the following areas: a clearly stated, specific diagnosis; a description of the symptoms; a description of the current functional limitations of the condition; an explanation of the impact of the condition on the academic and/or housing environment; and recommendations of appropriate accommodations.
- A written evaluation by a psychiatrist, neurologist, licensed psychologist, or other qualified professional.

Documentation for Learning Disability:

- Comprehensive Psycho-educational Evaluation Report by a school district, neurologist, licensed psychologist, or other qualified professional; the report should include results of psycho-educational testing.
- An IEP, Summary of Performance, or 504 plan will be accepted as supplemental information only and not the primary supporting document.

The AHEAD Best Practices: Disability Documentation in Higher Education was used in developing these guidelines. For further reference, please visit <http://www.ahead.org/resources/best-practices-resources>

Disability-Related Housing Accommodation Policy and Procedure

- **Please note:** This policy and procedure is NOT a housing application but a request for disability-related housing accommodations only. Applicants must also comply with

Resident Life housing applications, guidelines, forms, and deadlines to apply for on-campus housing.

Gwynedd-Mercy College is committed to providing accessibility to all residence Halls for students with registered disabilities. To register as a student with a disability, a student must complete the Gwynedd-Mercy College Disability Application which includes documentation from a health care professional. Students are encouraged to submit this application as soon as an acceptance letter from the Admissions Office is received. The documentation guidelines can be found on the Disability Support web page: <http://www.gmc.edu/students/disabilitysupport/>. In addition, further information and recommendations from a professional are welcome and will be considered during the review process.

All documentation is kept confidential in accordance with guidelines set forth by FERPA. Requests for disability-related housing accommodations are reviewed by the Disability Support Service Coordinator and the Director of the Health and Wellness Center. Each request is reviewed and determined on a case by case basis. Determinations are based on the documentation and information received. Complete applications should be submitted by the identified deadline date. An application that is incomplete or received after the deadline may result in a housing assignment that does not meet the applicant's need.

Factors given consideration for special housing requests:

1. Is the impact of the condition life threatening if the request is not met?
2. Is the request an integral component of a treatment plan prescribed by a medical professional for the condition in question?
3. Is space available to meet the student's need?
4. Can space be adapted without creating a safety hazard?
5. Are there other effective means that would achieve similar benefits as the requested accommodation?
6. How does meeting the documented need impact housing commitments for other students?
7. Is the cost of meeting the need prohibitive?
8. Was the request made by the deadline?

- Please note: Private room accommodations are rare. We make every attempt to find reasonable accommodations for those conditions that are covered under the ADA.

Once a determination is made, written notification will be sent to the applicant. This notification should be reviewed and signed by the applicant and then returned to the Disability Support Services Coordinator. Students approved for housing accommodations must meet with the Disability Support Services Coordinator annually to renew their request. All questions regarding this application process or accommodations should be directed to the Disability Support Services Coordinator.

Complete applications should be mailed to the DSSC before **May 1**.

A complete application includes:

1. Disability Support Services Accommodation Application

2. Gwynedd-Mercy College Health Care Professional Form
 - completed by your physician or other qualified professional

Forms and documentation guidelines can be found on the Disability Support web page: <http://www.gmc.edu/students/disabilitysupport/>. All questions regarding this application process or disability-related accommodations should be directed to the Disability Support Services Coordinator, Dan Jordan, at 215.646.7300 x427 or jordan.d@gmc.edu.

Notification of Confidentiality

Disability Support Services is committed to ensuring that all information and communication pertaining to a student's disability is maintained as confidential as required or permitted by law. The following guidelines about the treatment of such information have been adopted by Disability Support Services and will be shared with students. These guidelines incorporate relevant state and federal regulations.

1. This information is protected by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). As such, all records received and kept by the Disability Support Services Coordinator are considered educational records. All documentation is kept in secure files with access limited to the Disability Support Services Coordinator, the Director of Counseling Services to whom the Coordinator reports, and the Vice President of Enrollment and Student Services.
2. No one will have immediate access to student Disability Support Services files except authorized staff. Any information regarding a disability is considered confidential and will be shared only with others within Gwynedd Mercy College who have a legitimate educational interest.
3. Sensitive information in student disability files will not be released except in accordance with federal and state laws.
4. A student's file may be released pursuant to a court order or subpoena.
5. The student's disability file is separate from the student's educational record. If a student wishes to have information about his/her disability shared with others outside the institution, the student must provide written authorization to the Disability Support Services Coordinator to release the information. Before giving such authorization, the student should understand the purpose of the release and to whom the information is being released.
6. The student should understand that there may be occasions when the Disability Support Services Coordinator will share information regarding a student's disability at his/her discretion if circumstances necessitate the sharing of information and the Disability Support Services Coordinator has determined that there is an appropriate, legitimate, educational need to know.
7. A student has the right to review his/her own Disability Support Services file with reasonable notification.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Role and Responsibility of the College

Gwynedd-Mercy College has a responsibility to identify and maintain the academic and technical standards that are fundamental in providing quality academic programs while ensuring access to students with disabilities. In meeting these obligations, the College:

- Has the responsibility to inform its applicants and students about the availability and range of accommodations.
- Has the responsibility to ensure that all of its programs (not necessarily all physical facilities) are accessible.
- Has the responsibility to make reasonable adjustments in the delivery, instructional method and evaluation system for a course to accommodate the specific manifestation of the disability.
- Has the right to identify and establish the abilities, skills, and knowledge necessary for successful entrance into its programs and to evaluate applicants on that basis.
- Has the right to identify and establish the abilities, skills, and knowledge that are fundamental to academic programs/courses and to evaluate each student's performance on that basis.
- Has the right to request and review documentation in support of accommodation requests. Based on this review by appropriately designated individuals, the College has the right to refuse an unsupported or unreasonable request.
- Has the right to refuse an accommodation for the following reasons: undue hardship as determined by designated College officials (e.g. a major structural renovation), the request is unsupported by the documentation, or the request is unreasonable.

The College has a **Disabilities Awareness Committee** that meets two to three times per year. The Committee works to identify ways to address barriers to accessibility in addition to making recommendations to improve the campus environment for the entire College community.

The Role of Disability Support Services

Disability Support Services is devoted to providing academic support, accommodations, advocacy, and referrals for students with disabilities. Disability Support Services is housed within Counseling Services and the Coordinator of Disability Support Services is also a Counselor. Disability Support Services intends to:

- Acquire documentation of a disability, evaluate students' eligibility for accommodations, and assess the reasonableness of the accommodation requested.
- Request additional testing/documentation if the information provided is inadequate or outdated.
- Engage in an interactive process with students to identify appropriate and reasonable accommodations.

- Provide Letters of Accommodation to students.
- Assist instructors with information regarding the implementation of specific accommodations.
- Assist in resolving student issues, complaints, and/or grievances.
- Advocate for the rights of students with disabilities.
- Educate the college community regarding disability issues and services.
- Act as a referral source for resources on and off the campus.
- Assist students with self-advocacy within the academic process.
- Support students' efforts to reach their educational goals.
- Support instructors, advisors, and staff in developing inclusive and accessible programs and content.
- Serve as a member on the college's Disability Awareness Committee.

The Role and Responsibilities of Staff and Faculty

- To create an open and inclusive atmosphere in your classroom for students with disabilities. For example, placing a disabilities statement on your syllabus.
- To uphold the confidentiality of students' disability-related issues and discuss student's disability issues privately.
- To ask how the disability impacts on student learning.
- To discuss the accommodations being requested.
- To be familiar with the student's responsibilities.
- To hold students with disabilities to the same academic and behavioral standards as all students.
- To ensure that the proposed accommodation does not substantially alter curricular standards.
- To provide the accommodation(s) listed on the Letter of Accommodation.
- To contact the DSS Coordinator if there are questions about the appropriateness of a required accommodation.
- To continue to provide the accommodation until a resolution has been determined.
- To not implement accommodations without an accommodation letter from the DSS Coordinator.
- To assist the student in contacting the DSS Coordinator when a student requests an accommodation without a Letter of Accommodation.

Due to the difficulty some students may have with self-identifying as having a disability, it is recommended to include a statement in all syllabi regarding the willingness to accommodate students with disabilities:

If you have a documented disability that will impact your work in this class, please contact me to discuss your needs. Additionally, you will need to register with Disability Support Services Office located in the counseling center in the Griffin Complex; call 215-646-7300 x427, or visit the Disability Support web page at www.gmc.edu/students/disabilitysupport/.

The Role and Responsibilities of Students with Disabilities

Qualified students with disabilities have the right to an equal opportunity to participate in programs offered at Gwynedd-Mercy College. Students who exercise these rights also undertake the responsibility to initiate and participate in the accommodation process. Recognizing this, students:

- Have a responsibility to self-identify as needing accommodations. Please be aware that the amount of time for administrative processing may vary depending on the type of accommodation.
- Have a responsibility to document their disability and the functional impact.
- Have a responsibility to actively participate in the accommodation process.
- Have a responsibility to explain how the disability affects their learning.
- Have a responsibility to pick up Letters of Accommodation and give these letters to each course instructor where accommodations are to be used.
- Have a responsibility to read and be familiar with the contents of the Disability Support Services Manual.
- Have the responsibility to inform their instructors about the use of accommodations in the course. The student should discuss the accommodation(s) to be used and how it compensates in the classroom.
- Have a responsibility to inform their instructors of the use of accommodations in a timely manner. Requests that do not give a reasonable time frame may not be able to be arranged.
- Have the responsibility to turn in the Letter of Accommodation to the Assistant Director of the Academic Resource Center if using the ARC for testing accommodations.
- Have the responsibility to follow the guidelines given for testing at the ARC. However, there may be circumstances that affect the timeliness of the request. In those circumstances, staff will make a good faith effort to accommodate a student's request for test accommodations. Multiple factors such as scheduling, space, the nature of the accommodation etc. may affect the ability to fulfill the request.
- Have the same obligation as any student to meet and maintain the institution's academic standards.
- Have the responsibility to meet with the Disability Support Services Coordinator each semester to request and review accommodations.

Establishing Accommodations

Once accommodations are approved and the student has picked up their Letters of Accommodation, the student should promptly meet with the faculty members who teach their course(s) or the staff member who will be overseeing the implementation of the accommodation. With the letter of accommodation prepared by the DSS Coordinator, students should then discuss the accommodations and how they may be used. Students are not advised to discuss accommodations with faculty prior to completing the application process with the DSS Coordinator. However, any faculty or staff member may be able to direct you to the DSS Coordinator to begin this process.

Students have the responsibility to play an active role in implementing their accommodations. Knowing your responsibilities is only one part of an ongoing process. To ensure that your accommodations are used in an effective manner, it is advised that each student be as proactive as possible when using your accommodations and give advanced notice to faculty and staff. Gwynedd-Mercy College defines advanced notice as a week's notice prior to the use of accommodations as some accommodations may take time to coordinate. Students should be aware that if less time is given, a good faith effort will be made to accommodate, however, there may be factors that impede the fulfillment of the request.

When meeting with a faculty or staff member, a student should:

- Provide the instructor with the Letter of Accommodation from the DSS Coordinator.
- Discuss with the faculty or staff member details with each accommodation. How the accommodations be provided? Who will provide it? Which ones are to be used or not used?
- Be informed about your disability and the ways that your disability impacts your functioning (academic, daily living). It is advised to make your needs known, describe functional limitations, and how accommodations help. As a student, you have the right to privacy and thus do not have to disclose what your specific disability is.
- Be on time for a scheduled appointment.
- Be flexible. There is often more than one right way to provide an accommodation. If you cannot immediately identify a solution, participate in problem solving with the faculty or staff member with an open mind.
- If a faculty or staff member is unwilling to provide an accommodation which is specified in the Letter of Accommodation, you should not argue with the faculty or staff member, but should contact the DSS Coordinator for assistance.
- Be patient. The faculty and staff member you are dealing with may not have experience with working with disabilities or your particular disability.
- Be calm and courteous. Treat faculty and staff with respect. If you are unable to make arrangements for an accommodation, the next step is to contact the DSS Coordinator to discuss the issue.
- Request only those accommodations that are listed in the Letter of Accommodation.

When Meeting with a student, faculty or staff should:

- Implement accommodations only after they have received the Letter of Accommodation from the student.
- To meet as quickly as possible with students who provide a Letter of accommodation from the DSS Coordinator. Students should initiate this meeting, but faculty can take the initiative when students are reluctant to self-advocate, for example, when turning in a letter without meeting with you.
- Treat the information as confidential. Information about a student's disability or accommodations should not be disclosed without the student's permission.
- Ensure the discussion is held in a confidential manner. It may be helpful to have these discussions during office hours. Discussions in hallways or in the classroom after class should be avoided.

- Be aware that not all students use every accommodation in every class.
- Do not ask the student to identify the specific disability.
- Discuss how the disability impacts on learning and classroom performance.
- Read the Letter of Accommodation carefully. Some accommodations are specific. For example, ‘all tests should be in 16 font.’
- Use caution to avoid inadvertently identifying a student with a disability to classmates or other faculty. Violation of confidentiality can present a legal risk to faculty and the institution.
- Hold students with disabilities to the same academic and behavioral standards as all students.
- Ensure that the proposed accommodation does not substantially alter curricular standards.
- Contact the DSS Coordinator if there are questions about the appropriateness of a required accommodation.
- Continue to provide the accommodation until a resolution has been determined.
- When a student requests an accommodation without an Letter of Accommodation, assist the student in contacting the DSS Coordinator.
- Contact the DSS Coordinator as soon as possible if problems or questions arise.

Service Animals

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Amendment Act and applicable Commonwealth of Pennsylvania laws, and Montgomery County Codes, dogs that provide a trained service to students with certain disabilities are permitted on the Gwynedd-Mercy College campus in all areas open to the public.

All students attending Gwynedd-Mercy College who utilize a Service Dog are encouraged to meet with the Disability Support Services Coordinator to request and address the need for accommodations.

Service animals must be under the owners control at all times. When on campus, service animals must be on a leash, harness, or other type of control device unless the owner is prevented from this due to the nature of the disability.

The service animal is expected to display reasonable behavior and not be disruptive. If disruptive behavior occurs, owners are expected to utilize appropriate techniques to deal with the behavior. Students using a service animal must also be aware of the Student Code of Conduct and Resident Life policies applicable to student behavior and conduct as these may also apply. Disruptive behavior can be grounds for removal of the service animal from campus.

General Guidelines for Service Animals

In order to make an informed decision about the request, the following factors will be evaluated:

1. Verification that the student has a disability and the pertinent manifestations of the condition.

2. Evidence of the animal's specific training and function, i.e., what "work or tasks the animal has been trained to perform."
3. Safety considerations.
4. Relationship between the animal's service or task and accommodations needed to provide equal access.
5. Reasonableness of the request and associated accommodation(s).
6. History of the student's therapeutic use and benefit of the Service Animal.
7. Documentation of continued need.

Requirements:

1. Service animals must be licensed in accordance with county and state laws.
2. Service animals must be house broken prior to coming onto campus and /or staying in Residence Halls.
3. All shots and vaccinations must be kept current. Rabies vaccination tags must be displayed at all times.
4. Service animals must be under the owners control at all times. When on campus, service animals must be on a leash, harness, or other type of control device unless the owner is prevented from this due to the nature of the disability.
5. The service animal is expected to display reasonable behavior and not be disruptive. If disruptive behavior occurs, owners are expected to utilize appropriate techniques to deal with the behavior. Students using a service animal must also be aware of the Student Code of Conduct and Resident Life policies applicable to student behavior and conduct as these may also apply. Disruptive behavior can be grounds for removal of the service animal from campus.
6. Service animals are expected to be in good health. Owners should take steps to address any health issues that occur in a reasonable time frame.
7. Owners are expected to maintain their animal's hygiene. Flea/tick treatments are essential and preventative methods should be given on a routine basis.

Service Animals within Residence Halls

Students with Service Animals living in Residence Halls or applying to live in a Residence Hall must inform Resident Life as soon as possible prior to attending Gwynedd-Mercy College in order to give Residence Life adequate time to address any issues or concerns that may arise.

Grievance Policy and Procedure

Grievances falling under the scope of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and the ADA Amendment Act of 2008 should be made according to the following procedure. This procedure is applicable only to students who have previously registered with the Office of Disability Support Services, regardless of his/her experience in the classroom to date. A student who has a grievance/concern regarding his/her

disability status, accommodations/modifications or lack thereof, the “reasonableness” presented by the College, or any decisions based on their presentation by faculty, staff or a department, will first contact the Disability Support Services Coordinator, who may be able to assist in the informal resolution of the issue, and/or serve as a liaison to the faculty/staff member or department. In instances which directly involve the Disability Support Services Coordinator as an integral party to the grievance/concern, the student will contact the Director of Counseling Services for attempts at informal mediation/negotiation. To increase the likelihood of successful resolution, such processes must be initiated at the time of conflict. If the student is not satisfied with the outcome of this process, he/she may proceed to a Formal Complaint.

Formal Complaint

A student may choose this option if attempts at prior resolution have been unsuccessful. A signed, written summary of events must be submitted to the Director of Counseling Services within 30 days of the initiation of the grievance process. The summary should include the following:

1. the specifics of the concern including any applicable sections of the above laws
2. the steps already taken by the student to resolve the issue
3. the outcomes of those steps
4. the requested resolution to the concern

The Director of Counseling Services will, as expeditiously as possible, present the complaint to a committee comprised of representatives from Health and Wellness Services, Counseling, the academic program the student is pursuing or other faculty/staff on campus with relevant expertise, Academic Resource Center, and Institutional Technology, for a full investigation. The Director of Counseling Services may also include or consult with an external professional with expertise in disability support services and the presenting concern. Confidentiality will be maintained for everyone involved, in so far as possible. Only those persons who have a “need to know” within the investigation and resolution of complaints are entitled to information regarding a complaint. The Director of Counseling Services may meet with the Disability Support Services Coordinator for briefing on information relevant to the case. This communication may occur through a verbal account and/or through review of material documentation previously submitted to the Disability Support Services Coordinator, which shall then be permissible in the investigation process. A written report regarding findings will be provided by the committee to the complainant and any involved parties, if action is required on their part. The Director of Counseling Services may wish to meet with the complainant to discuss alternate ways of meeting the student’s concern determined by the committee, if the requested resolution is not deemed appropriate and/or necessary.

If the student remains unsatisfied with the outcome, he/she may appeal to the Vice President of Enrollment and Student Services with an updated version of the Summary of Events specifying the current area of discontent, for review.

If the student remains unsatisfied with the outcome, he/she may pursue other federal or state remedies. The above process should not be considered a pre-requisite to such external remedies. Students may opt to contact the Office of Civil Rights at www.hhs.gov/ocr/.

FAQ's

What does “a good faith effort” mean?

An accepted definition of “good faith effort” would be a sincere and honest intention to make reasonable efforts to accommodate regardless of the outcome of the action.

The student gave me a Letter of Accommodation but did not discuss the accommodations with me. Does this mean the student will use all of the accommodations listed?

The DSS Coordinator instructs each student to discuss the accommodations with their staff/faculty because it is not enough just to hand in the Letter of Accommodation. Not all students will use all approved accommodations in every class and there is no way for you to know which accommodation the student intends to use without this discussion. Instructors are asked to make an announcement during the first week of classes inviting students with accommodation needs to meet them in their offices to discuss these needs privately. You could also mention privately, such as an email, to the student to meet and discuss the accommodations because you need clarification. Make note of this offer and then it is up to the student to follow through.

The student is requesting extra time for tests and I have not received a Letter of Accommodation. I have no problem giving any student extended time. Should I insist the student see the DSS Coordinator?

No, if you give all students extended time, then the student should not be required to do something extra like contacting the DSS Coordinator. If you do not give all students extended time, the student with a disability is then asking for an accommodation and you, as the instructor, have the right to require that the student go to the DSS Coordinator and get a Letter of Accommodation. By following this procedure, you are assuring that all accommodations are appropriate and consistent throughout the campus.

Resources

For more information regarding services for students with disabilities, please contact Disability Support Services in the Counseling Services at Gwynedd-Mercy College or one of the resources listed below:

Campus Resources

Any questions regarding this manual can be directed to Dan Jordan, Disability Support Services Coordinator, at 215-646-7300 x427 or Jordan.d@gmc.edu.

Academic Resource Center

2nd floor of the library

Off campus- 215-646-7300, ext. 449 On campus- ext. 449

Campus Ministry

Visitation House

Off campus- 215-641-5590

On campus- ext. 590

Computer Labs

Fall/Spring Hours M-Th 8AM-10:30PM, Fri 8AM-4PM

Summer Hours M-Th 8AM-6PM, Fri 8AM-4PM

Locations: Keiss Hall Room 102, 103, 202, 203; Fatima Hall Room 3; St. Bernards Rooms 14 and 16; and three other Labs for CLL locations

Counseling Services2nd floor of the Griffin Complex

Off campus- 215-641-5571 or 215-646-7300, ext. 427

On campus- ext. 571 and ext. 427

Disability Support Services2nd floor of the Griffin Complex

215-646-7300, ext. 427

www.gmc.edu/students/disabilitysupport**Lourdes Library**

Hours M-Th 8:30AM-9PM, Fri 8:30-4PM

Food Services

Waldron Center

Off campus- 215-646-7300, ext. 243 On campus- ext. 243

Health and Wellness Center

Loyola Hall

Off campus- 215-646-7300, ext. 486 On campus- ext. 486

Public Safety

Saint Brigid's Hall

Off campus- 215-641-5522

On campus- ext. 522 or ext. 111 for emergency

Residence Life

Loyola Hall

Off campus- 215-646-7300, ext. 298 On campus- ext. 298

On-line Resourceswww.hhs.gov/ocr/ - Office of Civil Rightswww.bookshare.org – An online resource for books in alternative format.

www.ahead.org - The national organization for students in higher education with disabilities

www.LDonline.org - A website with information for students with learning disabilities

www.ldresources.com - A website with information for students with learning disabilities

www.rfbd.org - Readings for the Blind and Dyslexic

www.dli.state.pa.us/landi/cwp/view.asp?a=128&Q=168255&dsftns=1375 - Office of Vocational Rehabilitation

<http://www.ed.gov/ocr/transition.html> - **Transitioning to Secondary Education: The U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights** has issued a new pamphlet "Students with Disabilities: Preparing for Postsecondary Education: Know Your Rights and Responsibilities."

Addendum I

Academic Resource Center Test Accommodation Procedures

Attention: ARC testing accommodations are only for students registered and approved with Disability Support Services.

Accessing Testing Accommodations

A student seeking to utilize the ARC for testing accommodations must first have applied for and been approved for academic accommodation(s) from the Disability Support Services Coordinator (DSSC). The student must have an accommodation letter from the DSSC specifying the approved testing accommodations and turn in the letter to their course instructors and ARC staff. Please note that the ARC will make every effort to meet each individual student's needs. However, due to scheduling and volume, students should be aware that private testing rooms may not be available. If you need information on how to apply for Disability Support Services, please refer to the Disability Support Services Manual or the [Disability Support Services](http://www.gmc.edu/students/disabilitysupport/) web page (www.gmc.edu/students/disabilitysupport/).

Using Testing Accommodations

Students must first submit accommodation letters to each course instructor and the ARC staff. Students must inform their course instructors of their intent to use testing accommodations in the alternative testing room at the ARC. **This must be done for each test or quiz to be taken at the ARC.**

Students have a responsibility to:

- Inform their course instructors of their intent to use testing accommodations in the alternative testing room at the ARC
- Schedule a testing date and time with ARC staff at least one week prior to the testing date.
- Inform your instructor of the ARC testing date/time.
- Arrive on time for the test. This is your scheduled test period. No further scheduling will be made without prior approval from the instructor (See section: No Show, Cancellation, or Rescheduling).

Faculty has the responsibility to:

- Complete the ARC testing accommodation form.
- Discuss with the student what materials are allowed for the test e.g. notes, text, calculator etc. and document these on the form.
- Fully complete testing accommodation form.
- Submit testing accommodation form with exam attached at least one day prior to student's appointment.
- Pick up the exam from the Assistant Director of the ARC on the second floor of Lourdes Library.

Faculty members are responsible for the delivery and pick-up of the exam. Students should call the Assistant Director at the Academic Resource Center (x201) at least one week in advance to make an appointment to take the exam within the required time. Space is limited, so students will be scheduled in the Testing Room on a first come, first serve basis. However, the student will not be monitored during the testing time. The room can accommodate students needing extended time or use of Kurzweil. We may not be able to process accommodation requests the same day of the test; most testing dates are on your syllabus, so plan ahead.

Time Allotted for Test

Students are given the time indicated on the ARC Testing Accommodation Form for completing an exam. The test will stop at the designated end time. No additional warnings are provided.

Arrive On Time

The test begins at the time originally requested, regardless of the time a student actually arrives, similar to what would be expected in the classroom. Arrive at least 5 minutes before scheduled start time of exam. **Please arrive on time; we don't allow extra time if you arrive late.**

No Show, Cancellation, or Rescheduling

A "no show" is anyone not arriving or arriving 30 minutes or later to the exam. If a student does not show for an exam, the unused test will be returned to the instructor. Contact your instructor immediately. Making up an exam is at the instructor's discretion. If a makeup time is approved, the instructor must fill out another testing accommodation, and the student must contact the ARC to schedule an appointment.

Unscheduled Requests

Students have the responsibility to follow the guidelines given for testing. However, there may be circumstances that affect the timeliness of the request. In those circumstances, the ARC staff will make a good faith effort to accommodate a student's request for test accommodations. However, multiple factors such as scheduling, space, the nature of the accommodation etc. may affect the ability to fulfill the request.

Bathroom Breaks

It is recommended that you use the restroom before starting your exam. However, if you need a bathroom break, testing time is not extended.

Academic Integrity

All students are expected to follow the appropriate Code of Conduct during an exam. Please refer to the DSS Manual for more information. The instructor indicates on the testing accommodation form what aids may be used for each test. The use of any unauthorized aids such as texts, notes, "cheat sheets," and/or calculators to gain an advantage on a test will be reported

to the instructor. At your instructor's discretion, sanctions will be applied according to the student handbook.

All books, back packs, cell phones and other unauthorized materials will be kept in the Assistant Director's office until the end of the testing period. When the student returns the completed test to the proctor, all belongings will be returned to the student. The student may not see or alter the test at this point.

Test Location

The ARC is located on the second floor of Lourdes Library. Tests are kept in the Assistant Director's office.

Hours of Operation for Testing Accommodations

Regular Fall and Spring Semesters:

Monday – Thursday 9:00am – 7:30pm

Friday 9:00am- 2:00pm Additional hours may be available. Contact the Assistant Director (x201) for information.