



# Student Accessibility Services Student Handbook

2018-2019

Board of Regents, Community Colleges of Connecticut

Gateway Community College does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or age in its programs and activities.

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# INTRODUCTION

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## PURPOSE OF STUDENT HANDBOOK

This manual is provided for students with disabilities as a resource and guide in order to address the procedures of the Student Accessibility Services (SAS) office at Gateway Community College. It is intended to explain the academic adjustment process in order to ensure timely disclosure, support, and access to services for students who have disabilities at Gateway Community College.

## MISSION

The SAS office is committed to promoting equal access to education for students with disabilities in an environment that respects and values their differences and encourages self-advocacy and self-determination.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

VOICE: 203-285-2231

TTY: 203-285-2233

FAX: 203-285-2232

Ron Chomicz, Accessibility Specialist, email: [rchomicz@gatewayct.edu](mailto:rchomicz@gatewayct.edu)

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## DEFINING REASONABLE ACADEMIC ADJUSTMENTS

A reasonable academic adjustment is a modification or adjustment to a course, program, service, job activity, or facility that ensures an equal opportunity for qualified students with disabilities to participate in, and enjoy the benefits of, a service, program, or activity. Aids, benefits, or services need not produce equal results, but must afford an equal opportunity to achieve equal results. When necessary, SAS staff will consult with faculty regarding whether an adjustment would fundamentally alter the nature of the service, program, or activity, or whether an academic requirement is essential to the instruction being pursued, or to any directly related licensing requirement. In doing so, SAS will examine the following:

Barriers between individuals with disabilities and the campus environment in accessing courses, programs, services, jobs, activities, or facilities without academic adjustments;

- Requested modifications, adjustments, and auxiliary aids;
- Whether the proposed adjustments would fundamentally alter the nature of the course, program, service, job, activity, or facility;
- Whether an academic requirement is essential to the instruction or to any directly related licensing requirement;
- Whether effective alternatives exist that would allow the individual with a disability to participate without lowering essential requirements or fundamentally altering the nature of the program.

When the College determines that a modification related to facilities or communication would result in a fundamental alteration or undue burden, SAS shall acquire the written opinion of the proper authority (i.e., department chair of impacted discipline), providing the reasoning supporting the decision.

### **STUDENT DISCLOSURE OF A DISABILITY**

- It is the responsibility of each student to voluntarily contact the SAS office to disclose his/her disability and request academic adjustments **each** semester
- All students who are requesting academic adjustments must provide the SAS office with appropriate documentation substantiating the nature of his/her disability **prior** to academic adjustments being granted
- The SAS office reserves the right to require additional documentation from a student if the current documentation is deemed insufficient before granting academic adjustments
- Eligibility for academic adjustments will be determined by the SAS office on an individual basis as validated by the documentation that has been supplied by the student
- Students are advised to provide the SAS office with documentation one week prior to initial appointment, and allow time to discuss academic adjustments before granting them
- No other representative at the College may determine or grant academic adjustments for a student with a disability besides a representative from the SAS office
- Academic adjustments are not retroactive

## DETERMINATION OF ELIGIBILITY

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The office of Student Accessibility Services requires documentation of your disability in order to fully evaluate your eligibility for services. Students with documented disabilities, visible or hidden, qualify for services. Categories of disability include, but are not limited to the following:

- Learning Disabilities
- Attention Deficit Disorders
- Mobility/Orthopedic Disabilities
- Chronic Health-Related Disabilities
- Emotional/Psychological Disabilities
- Deaf/Hearing Impairments
- Blind/Low Vision Impairments
- Traumatic Brain Injuries
- Autism Spectrum Disorders

### DOCUMENTATION GUIDELINES

- Determination of eligibility for academic adjustments must be supported by appropriate documentation provided by qualified professionals\*
- This documentation must substantiate the need for these services based on the individual's **current** level of academic functioning in an educational setting
- Students are required to provide recent (within 3-5 years for learning disabilities/attention deficit disorders; 3-6 months for mental health and/or chronic health disorders) and appropriate documentation relevant to the student's needs and learning environment
- Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), Summary of Performance (SOPs), or Section 504 plans from high schools may provide supportive information of a disability, but are not considered sufficient forms of documentation of a disability
- The SAS office will not accept documentation that has been altered in any way or that has pages missing from the text

\*Appropriate professionals include school and/or clinical psychologists, educational therapists, special education teachers, licensed psychiatrists, neurologists, or physicians (for medical conditions). Certified/appropriate professionals cannot be family members.

### **Documentation must include:**

1. A clear and detailed comprehensive assessment of the disability and/or diagnosis provided by a qualified professional
2. Evaluation of possible alternative diagnoses or explanations
3. Historical and background evidence of existing impairment
4. Current impact of (or limitations imposed by) the present disability

5. Treatments, medications, devices or services currently prescribed or used to minimize the impact of the impairment
6. Expected duration, stability, or progression
7. Supportive testing and/or qualitative neuropsychological or psycho-educational assessment discussing academic area(s) of impact and/or limitation(s)
8. Recommended academic adjustments with rationale as related to the student's disability
9. Integrated summary of medical documentation, related testing, and supportive information
10. Name, title, address, and phone number of certifying professional, as well as, the date of diagnosis and/or evaluation included on typed letter head

## **CONFIDENTIALITY AND RELEASE OF INFORMATION**

The SAS office is the Gateway Community College agent that is charged with the responsibility for collecting and maintaining disability documentation. Submitted documentation becomes the property of the College; any documentation provided to the SAS office is stored in a secure online file system with limited access for no more than seven years from the date students were last registered at the College. Documentation sent to the College by prospective students is kept only for those students who subsequently attend Gateway the following semester. Documentation received by this College will remain confidential and will not be shared with faculty, administration, or parents without the student's informed and written consent, except where disclosure is required by law. Confidentiality is not maintained relative to child abuse, suicidal, or homicidal intent. A written release of information must be completed by the student before documentation will be released to the student and/or other parties.

The SAS office refers to Connecticut's Association on Higher Education and Disability (CT AHEAD) guidelines to determine documentation guidelines and eligibility of academic adjustments. For more information about guidelines for specific disabilities, please contact a Student Accessibility Services representative for a documentation requirement checklist.

# ADJUSTMENTS AND OTHER SUPPORTS

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## REQUESTING ACADEMIC ADJUSTMENTS

Adjustments cannot be arranged unless a student initiates a request for adjustment through SAS each semester, provides the necessary documentation, and schedules an intake appointment with a specialist.

### ***New/Returning Students:***

- Make contact with the SAS office and disclose your disability. This may be done before or after course selection
- Provide the SAS office with the necessary documentation regarding your disability and set up an intake appointment to discuss course selection and possible academic adjustments for the upcoming semester
- Schedule another appointment to meet with a specialist to prepare *Academic Adjustment Letters* to instructors and discuss adjustment needs with each instructor
- Adjustments such as requests for alternate formats, assistive technology in the classroom, or sign-language interpreters, usually requires sufficient lead time to arrange. Students who anticipate requiring these kinds of adjustments should make an appointment with a specialist immediately after they register for courses to develop a timeline
- *Academic Adjustment Letters* are emailed to each professor and copied to students' GCC email accounts. Follow up with professors immediately upon being approved for adjustments to ensure emails have been received

**Academic Adjustment Letters are not automatically drafted; therefore, an appointment with a specialist must be made every semester.**

### ***Examples of Possible Academic Adjustments Provided***

- Extended time, scribes, and readers for exams/quizzes
- Reduced distraction testing environment
- Note-taking assistance
- Sign language interpreting
- Assistive technology and auxiliary aid/equipment loans
- Large-print materials
- Permission to record a lecture

The ADA does not require the College to provide personal assistants, individual tutors, or equipment that has been individually prescribed by outside agencies or medical or rehabilitation professionals.

## SCHEDULING EXAMS AND QUIZZES THROUGH SAS

Students who have been approved for exam/quiz adjustments are encouraged to work with their instructors to arrange to take exams with the instructor or in the department when possible. When an instructor/department cannot proctor the exam for the student, the exam can be scheduled at SAS.

Students arriving late to their exam will have the time deducted from the scheduled appointment. Due to logistical issues, SAS may not administer exams if the student shows up more than 15 minutes past their start time.

### ***Exams and Quizzes Scheduled at SAS***

- Exams or quizzes must be scheduled to start on the half hour and must be taken during the hours of 8:30 AM to 4:15 PM Monday through Friday. Extended office hours are determined from semester to semester; please contact SAS for up-to-date information
- During the fall and spring semesters, exams/quizzes must be scheduled **at least three days in advance to ensure space is available**. Discuss alternate arrangements with professors and SAS if unannounced quizzes are a possibility. There is more scheduling flexibility during summer/winter sessions
- Students pick up a *test proctoring envelope* from SAS and take it to their professors to confirm exam arrangements and exam drop off
- Students should schedule their exams on the same date/time as their class. Exceptions to this requirement may be made due to SAS's inability to have a scribe, reader, or computer available at the requested time or due to a student's academic schedule not permitting full use of allotted extended time. Students needing extended time should determine their start time to ensure that exams are completed by **4:15 PM**
- Exams are taken in one sitting unless an instructor has made prior arrangements with the SAS to divide the exam into sections; **no electronic devices are allowed while testing**
- Students approved for additional test adjustments, such as scribes, readers, computers, and/or other adaptive technology, will need to request these adjustments when they schedule their exams

The SAS office adheres to the College's guidelines on academic honesty and integrity. If the SAS office believes that a violation has occurred, the student's professor will be notified.

### **ARCHITECTURAL ACCESS: ELEVATORS**

If students who require the use of elevators find that the elevator is out of service, contact either SAS or Campus Security immediately. Call SAS for assistance Monday through Friday (8:00 AM to 4:30 PM) at 285-2231 and Campus Security after hours at 285-2246. If the problem persists, contact SAS for possible relocation of the class.

At the start of the semester, students who rely on elevators should discuss with their instructors how to handle emergency evacuations and/or missed classes due to an elevator malfunction.



## EVACUATION PROCEDURES FOR PERSONS WHO REQUIRE ASSISTANCE

### *Students who are unable to vacate a building for any reason should:*

- Be aware of locations of area of refuge in the North and South buildings
- Notify someone who is leaving the building, or if possible, use either a cell phone or emergency phone to call 911 to inform authorities of their location. Persons receiving this information should be instructed to pass it on to Campus Security or the responding Fire Department units
- Keep the Campus Security phone number (203-285-2246) stored in their personal cell phone to directly inform Campus Security of their location
- Protect themselves as well as possible, for example, by closing the door to the room where they are located; or by seeking refuge in designated stairwells/hallways
- Wait until directed by Campus Security or Fire Department officials before reentering the building

## NOTE-TAKING ASSISTANCE

Note-taking assistance may be provided as an academic adjustment for students whose documented disabilities interfere with their abilities to take notes. Note-taker assistance is

Any student interested in being a note-taker should bring their class schedules to SAS.

intended for a student's personal study use only and is not to be shared with other individuals. This service is provided as a necessary academic adjustment and is not considered a substitute for a student's full participation in class. Students are responsible for notifying the SAS office if notetaking arrangements have not been made within the first two weeks of the class or if other difficulties occur during the semester. Note-takers are hired by the SAS and are responsible only for taking notes while in the classroom; they are not hired as personal tutors for

students.

### Student:

1. Discuss your academic adjustment needs with an Accessibility Specialist in the SAS office. If a notetaker is needed, disclose whether you would like to remain anonymous to the notetaker
2. Notify the SAS office if you do not need a notetaker in one or more of your classes
3. Discuss any relevant issues regarding note-taking with your instructors
4. Attend each class (receiving notes does not mean that you can miss class)
5. If possible take your own notes and follow along as best you can
6. Contact the SAS office if any issues arise or if you are having any difficulties in the class
7. Notify the SAS office within 2 weeks of the start of the semester if a notetaker has not been hired in your class(es) or you feel that you will not need one
8. Notify the SAS office if you are not receiving the notes from your designated notetaker.

9. Notify the SAS office if you are withdrawing from the class, if your note-taker has withdrawn from the class, or if your note-taker does not have consistent class attendance

#### Faculty/Professors:

1. Discuss with the student his/her academic adjustment needs and provide support as indicated in the academic adjustment letter
2. Information regarding a **student's identity must be kept confidential** and his or her name should not be revealed in class
3. Make an announcement that a notetaker volunteer is needed in the class
4. If a notetaker is not identified in a timely manner, discuss other alternatives with the student and the SAS office
5. Assist in obtaining another notetaker if the current notetaker withdraws from the class or is ineffective

### **SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS**

If you have been approved for the use of a sign language interpreter by the SAS office, you must abide by the following:

- When interpreting services have been requested, a contracted interpreting agency will be contacted
- Students who know that they will be more than 15 minutes late to a class/activity should contact the SAS office and (if possible) their interpreter to notify them
- Students who arrive late to class cannot expect their interpreter to remain in class after a waiting period of 15 minutes
- Students who know that they will not be able to attend a class/activity should contact the SAS office at least 48 hours in advance to request a cancellation
  - If students do not cancel prior to 48 hours of the event, they should alert SAS as soon as possible
- Students who miss more than two scheduled classes/activities without canceling interpreting services are required to meet with the SAS office to discuss future service options
- Students should notify the SAS office if their interpreter is late or does not show up for an assignment as soon as possible
- Students who experience difficulties working with individual interpreters should make an appointment with the SAS office to discuss their concerns
- Due to the shortage of qualified interpreters; requests to change interpreters for an assignment may not be accommodated
- The SAS office encourages professors to notify the SAS office if a student has missed more than two classes in a row to determine the status of the student/interpreter

New and returning students upon registration should provide the SAS office with a copy of their schedule and request interpreters immediately for the new semester in order to provide sufficient time to set up services. Inform the SAS office as soon as possible if there have been any changes to the schedule so that there is sufficient time to accommodate the changes. Students requesting interpreters for additional activities, appointments, or tutoring sessions, must put the requests in writing including the date, time, and room/campus location of the event.

## **PERSONAL ASSISTANTS (PA)**

Personal Assistants work directly for the student with a disability. If a student has been approved for the use of a personal assistant by the SAS office, it is the student's responsibility to make a contract with that individual.

- Permission to utilize a personal assistant to accompany a student in the classroom may not be used without the approval of the SAS office
- Students requesting a personal assistant must meet with the SAS office and provide appropriate documentation
- The use of a personal assistant is not considered a substitute for a student's full participation in a course
- A personal assistant is prohibited from participating directly in classroom discussions or activities
- A personal assistant is prohibited from participating in the testing process, including but not limited to administering, and/or proctoring tests, scribing, reading, and/or clarifying test material
- Questions regarding lecture material or laboratory instructions provided by the professor will be made solely by the student (unless the student's disability renders him/her unable to communicate verbally)
- A personal assistant will meet the personal needs of the student while following the student code of conduct of Gateway Community College
- A personal assistant is responsible for assisting in the safe evacuation of the student from the building

GCC is **not** responsible for providing services of a personal nature, such as a personal assistant. Students who use PAs are responsible for securing, training, supervising, and paying their assistants.

## **PETS & SERVICE ANIMALS**

With the exception of service animals, animals are not permitted on campus. Service animals on campus must be under the control of the owner. Service animals must be on a leash at all times. Service animals are considered personal property as the owner/handler is responsible for any damages caused by their animal. Individuals are not required to disclose their disability or show documentation, but when asked by college officials, individuals with animals are required to disclose the status of the service animal and what function it performs.

## ATTENDANCE FLEXIBILITY

Student Accessibility Services does not have a role in determining course attendance requirements. Because attendance may be integral to the pedagogic process, these requirements are set by faculty at the college, departmental, or individual level.

In some cases, attendance is fundamental to course outcomes/objectives; for example, students may be required to interact with others in the class, to demonstrate the ability to think and argue critically, or to participate in group projects. In other instances, faculty may determine that students can master course content despite absences. Rarely, faculty may decide that students do not need to attend classes at all.

Similarly, faculty also determine requirements for make-up work and missed quizzes and exams. Faculty are not required to lower or substantially modify standards for adjustment purposes.

SAS can provide students with written verification of their disabilities, based on appropriate medical and/or psychological documentation. These verification letters may be distributed by students to faculty in order to initiate discussions of attendance and make-up procedures. Accessibility Specialists may also e-mail faculty on students' behalf if a particular absence is as a result of a disability.

## ADAPTIVE TECHNOLOGY ON CAMPUS

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### AUDIO TEXTBOOKS

Students with disabilities who require alternate access to printed material may receive their textbooks in an alternate format. (i.e., audio books). Eligibility for this academic adjustment is determined on an individual basis, and students must be able to demonstrate a substantial visual or learning disability, which requires alternate materials. In order to assure textbook availability, all textbook information for classes should be requested and submitted to the SAS office 3 weeks prior to the start of the new semester. Students can locate the names of their textbooks on the College's [www.my.commnet.edu](http://www.my.commnet.edu) online registration page under "student detail schedule". Students are responsible for obtaining this textbook information as soon as they register for classes. Late requests for alternate formatted textbooks will result in a delay in providing materials. Please note that all alternate format materials are intended for a student's individual use and should not be replicated or shared with others. If textbooks are not available in an alternate format, students may also use the Kurzweil program and/or Read and Write for Google to scan and read their books. An appointment to learn how to use Kurzweil/Read and Write for Google can be made at the SAS office upon request. At the end of the semester, return all equipment and alternate format books to the SAS office.

## AUDIO RECORDINGS

Eligibility for audio-recording as an academic adjustment is determined on an individual basis, and it must be deemed necessary and reasonable by the SAS office. An **Audio-Recording and Nondisclosure Agreement** form must be completed and signed by the student in order to record anything in the classroom. The signed form is kept with the student's file.

- Students will turn off the recorder during class or erase portions when requested
- Students will not share the contents of the audio-recordings with anyone whatsoever
- Students will not allow anyone other than themselves to use the audio-recordings for any purpose
- Students will not make, or allow anyone to make copies of the audio-recordings
- Students will not transfer the contents of the recorder to any other media nor will they transfer the contents electronically, by uploading, by downloading or in any other manner whatsoever
- Students will keep such audio-recordings within his/her exclusive possession and control at all times and at all locations
- Students will not make, or cause to have made, a written transcription in any form of the contents of the audio-recordings (other than personal notes for his/her sole and exclusive use)

### Procedure:

1. Make a request for the use of the assistive equipment and fill out an Equipment Loan form with SAS
2. Agree upon a date in which the equipment will be returned
3. Return the assistive equipment to the SAS office by the agreed upon due date

## EQUIPMENT LOANS

If you have been approved for the use of assistive technology/equipment that is owned by the College, you must abide by the following:

- Eligibility for the use of any loaned equipment as an academic adjustment is determined on an individual basis, and it must be deemed necessary and reasonable by the SAS office
- The SAS office may loan out assistive equipment to students who have been approved for this service on a one-semester basis
- Any equipment loaned out by the SAS office is considered property of the College and may not be permanently kept by the student
- The SAS office and student must have an agreed upon date in which the student shall return the equipment to the SAS office (usually at the end of the semester)
- Before loaning out any equipment to the student, the SAS office representative checks the equipment to ensure it is working and that all pieces of equipment are there. This is noted on the appropriate form.

- When a student is returning equipment, the SAS office representative checks the equipment to ensure that it is working and that all pieces of equipment are there.
- The student may be held financially accountable for any damage or loss of equipment loaned out by the SAS office, and a hold may be placed on their account

## COMPLAINT AND GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES

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The following process is designed to expedite any conflict resolutions:

1. A student who feels that the approved academic adjustment(s), as stated in the academic adjustment letter, are not being effectively provided by the instructor, or has additional concerns, should contact an Accessibility Specialist from the SAS office.
2. After meeting with the student, if appropriate, the student will be encouraged to meet with the faculty member to discuss the requested academic adjustment(s) or additional concerns.
3. If the conflict remains unresolved, an Accessibility Specialist from the SAS office will contact and/or meet with the faculty member. At the discretion of the SAS office, this meeting may include the student, division director, or academic dean.
4. If a resolution cannot be reached, the student will be referred to the grievance procedures as described in the GCC Student Handbook.

### GRIEVANCE PROCESS

**Definition:** A grievance is an allegation by a student that, as to him/her, an agent of the college has violated board or college policies relating to students other than assignments of grades or other academic evaluation.

**How to file a grievance:**

The following people have been designated to handle inquiries regarding the non-discrimination policies: Dean of Student Affairs (Title IX Coordinator) and the Section 504/ADA Committee.

A grievance is to be submitted in writing to the Dean of Student Affairs or their designated representative within (30) days of the date of the grievance or when the student knew or reasonably would have known of the alleged violation. The written grievance shall specify the right claimed to have been violated and state briefly the underlying facts.

***Procedure for Grievance Resolution on Basis of Disability Discrimination:***

The Dean of Student Affairs, their designated representative, and/or the Section 504/ADA Committee shall investigate the grievance and within thirty (30) days from the time the grievance was submitted, recommend to the President or his/her designee a disposition of the grievance, except as provided hereinafter. In the course of each investigation, the Dean of Student Affairs or their designated representative shall designate the Section 504/ADA Committee to consult with whichever Dean responsible for the area of college operations in which the grievance arose.

In the case of a grievance alleging discrimination based on race, color, religious creed, sex, age, national origin, ancestry, present or past history of genetic information, learning disability, marital status, intellectual/physical disability, prior conviction of a crime, political beliefs, veteran status, or sexual preference, the Section 504/ADA Committee shall consult with the college's Affirmative Action officer during the course of the investigation (Student Handbook).

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This handbook was adapted from the procedure and policies from the following Colleges/Universities:

- Manchester Community College
- Naugatuck Valley Community College
- Norwalk Community College
- Three Rivers Community College
- Southern Connecticut State University
- University of Connecticut