

# Reasonable Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

## Statement of Policy

Excelsior College is committed to the principle that every individual should have an equal opportunity to enroll in an Excelsior College degree program, to register for courses or examinations in order to demonstrate their knowledge and skills under appropriate conditions, and to complete a degree. The College seeks to assure access by providing reasonable accommodations to individuals with physical, mental or learning disabilities recognized under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA). Reasonable accommodation is the provision of aids, or modification to testing, services or a program of study, that allows access by individuals with disabilities.

The ADA defines a disability as “any mental or physical condition that substantially limits an individual’s ability to perform one or more major life activities” as compared with the average person in the general population. Major life activities include, but are not limited to, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, performing manual tasks, caring for one’s self, working and learning.

The ADA requires an institution of higher education to provide reasonable accommodation to a qualified individual with a documented disability, provided that the accommodation does not create undue hardship. An undue hardship refers to any accommodation that would be unduly costly, substantially disruptive or that would fundamentally alter the nature of the program. Both matriculated and non-matriculated students may request reasonable accommodations from Excelsior College.

Additionally, the College is required to abide by the provisions of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 which protect otherwise qualified individuals from discrimination based on their disability. In order to be considered otherwise qualified a student with a disability must be capable, either with or without accommodation, of fulfilling the essential requirements of the educational program.

Individuals requesting reasonable accommodation are required to self-disclose to the Disability Services Coordinator and submit a request in writing or an accessible format appropriate for their limitation which generates a durable record. The request must be accompanied by official documentation of the disability from an appropriate, licensed professional, which must address the current functional limitation(s), their prognosis, and recommendation(s) of appropriate accommodation. Once eligibility has been established, accommodations are requested on a course-by-course (or exam-by-exam) basis.

# Procedure

## A. Overview

### How to Apply for Reasonable Accommodation

1. Review the Disability Services Student Information Packet which is available at [www.excelsior.edu/disability\\_services](http://www.excelsior.edu/disability_services) or by request from the Disability Services Coordinator.
2. Complete the **Disability Registration and Request for Accommodation Form** which is available at [www.excelsior.edu/disability\\_services](http://www.excelsior.edu/disability_services) or from the Disability Services Coordinator. An accessible format which generates a durable record may be substituted for a written version of this form where appropriate.
3. Request and submit documentation which is original, signed, and on official letterhead from a certifying professional in the area of the student's disability. The documentation must address:
  - a. Disability and functional limitation(s)
  - b. Prognosis (permanent or temporary and, if temporary, the anticipated duration)
  - c. Recommendations for accommodation(s)
4. In the case of students requesting accommodation for the Clinical Performance in Nursing Examination (CPNE®), the documentation

must address the student's ability to care for adult and pediatric patients in the acute care setting.

5. Submit the completed **Disability Registration and Request for Accommodation Form** together with the documentation directly to the Disability Services Coordinator who will review documentation and work with faculty and staff as appropriate. The student will be notified in writing, or by accessible format which generates a durable record where appropriate, regarding the outcome of the request. Excelsior College reserves the right to verify the qualifications of the certifying professionals and the authenticity of the documentation.
6. Each student who is offered an accommodation is required to affirmatively indicate his/her acceptance of the accommodation offered by signing and returning the Accommodation Acceptance Form included with each official accommodation response letter.
7. In the event a student's accommodation request is denied or the student finds the accommodation offered unacceptable, such student may submit a written appeal to the Provost and Chief Academic Officer for consideration and determination. Such written appeal may request a conference with the Provost, or the Provost's designee, to discuss the appeal. The student may be assisted during such conference by an attorney and/or other appropriate professional with knowledge of the student's disability, functional limitation(s) and/or the availability of appropriate accommodations. The Provost and Chief Academic Officer shall provide the student with a written copy of her/his determination.

## **B. Documentation Guidelines**

### **Medical and Long Term Disabilities**

Documentation should be appropriate to the nature of the disability. The documentation must be provided by a physician or other appropriate professional who specializes in the area of the physical disability. A permanent medical disability (i.e., blindness) can be supported by documentation that is up to 5 years old. All other documentation must be no more than 3 years old and include:

1. Documentation of the specific disability and functional limitation(s); and
2. Recommendations for accommodations—must link the accommodation to the functional limitation(s)

### **Mental Health Disorders**

Documentation should be no more than 1 year old. It must be provided by a licensed clinical psychologist or psychiatrist or other professional who specializes in psychological disabilities and include:

1. Documentation of the specific disability
2. Presenting symptoms and how they impact the student academically
3. Prognosis—Include treatment information if medications prescribed could impact the student's academic functioning

4. Recommendations for accommodations—must link the accommodation(s) to the functional limitation(s)

## **Attention Deficit Disorders (ADD) Attention Deficit/ Hyperactivity Disorders (ADHD)**

Documentation can be in the form of a psycho-educational report from a licensed psychologist (or other qualified professional) or it may be in the form of a letter prepared by a licensed professional who has had the specific training to make differential mental diagnoses (psychiatrists, psychologists, neurologists, etc.). Documentation should be no more than 3 years old. If submitting a letter from a physician it must include:

1. Documentation of the specific disability
2. Presenting symptoms and how they impact the student academically
3. Prognosis—Include treatment information if medications prescribed could impact the student's academic functioning
4. Recommendations for accommodations - must link the accommodation(s) to the functional limitation(s)

## **Other Learning Disabilities**

Documentation should be provided by a licensed psychologist or neuropsychologist, be no more than 3 years old and include:

1. Documentation of specific disability

2. Recommendations for accommodation—must link the accommodation(s) to the functional limitation(s)

## **C. When to Apply for Accommodations**

Students are encouraged to request reasonable accommodations at the time that they enroll in Excelsior College but are not required to do so. Accommodations are requested on a course-by-course (or exam-by-exam) basis. The time frame for requesting accommodation is determined according to the method used by the student to earn credit through Excelsior College.

### **For Excelsior College Courses**

Students who are seeking reasonable accommodation for courses such as extended time for completion of assignments and/or examinations, alternate media for textbooks, etc., must submit their request to the College **in writing or by an alternate accessible format which generates a durable record at least 45 days prior to the start date of the course.** While the College will review and attempt to fulfill late requests, the delay may result in accommodations not being available at the start of the term.

### **For Excelsior College Examinations and Practice Examinations**

Students who are seeking reasonable accommodation for Excelsior College Examinations should apply for accommodation at the time they are ready to register for an exam.

## **For the Clinical Performance in Nursing Examination (CPNE®) or CPNE Skills Workshop**

Students seeking reasonable accommodation for the CPNE may apply at the time they register for the examination but no later than 45 days prior to the scheduled date of the CPNE. Students should apply for accommodations for the CPNE Skills Workshop at the time that they register for the workshop. While the College will review and attempt to fulfill late requests, the nature of the request may result in accommodations not being available for the scheduled date.

# **Examples of Reasonable Accommodations**

## **A. Accommodations for Educational Program**

1. For all students with hearing or speech disabilities, the College provides TDD to facilitate telephone communication with the College.
2. The appropriate faculty will consider requests for substitution or waiver of specific degree requirements, provided that substitution or waiver does not alter the academic integrity of the degree. The College is not required to substitute courses or examinations considered fundamental to the academic program but it will consider possible course or examination substitutions (if disability proves to be a barrier to fulfillment of the course or

examination in question). The feasibility for available alternatives will be considered and faculty will determine whether a course or examination substitution is possible without lowering academic standards or requiring substantial program alteration.

3. To the extent possible, the College will maintain a barrier-free Web site.

## **B. Accommodations for Excelsior College Examinations**

The College will modify the testing conditions for Excelsior College Examinations, provided that the modification does not compromise the validity of the examination. Examples of modifications to testing include:

1. Additional testing time
  - Time and a half
  - Double time
  - Scheduled breaks
2. Assistance
  - Reader
  - Recorder
  - Special mechanical devices (limited)
  - Accessible work stations
3. Format

- Braille examination booklet
- Large print examination booklet
- Large print answer sheet
- Sign language interpreter (spoken instructions only)

#### 4. Separate Room

## **C. Accommodations for Excelsior College Courses**

Students with disabilities who are taking Excelsior College courses may request accommodations providing that they do not compromise the validity or content of the course. Examples of modifications for courses include:

1. Extended time for testing and assessments (time and a half or double time)
2. Provision of alternate print or presentation formats, i.e. books on tape or electronic file, scanned text, enlarged print, Braille
3. To the extent possible, Excelsior College will maintain a barrier-free Web environment

## **D. Accommodations for the Clinical Performance in Nursing Examination (CPNE®)**

All students must be able to safely care for hospitalized adult and pediatric patients, addressing their physical needs (including mobility) and psychological needs. Students are expected to satisfy the Technical Standards for the School of Nursing associate degree programs. Where appropriate, accommodations for the CPNE may include:

1. Use of an amplified stethoscope
2. Use of electronic devices for assessing vital signs
3. Sign language interpreter
4. Additional testing time which can be extended by 30 minutes for each Patient Care Situation in the CPNE
5. Limiting to 5 the number of assigned areas of care in the Patient Care Situation
6. Additional break time between examination components
7. Assistance with lifting and positioning of patient
8. Provision of latex-free gloves (according to individual hospital policies for latex-sensitive nurses)

# Management of Student Information

The Disability Services Coordinator receives and retains all inquiries and requests for accommodation and the required documentation.

Requests for accommodation and the related documentation will be scanned into the ADA database by the Assistant Director of Records and the original documents will be retained by the College for a minimum of six months.

Access to information regarding student requests for accommodation is on a “need to know” basis consistent with the requirements of HIPPA. To preserve student confidentiality, all information regarding requests for or delivery of reasonable accommodation is housed in the secure ADA database and access is restricted to staff supporting our disability services processes.



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