



Accessibility Services
Student Handbook
2023-2024

Purpose

The Office of Accessibility Services (OAS) provides accessibility to students with different abilities in the college environment. OAS assists students with accommodations, advocacy, empowerment, goal planning, and study skills. After reviewing the OAS Student Handbook, students seeking accommodations complete the online Registration Form. Registering with the OAS at Blue Ridge Community and Technical College is a self-reporting process. The purpose of the Accessibility Services Student Handbook is to inform faculty, staff, and students of OAS services, policies, and procedures.

OAS Mission

The Office of Accessibility Services ensures equal access to the college experience by facilitating supportive resources and educational programming to remove barriers from education.

Nondiscrimination Policy

Blue Ridge CTC is committed to fostering a diverse and inclusive culture by promoting diversity, inclusion, equality, and intercultural and intercommunity outreach. Accordingly, the College does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, ancestry, age, physical or mental disability, marital or family status, pregnancy, veteran status, service in the uniformed services (as defined in state and federal law), religion, creed, sex, sexual orientation, genetic information, gender identity, or gender expression in the administration of any of its educational programs, activities, or with respect to admission or employment.

Mandates

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), amended in 2008, prohibit discrimination against individuals with medical diagnoses. Title II of the ADA protects students attending state universities, state and local community colleges such as Blue Ridge Community and Technical College, and the university school system. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 prohibits all institutions receiving federal financial assistance from discriminating against an individual due to their different ability. To ensure compliance with these equal access laws, Blue Ridge Community and Technical College must provide reasonable accommodations to support students in college classes and student activities.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act: “No otherwise qualified individual with a disability in the United States...shall, solely by reason of his or her disability, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.”

Title II of the ADA: “A public entity shall make reasonable modifications in policies or procedures when the modifications are necessary to avoid discrimination on the basis of disability, unless the public entity can demonstrate that making the modifications would fundamentally alter the nature of the service, program, or activity.”

Students’ Rights and Responsibilities

In higher education, it is the student’s responsibility to request accommodations. Accommodations may not be required for all diagnosed conditions. Students are responsible for completing the appropriate forms provided on the Blue Ridge CTC website in order to register with the Office of Accessibility Services.

Accommodations at the college level differ from options provided by primary and secondary schools, as the protection provided by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) expires when a student graduates high school. This means a student’s Individualized Education Plan (IEP) does not automatically transfer from high school to college.

Students with different abilities at Blue Ridge CTC have the RIGHT to:

- Request reasonable accommodations ensuring equal access to courses, programs, services, employment, activities, and facilities available through the college.
- Appropriate confidentiality of all information regarding diagnosis(es) and to choose who may access their information, except disclosures required or permitted by law.
- Request information available in accessible formats.
- File a grievance according to the Grievance Procedure outlined in this handbook.

Students with different abilities at Blue Ridge CTC have the RESPONSIBILITY to:

- Meet qualifications and maintain essential institutional standards.
- Identify themselves as an individual with different abilities when an accommodation is needed.
- Seek information, counsel, and assistance.
- Follow policies and procedures for obtaining reasonable accommodations and services as defined by the Accessibility Services Student Handbook.
- Arrange testing accommodations with each faculty member a minimum of one week prior to each test/exam. If the faculty member is unavailable, contact OAS coordinator to assist scheduling the exam.

- Schedule meetings with the OAS Student Access Coordinator as needed AND maintain communication throughout the semester.

Changes to accommodations after the start of a semester are possible; however, accommodations are not retroactive. To modify accommodations, students must schedule a meeting with the OAS Student Access Coordinator.

Academic Standards

Students enrolled in the OAS are expected to meet institutional academic standards. The purpose of an accommodation is to assist with, but not dilute, course requirements.

Registering for Accommodations

The Intake Process – Completed by the Student

1. Complete the online Registration Form and provide supporting documentation to enroll with the OAS. Supporting documentation of a disability and the impact on one or more major life activities may include assessments, letters from qualified professionals, IEPs/504 plans, accommodation letters from other colleges or testing organizations, and documentation from the uniformed services.
2. Schedule a virtual or in-person intake meeting with OAS. Upon receipt of the Registration Form, if no intake meeting has been set, the OAS Student Access Coordinator will contact the student to schedule a meeting.

The Review Process – Completed by the OAS

Once the intake process is complete, the OAS Student Access Coordinator reviews the supporting documentation and the requested accommodations. Should additional documentation or clarification be needed, the OAS Student Access Coordinator contacts the student. While documentation may be sufficient to establish a disability, documentation alone does not inform whether OAS approves accommodations or the specifics of those accommodations. The determination of reasonable accommodations involves the consideration of the student's barriers and the context of the educational program.

Accommodations do not take effect until the intake and review process have been completed. Accommodations are not retroactive and cannot be applied prior to completion of the registration process with the OAS.

Issuing Accommodations – Completed by the OAS

Once the intake process and the review process are completed, accommodations are issued, and an accommodation letter is provided to the student.

Accommodation letters are sent to faculty members the first day of each semester and the day after add/drop ends. If the semester has begun when accommodations are issued, accommodation letters are sent immediately following process completion. Faculty and students are encouraged to discuss the implementation of appropriate accommodations for their class. These conversations should be held in private.

Faculty members are NEVER given details regarding a student's diagnosis. Letters to faculty members outline accommodations granted by the OAS. The OAS abides by strict confidentiality rules set forth by ADA and FERPA. A student may share with the faculty member as they wish; however, a faculty member should not initiate the inquiry.

Temporary Accommodations – Completed by the Student and the OAS

If a student has a temporary diagnosis (i.e.: broken arm, loss of eyesight due to cataract surgery, etc.) documentation provided by the student's primary care provider warrants a temporary accommodation. To receive a temporary accommodation, complete the online Registration Form. Following receipt of the Registration Form, the OAS Student Access Coordinator contacts the student to discuss the student's specific temporary accommodations.

Issues with Accommodations

Students are encouraged to communicate with faculty members immediately whenever a problem arises. If the situation cannot be resolved, the student should contact the OAS Student Access Coordinator. The Grievance Policy should be discussed and considered whenever the student is not satisfied with the outcome.

Common Accommodations

Extended Test Time

Students with extended test time are given time and a half (e.g., 60 minutes = 90 minutes). It is the student's responsibility to schedule a test time that does not interfere with any other courses.

Extra Breaks

Students receiving this accommodation are allowed to move around or leave the classroom as needed as long as they are not disrupting the class.

Digital Readers

Students with this accommodation need to use a screen reader or text-to-speech software to read course materials. All course materials should be in an accessible digital format. Contact OAS if any course materials need to be remediated.

Interpreters

The OAS provides sign language interpreters to students who are deaf and hard of hearing. Interpreters are provided for both academic and non-academic courses and/or activities. It is the student's responsibility to provide the OAS with ample notice when an interpreter is needed. The OAS Student Access Coordinator contacts the interpreting service provider to secure interpreters for the semester.

Video Relay Interpreting (VRI) services are available at times when an interpreter is not available. A laptop is in both Security Offices at HQ and TC for use. Please contact the OAS Student Access Coordinator for questions regarding VRI.

Interpreters Within the Classroom: The interpreter is not to be involved in a dual role inside the classroom. The student should not request an interpreter to engage in the following roles: counselor, tutor, friend, confidant, class assistant, note taker, transportation provider, or other roles that are unrelated to interpreting services. The student is responsible for all course content, exams, assignments, and other course requirements. The interpreter is not responsible for the grade the student receives. If the student has questions about course material, grades, or related course aspects, they must speak to the faculty member.

Problem Resolution: Discuss any issues regarding interpretation services with the interpreter and the OAS Student Access Coordinator. Should the interpreter be absent from class or another scheduled event, the student must report the absence to the Office of Accessibility Services immediately.

OAS understands emergencies occur, but it is important for the student to notify the OAS Student Access Coordinator at access@blueridgectc.edu or 304.260.4380 ext. 2117 or text 304.745.2335 when they will be absent.

Notetaking

Students with this accommodation receive copies of the faculty member's handouts and slideshows. It is the faculty member's responsibility to provide this at the beginning or end of each class.

Public Speaking Exemption

Instructors should provide the student with alternative methods to meet the assignment objectives when public speaking is required. Do not call on the student unless the student asks to contribute to the discussion.

Recording Lectures

Upon the request of the faculty member, the student must delete the recordings when they are no longer needed for academic assignments. The class lecture is property of the faculty member and should not be used for anything other than the purpose of the specific class.

Test Reader/Writer

Students with this accommodation have access to a proctor or text to speech software. The faculty member and student should schedule a time for the faculty member to read/write for the student during their test. Students may also contact the OAS Student Access Coordinator for assistance with the exam.

Testing in Private

Students schedule a time with the faculty member to test in private. The student and faculty member need to agree on a place for the testing to occur. This accommodation does not need to be provided for online tests, as the test can be completed in the privacy of the student's home.

Test Proctoring

Students in need of testing accommodations should schedule with the faculty member. Respondus, a secure online proctoring services is available through Blackboard, if the faculty member is not able to provide the accommodations. The OAS Student Access Coordinator should be contacted if the previous two methods are unavailable.

Student Responsibilities

- Find out when all tests are scheduled by reviewing the syllabus.
- Schedule a time with your faculty member to take your test with accommodations or schedule with the OAS Student Access Coordinator in advance of your test date.
- Show up on the appropriate test date and time.

Faculty Responsibilities

- Meet with student and discuss availability to proctor tests with accommodations.
- Provide test in alternate format if noted on accommodation letter.
- If you cannot proctor the exam, provide the OAS a copy of the test at least 24 hours in advance of the scheduled test date.

Waiver of Absences

Students have a responsibility to contact the faculty member when this accommodation needs to be implemented (within 48 hours is best practice). The student and faculty member should discuss how missing assignments or learning activities will be managed according to course excused absence policies. Incompletes are limited and addressed on a case-by-case basis. This accommodation is only given for specific medical documentation.

Counseling and Auxiliary Aids Support

The OAS Student Access Coordinator is available for psychoeducational counseling in areas of specific expertise. Topics could include but are not limited to advocacy, empowerment, healthy coping techniques, and resiliency. Community mental health resources can be found on the Blue Ridge CTC website.

*Note the OAS Student Access Coordinator cannot provide mental health counseling but can provide emotional support during challenging times. This support should not take the place of mental health counseling.

Accommodations/Auxiliary Aids: The OAS Student Access Coordinator may assist students in accessing exam accommodations, converting materials into accessible formats, and learning how to use assistive technology.

Blue Ridge CTC Policy for Service Animals

Service animals are canines who are individually trained to perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a medical diagnosis. Other species of animals, whether wild or domestic, are not service animals for the purposes of this definition. Emotional support animals are not considered service animals and are not covered by the ADA.

Example tasks provided by the service animal include but are not limited to:

- Assisting individuals who are blind or have low vision with navigation and other tasks.
- Alerting individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing to the presence of people or sounds.
- Pulling a wheelchair.
- Assisting an individual during a seizure.
- Alerting individuals to the presence of allergens.
- Retrieving items such as medicine or the telephone.

- Helping persons with psychiatric and neurological diagnoses by preventing or interrupting impulsive or destructive behaviors.

The following are requirements of student-owners and their service animals:

1. Service animals are permitted to accompany student-owners to most areas on campus. Certain labs and/or areas requiring protective clothing may exclude service animals. Denial to an area will be based on the nature of the machinery and/or the nature of the research.
2. Service animals may be excluded from a facility if that animal poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others.
3. Service animals may be excluded from a facility if that animal's behavior is disruptive to other participants within the facility.
4. Service animals must be clean, in good health, and have a current rabies vaccination.
5. All student-owners and/or users of service animals are responsible to clean up after and properly dispose of their animal's feces while on campus.

Infraction of any of these behaviors or policies may result in the expulsion of the service animal from campus property.

Grievance Procedure

Any student who believes they have been subjected to discrimination based on ability or have been denied access or accommodations shall have the right to invoke the Grievance Procedure. This procedure is designed to address the following issues:

- Disagreements or denials regarding requested services, accommodations, or modifications.
- Alleged inaccessibility of an institution program or activity.
- Alleged harassment or discrimination based on ability.
- Any other alleged violations of the ADA and/or Section 504.

The focus of this Grievance Policy does not and will not supersede any other institutional procedure or policy which may exist for addressing issues such as grade appeal or any other issue of concern in which the college has already established policies and procedures. Students are encouraged to consult the OAS Student Access Coordinator regarding the most appropriate procedure to address a particular concern.

Upon completion of the Informal Grievance Procedure, any qualified student registered with the OAS shall have the right to request that the OAS Student Access Coordinator review the denial of any requested academic accommodation or service by fully complying with the procedure outlined below.

The student shall fully complete the Informal Grievance Report. The completed form must be submitted to the OAS Student Access Coordinator or Assistant Dean of Student Outreach within 15 business days of alleged incident. A meeting is scheduled with the student and faculty member after the OAS Student Access Coordinator or Assistant Dean of Student Outreach review the report.

After meeting with both the student and the faculty member, the OAS Student Access Coordinator or Assistant Dean of Student Outreach review all information necessary to render a written resolution. If requested, the student is responsible for providing any additional information/documentation as requested by the OAS. The OAS Student Access Coordinator issues the written resolution within 10 business days of the formal meeting.

Within 10 business days following the receipt of the written resolution, the student has the right to seek review through the Vice President of Enrollment Management and Allied Health Sciences, Leslie See, at lsee@blueridgectc.edu.

If a student should exhaust all Blue Ridge CTC's Grievance Procedures, they may contact: Mid-Atlantic ADA Center 800.949.4232

Contact the OAS Student Access Coordinator to discuss specific situations or need for clarification about accommodations.

Blue Ridge Community and Technical College

Office of Accessibility Services

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