

Disability Services

ADA/Reasonable Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

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 a disability as defined under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008 (ADAAA). 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, concentrating, caring for one’s self, working, learning, and the operation of a major bodily function such as those of the immune system, respiratory system, etc.

The ADA requires an institution of higher education to provide reasonable accommodation to a qualified individual with a 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 protects 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 should be accompanied by documentation of the disability including information from an appropriate, licensed professional, which should 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

Overview

How to Apply for Reasonable Accommodation

1. Review the Reasonable Accommodations for Students with Disabilities policy and procedure statement which is available at www.excelsior.edu/disability-services, in the *Student Policy Handbook*, or by request from the disability services coordinator.
2. Complete the Online Disability Registration and Request for Accommodation Form which is available at www.excelsior.edu/disability-services.

Students unable to complete an online request can request a paper copy by contacting the disability services coordinator by calling the College toll free at 888-647-2388. An accessible format which generates a durable record may be substituted for a written version of this form where appropriate.

3. Documentation of a disability will include a telephone intake interview with the disability services coordinator so that we can better understand each student's disability, the barriers to education that have been addressed and effective/ineffective accommodations previously received. Third party documentation from an appropriate, licensed professional adds to the complete understanding of the barriers to education faced by the student. Third party documentation can be submitted prior to the intake interview or the coordinator can help determine additional documentation needs after the initial interview.

Third party documentation should be on official letterhead and signed by a qualified professional in the area of the student's disability. The documentation should address at a minimum:

- a. Identification of the specific disability and functional limitation(s)
- b. Prognosis (permanent or temporary and, if temporary, the anticipated duration)

Recommendations for specific accommodations

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 safely care for adult and pediatric patients in the acute care setting.
5. **Documentation may be scanned as a PDF and sent as an attachment through the MyExcelsior Message Center to Disability/ADA Services or may be sent separately by mail to the Disability Services Coordinator, Excelsior College, 7 Columbia Circle, Albany, New York 12203-5159. Documentation may also be submitted as a scanned PDF via email to DSC@excelsior.edu.**
6. **Hard copy submissions** and requests in alternate format, should be submitted directly to the Disability Services Coordinator, Excelsior College, 7 Columbia Circle, Albany, New York 12203-5159. Documentation and accommodation request forms may not be submitted by fax.
7. Accommodation requests will not be reviewed until the online request form and documentation are available to the disability services coordinator and the intake interview is conducted. Requests for accommodation are processed as they become complete. Intake interviews and third party documentation are only required for first time accommodation requests.
8. The disability services coordinator will review the request and work with faculty and staff as appropriate. The student will be notified in writing through the MyExcelsior Message Center, by correspondence, or by accessible format which generates a durable record where appropriate, regarding the outcome of the request. When third party documentation is submitted, Excelsior College reserves the right to verify the qualifications of the qualified professionals and the authenticity of the documentation.
9. Each student who is offered an accommodation is required to affirmatively indicate his/her acceptance of the accommodation offered by responding

to Disability/ADA Services through the MyExcelsior Message Center or emailing DSC@excelsior.edu. Directions for this required response are contained in each official accommodation letter.

10. Students who receive accommodations for Excelsior College courses will be sent a letter in PDF format which is to be shared with the instructor of each course. The letter explains all approved accommodations to the instructor. It is the responsibility of each student to forward the letter to the individual instructor within 48 hours of receipt.
11. 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 should be made within 45 days of notice of denial of accommodation request and the student 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, other appropriate professional with knowledge of the student's disability, functional limitation(s) and/or the availability of appropriate accommodations and/or a family member or caregiver of the student. The provost and chief academic officer shall provide the student with a written copy of her/his determination within 45 calendar days of the date of receipt of the written appeal.

Documentation Guidelines

■ Primary Documentation

This information is gathered through a telephone interview between the student and the disability services coordinator. This is the student's narrative of his/her experience of disability, barriers

faced and effective/ineffective accommodations. It presumes honesty, self awareness and accuracy on the part of the student.

The College may also consider observation and interactions with the student when helpful to identify what he/she has experienced in terms of barriers to education (secondary documentation).

■ Tertiary Documentation: Information from External or Third Parties

This includes documentation from external sources such as medical records, assessments created by educational psychologists, health care providers, etc. This guidance will vary in its relevance and value depending upon the original context, credentials of the evaluator, level of detail provided and the comprehensiveness of the narrative.

After the intake interview, if it is determined that third party documentation is necessary and the student does not already have such documentation, the disability services coordinator will assist the student in identifying the information that should be collected.

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 (such as extended time for examinations, alternate media for textbooks, etc.), should submit their request to the disability services coordinator using the Online Disability Registration and Request for

Accommodation form, in writing to DSC@excelsior.edu or by an alternate accessible format which generates a durable record at least 30 calendar days prior to the start date of the course. While the disability services coordinator will review and attempt to fulfill late requests, the delay may result in accommodations not being available at the start of the term. Accommodations are never retroactive.

For UExcel® Exams and/or 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, allowing at least 30 calendar days between exam registration and the scheduling of the examination.

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

Students seeking reasonable accommodation for the CPNE® may request it at the time they register for the examination but no later than 30 calendar days prior to the scheduled date of the CPNE®. Students should not apply for CPNE® accommodations before they have submitted their CPNE application to the School of Nursing. Students should apply for accommodations for the CPNE® Skills Workshop at the time that they register for the workshop. While the disability services coordinator will review and attempt to fulfill late requests, the nature of the request may result in accommodations not being available for the scheduled date. **All requests for accommodation and documentation must be received by the disability services coordinator at least seven days prior to the scheduled date of the CPNE® in order to be processed.**

Examples of Reasonable Accommodations

Reasonable accommodations are provided to individuals on a case-by-case basis. Each individual is unique and each course or examination may impose different barriers to equal access. Although not all inclusive, the following list contains examples of some of the most frequently requested accommodations.

Accommodations for Educational Program

- For all students with hearing or speech disabilities, Excelsior provides TTY to facilitate telephone communication with the College. Students may also use a telephone relay service or may communicate through email, the MyExcelsior Message Center, or correspondence.
- 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.
- To the extent possible, the College will maintain a barrier-free web site.

Accommodations for Excelsior College® Examinations and UExcel® Exams

The College will modify the testing conditions for Excelsior College Examinations and UExcel Exams 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)
 - Large font size on computer monitor
 - Separate room

Accommodations for Excelsior College Courses

Students with disabilities who are taking Excelsior College courses may request accommodations providing that they do not fundamentally alter the validity or content of the course. Excelsior College seeks to develop courses which are ADA compliant and accessible to all students. Examples of modifications for courses include:

- Extended time for testing and assessments (time-and-one-half or double time)
- Provision of alternate print or presentation formats (e.g., books in electronic file, enlarged print, Braille)
- To the extent possible, Excelsior College will maintain a barrier-free Web environment

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 but are not limited to:

- Use of an amplified stethoscope
- Use of electronic devices for assessing vital signs
- Sign language interpreter
- Additional testing time which can be extended by 30 minutes for each Patient Care Situation in the CPNE® and five minutes for each Simulation Laboratory
- Limiting to 5 the number of assigned areas of care in the Patient Care Situation
- Additional break time between examination components
- Assistance with lifting and positioning of patient
- 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 in a secure manner 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 Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). To preserve student confidentiality, all information regarding requests for or delivery of reasonable accommodation is housed in a secure ADA database and access is restricted to staff supporting Excelsior’s disability services processes.