

FACULTY AND STAFF HANDBOOK

Psychiatric Disability

Description

Students with psychiatric disabilities who are registered at SAO generally have a persistent psychological impairment that adversely affects their educational access, their academic performance, and/or daily functioning. These students frequently require medication. Psychiatric impairments include, but are not limited to: depression, bipolar disability, anxiety disability, and schizophrenia.

In most situations a faculty member will not be aware that a student with a psychiatric impairment is in his or her class. Because students do not show any outward signs of the impairment does not mean that their impairment is any less disabling than a more visible impairment. Many of these students are fearful of and have faced stigmatization because of their impairment. Some do not need or request any accommodations, while others require a variety of accommodations. For some, the impairment is chronic and episodic in nature and requires accommodations only when the individual is experiencing symptoms during a psychiatric episode.

Colleges and universities are required by federal law to ensure program access by providing reasonable and appropriate accommodations. If a faculty member believes an accommodation listed in a student's accommodation letter would change the fundamental nature of the course or program, he or she should contact the SAO Director immediately. Accommodations for students with psychological impairments vary and are determined by the specific impairment as identified in the student's documentation, symptoms and/or side effects from medications.

Common accommodations include, but are not limited to:

- Extended time for in-class examinations
- Minimal distraction area for in-class examinations
- Preferential Seating
- Note taker
- Extensions for Assignments (decision made on an assignment-by-assignment basis in consultation with the student's faculty member and medical professional)
- Rescheduled Examinations (decision made on an examination by examination basis in consultation with the student's faculty member and medical professional)

Arranging for Accommodations

After receiving an Accommodation Letter from the Student Access Office, the faculty member will be contacted by the student to discuss how the accommodations listed in the letter will be arranged.

Suggestions

Welcoming and Supportive Environment: Many students with psychiatric disabilities fear stigmatization because of their impairment. If a student shares his or her impairment with an instructor, please be supportive.

Make-up Work

When students are experiencing a serious episode, he or she may miss class, assignments, and examinations. In these instances, please refer the student to the SAO Director who will assist the student in getting appropriate medical information. The director will also work with appropriate faculty, deans, etc to determine reasonable accommodations.

Behavior

Students with psychiatric impairments must follow the same behavior requirements as students without psychiatric impairments.

Confidentiality

Allow the student the same anonymity as other students (i.e., avoid pointing out the student or the alternative arrangements to the rest of the class).