



Student Guide  
To  
Disability Services

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VU OFFICE OF DISABILITY SERVICES  
STUDENT GUIDE TO DISABILITY SERVICES

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## **DIFFERENCES BETWEEN HIGH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE**

The office of Disability Services (DS) at Vincennes University (VU) offers resources to all students with disabilities, whether you recently graduated from high school or you've been out of high school for several years. However, if you are a recent high school graduate you may be confused by the changes with which you are faced and unsure what to expect as you prepare for college. Realistically, the transition from high school to college requires a period of adjustment for all students since the academic demands are different in the two environments. However, the transition for students with disabilities requires special preparation in order to progress smoothly.

During the high school years, much of the responsibility for accommodating your disability fell to school personnel, and your parents served as your primary advocates. Even though you were required to participate in case conferences and the implementation of your Individual Education Plan (IEP) you may have felt more on the "sidelines." As you transition to college, your parents no longer serve as your primary advocates and you are asked to assume this role. It is important you understand you will be expected to seek out the services you need, provide adequate documentation of your disability, self-identify your need for accommodations, and follow-through with your assigned responsibilities in the accommodation process.

Some of the confusion surrounding the transition from high school to college for students with disabilities can be traced to the fact that colleges and high schools are governed by different laws. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is no longer applicable as students transition to college and IEP's, mandated by IDEA, are no longer required at the college level. Even Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504) has different provisions for colleges than were in place for K-12 schools. IDEA and Section 504 mandate K-12 schools provide assessments to identify students with disabilities; however, when students enter college they bear the responsibility for providing evidence of their need for specific accommodations. In addition, Section 504 does not require colleges to provide accommodations that will fundamentally alter the essential academic requirements of a course or field of study, such as modified tests, or which are for personal use or study, such as tutors, and only requires the provision of accommodations that are considered "reasonable."

The disability services offered through DS are designed to assist all students with disabilities in navigating the accommodation process and learning self-advocacy skills for the college environment.

## THE OFFICE OF DISABILITY SERVICES

Staff in the DS office is committed to creating a “safe place” where students with disabilities feel respected and valued, and where they find meaningful support from caring professionals who encourage them to be independent and successful, as well as vital, contributing members of our community.

Our mission is to help students with disabilities participate more fully in educational programming, benefit from an accessible environment and achieve greater academic and personal success. The promotion of student independence and self-advocacy is instrumental to our mission and remains a major tenet of our philosophy for working with all our students.

Under the law, professors are responsible for ensuring students with disabilities receive reasonable and appropriate accommodations in their classes; however, as a student with a disability you are responsible for initiating and maintaining communication with each of your professors and for following through with your assigned responsibilities in the process. DS’ role is to assist the University in determining your eligibility for the specific college-level accommodations you are requesting, to advocate on your behalf with your professors, to assist you and your professors in setting up reasonable academic accommodations, and to locate the resources you need to be more successful in the college environment. The University never charges any additional costs to a qualified student for the provision of reasonable and appropriate accommodations for a disability.

All currently-enrolled Vincennes University students with disabilities, on any VU campus, are invited to register with DS in order to receive the most appropriate accommodations in their classes. The goal of DS is to help you overcome or compensate for obstacles related to a physical, emotional, learning, or other disability. Please complete registration in DS at the earliest date possible since **reasonable accommodations that necessitate additional staff or funding, contractual arrangements through an outside vendor, or structural modification or purchase (such as adaptive or assistive technology) may require longer than sixty (60) days to be arranged.** In rare instances, accommodation requests that are not made in a timely fashion may be delayed. Please be prepared to provide professional documentation/evidence of a disability and the need for specific accommodations. Generally, DS staff evaluates disability documentation and endorses those accommodations that help reduce or eliminate the effects of your specific symptoms or functional limitations. Once that evaluation has been completed, DS supplies you with a memo, listing your accommodations, to take to your professors.

## REGISTRATION AND APPEAL PROCESS

### **FORMS:**

Students may be asked to fill out a Student Questionnaire to assist staff in determining appropriate accommodations for their individual situations. This form may not be necessary for some students whose accommodations are apparent or when their high school accommodations are appropriate for the college environment.

A Release for Accommodations form should be filled out to activate your use of disability services once your eligibility for specific accommodations has been verified. We ask that you fill out a new Release for Accommodations form each semester so we know we have your permission to work with your professors, should they contact us. Please submit your Release for Accommodations form **at least 60 days before the start of each new semester** if you require accommodations that must be scheduled, ordered or purchased in advance. These accommodations may include sign language interpreters/CART services, books in an alternative format (e-text), closed captioned videos and films, all assistive technology, and structural modifications, including the use of an assistance animal in University Housing facilities.

### **DOCUMENTATION:**

All disability documentation must be received in DS before we are able to endorse your eligibility for specific academic accommodations. Please call and request our “Documentation Requirements” information sheet which describes the information we need in your documentation. By taking this information sheet to your licensed professional or specialist, he/she can better include the necessary information in either a **Diagnostic Narrative** (letter) or a **Diagnostic Test Report**. Once received in our office, your documentation will be evaluated to determine your eligibility for specific academic accommodations. Please note, we do not use high school education plans, such as a Section 504 or an individualized education plan (IEP), for determining college-level accommodations. However, you may choose to submit your most recent school plan, in addition to your professional documentation, in order to help us understand your history of accommodation use and better determine appropriate accommodations for your situation.

**Important:** these documentation requirements are the same for high school students who choose to participate in one of VU’s Early College or Dual Credit programs. Because you are registering to take classes to earn college-level credits with Vincennes University, you will be provided with college-level accommodations as opposed to high school accommodations. Please see the “Early College/Dual Credit” section at the end of this publication for more information.

Your accommodations will be individually “prescribed” based on how your disability affects you in the academic environment; therefore, the documentation you submit must specify your symptoms and functional limitations, which in turn will help us reasonably determine appropriate accommodations for your classes. If your documentation does not provide the information we need to make accommodation decisions, you may be asked to submit additional or updated documentation for

review and consideration. Generally, we do not ask that diagnostic testing be completed within a specified time frame, unless your testing is not a complete or comprehensive testing. We are more concerned about the quality of the information your testing provides, than we are with the age of your testing. Please contact the DS office for assistance in determining whether or not your documentation needs to be updated, or if we request additional information.

***APPEALS AND GRIEVANCES:***

You may appeal any disability-related decision or file a formal complaint against any member of the University community if you feel you have been treated unfairly or discriminated against because of a disability. However, you are strongly encouraged to first take your concerns to the faculty or staff person responsible for the decision or behavior, followed by contact with that individual's supervisor if the matter remains unresolved. If you are uncomfortable approaching the faculty or staff person, please contact the DS director for assistance and advice. In most cases, this process will provide the quickest successful resolution to your concerns. If this informal process is unsuccessful, you may contact the University's Judicial Affairs office (in the Dean of Students office) for information on the complaint process.

**MEETINGS AND APPOINTMENTS**

***ACCUPLACER TESTING WITH ACCOMMODATION:***

If you have a documented disability and require accommodations for your Accuplacer (placement) tests, including tests taken at approved off-campus testing sites, please follow these steps in setting an appointment:

1. Register for Disability Services; this includes providing the DS office with adequate evidence of your need for disability accommodations before you schedule an appointment for testing. Once we have identified the accommodations for which you qualify, we will send a memo verifying your accommodations to the VU Assessment Center. You will be notified it's time to contact the VU Assessment Center in the letter you receive from us about your approved accommodations.
2. **Prior to your StartVU date, contact the VU Assessment Center at (812) 888-5404** to schedule an appointment for Accuplacer testing with accommodations, EVEN IF YOU WANT TO TAKE YOUR TESTS DURING STARTVU. All Accuplacer tests are untimed, are administered on a computer, and the mathematics test includes a "virtual" calculator in the program. If you require other accommodations, you must take your tests in the Learning Resource Center (library), where additional accommodations are available.
3. If you will be taking your Accuplacer tests at your StartVU day, you **must** go to the VU Assessment Center, in the Learning Resource Center (library), to take your tests. Staff administering the tests to the large group are not able to provide you with your pre-scheduled accommodations, because

their computers are not installed with the appropriate software for accommodations.

4. If you will be taking your Accuplacer tests at an approved off-campus testing site, **you must still contact the VU Assessment Center staff at (812) 888-5404** so they can assist in arranging for your accommodations. However, we cannot guarantee that testing sites not affiliated with the Vincennes University system will be able to provide your accommodations. Additionally, these other sites often charge a fee for testing.

***DISABILITY SERVICES STAFF:***

All new students are encouraged to meet with the DS director after they have completed their registration for accommodations. During this appointment, we will discuss the necessary processes for arranging your individually prescribed accommodations, as well as any questions or concerns you may have. Regular appointments with the director throughout the semester are not required, however, it is imperative you notify the director if you have a problem situation, you feel your accommodations are not effective, and **especially** if you do not receive your approved accommodations.

***FACULTY:***

If you choose to receive accommodations in your classes, you are expected to self-identify as a student with a disability and establish a working relationship with each of your professors so they have the opportunity to provide appropriate classroom accommodations. An accommodation memo which lists your approved accommodations will be provided to you to assist you in notifying your professors about your need for accommodations.

***ACADEMIC ADVISORS:***

All students are expected to meet with an academic advisor in the College of their major prior to enrolling for classes each semester. Advisors assist students in determining appropriate classes to take, scheduling and registering for classes and will confer with students regarding academic progress and standards. If you have questions about the advising process or are not sure with which advisor you should meet, please contact the departmental secretary in the College of your major. The name of your assigned advisor is also available by logging into your BANNER account. Students who are undecided about a major or who have been admitted to VU on a provisional basis are advised by “University College” advisors, located in the Student Success Center, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of Davis Hall.

**RELATED COMMUNITY RESOURCES**

***VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION:***

We recommend all students apply for services through their area Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR, OVR, DVR, DORS, etc.) to help offset the costs of obtaining a college education. VR is a governmental agency which provides services to assist

people with disabilities in preparing for, obtaining or retaining employment. For more information about VR services or to apply, please contact the VR office in your county of residence.

**LEARNING ALLY:**

If you use alternative-format textbooks, you are encouraged to become a member of the professional audio book service, *Learning Ally*. By accessing their web page at [www.learningally.org](http://www.learningally.org), you can register for a free membership which includes "ReadHear" software and access to downloadable textbooks and an extensive audio library.

**BOOKSHARE.ORG:**

Vincennes University has an organizational account with the *Bookshare.org* and students are eligible for individual subscriptions to this service, for the length of time they are enrolled in classes at VU. This service enables "all-you-can-read" access to books in easy-to-use digital formats on your computer, including with a screen reader or screen enlarging software, and by manipulating the color/contrast of materials. A variety of "talking" software applications is available with membership, and provide members with several options for reading the books. Books are also available in contracted digital Braille. For more information, please visit their site at [www.bookshare.org](http://www.bookshare.org). Please also set up an appointment with the DS director for assistance in registering for your individual subscription, **if you are eligible to receive books in alternative formats.**

**ACCOMMODATIONS AND RESOURCES**

Each student's accommodation needs are evaluated on an individual basis. However, the following are some specific accommodations which are more "standardized." Please note: the University reserves the right to substitute requested accommodations with alternative accommodations. We will only do so if there is a valid reason and the alternative accommodations are appropriate and equally effective.

**ACCESSIBLE (E-TEXT OR BRAILLE) TEXTBOOKS:**

As mentioned above, if you are a student with a documented print disability and are eligible to obtain textbooks in an alternative format (ie: e-text or braille), you will be able to obtain your accessible textbooks through Bookshare.org. Please meet with the DS director for assistance in registering for your individual, personalized subscription. Then once you are registered for your classes each semester, you will be able to independently access the Bookshare.org website and download your textbooks to read on your computer. **If any of your textbooks are not available through Bookshare.org**, the DS director will assist you in obtaining e-text books from the publishers, as well as braille materials for students who are unable to use electronic text. Since obtaining your textbooks in an accessible format through a different source may require an extended period of time (especially for braille materials), it is essential you meet with the DS director **at least 60 days before your need your textbooks.**

***COURSEWORK ASSISTANCE:***

Vincennes University does not provide private tutoring for any student on the VU campuses. However, if you attend “on-campus” at the Vincennes campus and need study skills assistance or have questions about your coursework material, you will be referred to the Kirkwood Learning Center, Math Lab, Writing Center, Reading Lab, Accounting Lab, Student Success Room, or McCormick Science Resource Center. If you attend any of the other VU campuses, please inquire about the availability of coursework assistance by contacting the professor of your class.

***CLASS NOTES:***

If you qualify to receive copies of class notes, it is essential you work closely with each professor to make specific arrangements for receiving those notes; your accommodation letter outlines this responsibility. Some of the possible options your professors may choose for providing notes include: copies of notes from a peer in class, notes posted on Blackboard, or copies of their own notes. Even if you’ve made arrangements with your professors to receive class notes, you should still attempt to take notes relative to your ability. In addition, the University has a mandatory attendance policy and professors are not obligated to provide you with notes on days for which you have unexcused absences.

***SIGN LANGUAGE SERVICES:***

It is essential you register for your classes at the earliest date possible and fill out your Release for Accommodations form **at least 60 days before the start of each semester**. Qualified sign language interpreters are in high demand and short supply and we need as much time as possible to locate and hire sign language interpreters. If you are a Vocational Rehabilitation client, generally your VR counselor will make appropriate arrangements for these services. However, please let us know immediately if this is not the case in your situation.

If you would like to request interpreter services for activities outside the classroom (extracurricular activities,) you should submit your request to the VU department or faculty or staff person organizing the event, since they are responsible for the accessibility of their events.

***TEST ACCOMMODATIONS:***

Accommodations for the testing situation are the most common accommodations requested by students with disabilities. While tests presented in the college environment cannot be modified (such as limiting the number of test questions or answer choices) which is a standard practice in K-12 schools, there are other types of modifications that may be available to students who qualify. Extended time for testing, tests administered in a separate location with less distractions, use of a test reader or scribe, use of a computer with spell check for essays, and use of a calculator on tests which may not otherwise allow the use of a calculator, are all modifications which may be available. The specific test accommodations offered to you are directly related to the specific ways the disability affects you (your functional limitations) in the testing situation.

***COURSE SUBSTITUTIONS/WAIVERS:***

If you would like to petition for a substitution of a course that is required for either the University core or for your major, it is very important to begin the process as soon as feasible in your college career. However, the University respectfully requests that you explore all possible options for the successful completion of all required coursework, before a substitution is requested. Please set an appointment with the DS director to determine appropriate options for completion of your required curriculum and for specific information about the appropriate processes to follow.

***ASSISTANCE ANIMALS:***

Under the ADA, a service animal is a type of assistance animal defined as “a dog or miniature horse that is specifically trained to work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a physical, sensory, psychiatric/mental, or intellectual disability.” **These are the only types of animals that are considered service animals.** The work or tasks performed by a service animal must be directly related to the individual's disability. Service animals are also permitted in all campus buildings and facilities open to the public, as long as safety is not an issue. Per ADA regulations, the University reserves the right to ask if an animal is required because of a disability and what work or tasks it has been trained to perform.

Assistance animals, including other animals such as cats and guinea pigs, that only provide emotional support, comfort, therapy or companionship do not fall under the ADA definition of a service animal, and are not permitted in most campus buildings and facilities. However, any type of assistance animal may be permitted to live with a student with a documented disability in University Housing facilities, upon approval and completion of the required registration process. The University reserves the right to request that an animal be removed from University property if it is taken into a restricted area, it poses a health or safety risk, the handler fails to keep it under appropriate control, or it is not housebroken.

***HOUSING ACCOMMODATIONS:***

Adapted residence hall rooms are available for students who need accessible or unique accommodations due to a disability, or those who require any adjustments to their housing situation due to a disability or chronic health condition. If you have a disability that requires an accommodation in your housing situation, check the appropriate box on the housing application and submit a Housing Adjustment Request completed by your doctor, to DS. We will notify the Housing and Residence Life office that the housing accommodation you have requested is due to a disability, so you won't be charged extra fees. If you are requesting a structural modification to the living environment, you **must submit your request a minimum of 60 days before the move-in date for campus housing facilities.**

If you have a disability and are requesting an exception to VU's pet policy, found in the Residence Hall Handbook, for the use of an assistance (service, emotional support, comfort, or therapy) animal in a campus housing facility, please submit an Assistance Animal Registration Form to DS, in addition to your completed Housing Adjustment

Request. Both forms can be downloaded from the Disability Services web page, or obtained from the DS office, located in the south lobby of Vigo Hall. **Please note only service animals, not emotional support, comfort, or therapy animals, are allowed in any campus buildings other than housing facilities.**

***ADAPTIVE EQUIPMENT/ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY:***

If you are in need of an evaluation for adaptive equipment/assistive technology to determine the most appropriate equipment/technology for your situation, DS staff will be happy to provide you with a community referral for such an evaluation. If you've already obtained an evaluation and specific adaptive equipment/assistive technology has been recommended, or if you know which equipment/technology can best assist you in participating in your classes, please notify the DS director at **least 60 days prior to the start of the semester** for which the equipment/technology is needed. When you submit your request, please be prepared to provide as much information about the product as possible. Specific product and purchasing/vendor information will need to be obtained before the DS director can seek authorization to place the order and submit the purchase for payment. Only adaptive equipment or assistive technology that is necessary for you to participate in your classes will be provided; any equipment or technology that is used primarily for personal use or study will not be endorsed by DS staff.

***ATTENDANCE/ABSENCE VERIFICATION:***

Vincennes University has a mandatory attendance policy which requires students to attend all sessions of the classes in which they are enrolled. However, there may be situations for which you must be absent from class. These situations include accident, illness, hospitalization, death of a family member or close friend, or when the symptoms of your disability periodically become so severe it is not possible to attend a class. When you miss classes, the responsibility to provide verification (evidence of the reason) for the absence falls directly and solely on you.

The VU Dean of Students office, located in room 201 of the Beckes Student Union, assists all students in verifying their absences to faculty, notifying faculty when students experience an emergency and must be away from campus for an extended period of time, requesting course work make-up privileges, and appealing an administrative withdrawal from a class. **Please note:** you should not confuse an absence verification with an excused absence. The Dean of Students office assists in verifying absences while excusing absences rests solely with individual faculty members. It is very important you always communicate with professors whenever absences occur and to make-up missed coursework in a timely manner.

Please contact the Dean of Students office at 812-888-4301 to request more information or to fill out the appropriate paperwork. The DS director will also assist you in initiating the absence verification process, upon request.

***ACCOMMODATIONS NOT ENDORSED:***

Accommodations are only considered appropriate if they do not compromise or fundamentally alter the essential academic requirements of a course or field of study.

Accommodations which do so will not be endorsed by DS staff. Accommodations are also not sponsored by the University if they are for the purpose of personal use or study, such as a wheelchair or other individualized services needed for independent living, mental health, rehabilitation, individual remediation or private tutoring

## **OTHER UNIVERSITY PROGRAMS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

### ***STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES (COPE SSS and EXPERIENCE VU SSS)***

The Student Support Services (SSS) programs belong to one of eight grant-funded TRIO programs offered through the U.S. Department of Education. SSS helps eligible students successfully complete their degrees and provides free, comprehensive services through professional and peer tutoring; academic, career and financial aid counseling; academic support groups; learning and testing accommodations; computers with assistive technology; mentoring; and workshops.

Please contact COPE SSS staff in room 396 of Vigo Hall or by calling 812-888-4515, or the Experience VU staff in room 296 of Vigo Hall or by calling 812-888-4061, for information about qualifications or for an application for their respective programs.

### ***STUDENT TRANSITION INTO EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS (STEP)***

VU offers an academic support program which provides comprehensive services for students with documented learning disabilities and attention deficit disorders. You may have other disabilities, but you also must have an LD or ADD in order to participate. In STEP, student strengths, rather than deficits are emphasized and students are encouraged to develop compensatory techniques to be more successful. Benefits for participating in the program include individualized and peer tutoring; remedial and support classes; weekly academic progress reports; computerized LD assistance; program accommodations; and coordination with Counseling, the Career Center, and DS. STEP is a fee-for-service program and space in the program is limited. For more information, call the STEP office at 812-888-4214.

### ***SUMMER BRIDGE PROGRAM***

The VU Summer Bridge Program is designed to provide incoming and freshman level students with a summer college orientation experience and the opportunity to get a head start on their academic goals. The program takes place over 5 weeks during the summer and participating students live on campus, take a minimum of 6 credit hours of courses, and are enrolled in a non-credit seminar course. Students are also offered the opportunity to learn study and time management skills, and engage in social and recreational activities. For more information or to obtain an application for the program, call 812-888-4219 or visit the website at [www.vinu.edu/summerbridge](http://www.vinu.edu/summerbridge).

### ***EARLY COLLEGE/PROJECT EXCEL DUAL CREDIT***

In the college setting, the accommodations that students with disabilities receive may not be exactly the same ones they received in high school, since the laws that apply to colleges and universities are not the same laws that apply to the K-12 school system. Vincennes University reserves the right to determine appropriate, **college-level** accommodations for

high school students in the VU Early College/Project EXCEL dual credit programs who take Accuplacer tests and classes for college-level credit with Vincennes University. However, the provision of college-level accommodations is only applicable to those classes taken for college credit; IEP or 504 Plan accommodations are still provided for those classes taken for high school credit, only.

If you anticipate participation in a VU Early College/Project EXCEL program, please have an appropriate high school official submit your disability documentation for review for college-level accommodations to the DS director at Vincennes University. Please **DO NOT** send only an IEP; documentation requirements are the same for high school students seeking college credit as for college students and are listed under “Documentation” in this publication. Once appropriate accommodations are determined, you will receive a letter outlining your accommodations, with a second letter to provide to your TOR or other school official, in order to receive accommodations in the class you are taking for VU credit.

If you are required to take the Accuplacer tests prior to taking a class for VU college credit, you will need to make arrangements with the VU Assessment Center after you have been approved for your accommodations by the DS office, **even if you are taking the Accuplacer tests at your high school or another approved testing site.** Please call the VU Assessment Center at 812-888-5404, so staff can assist in coordinating your Accuplacer testing with accommodations.

*For more information on registering for Accuplacer, classroom or housing accommodations, please call the Disability Services office at **(812) 888-4501** or visit our office in the **south lobby of Vigo Hall**. Documentation can be faxed confidentially to **(812) 888-2087** or emailed to the DS director at **lmsmith@vinu.edu**.*