

Disabilities Policy

Soka University of America (SUA) is committed to ensuring equal treatment, educational opportunity and human dignity for students with learning, physical/medical, and psychological/ psychiatric disabilities. SUA is committed to providing reasonable and appropriate accommodations to otherwise qualified students with disabilities. These accommodations include academic adjustment and auxiliary aides necessary to ensure access to the University’s overall education program in accordance with Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and ADA Amendments Acts of 2008.

Whenever the need for a special accommodation or auxiliary aid is necessary, the department/area responsible for the program or service will work with the Office of Student Services to ensure that reasonable accommodations are made. Nevertheless, an academic unit is not required to fundamentally alter the nature of its academic program in order to accommodate students.

The student is presumed to have independent living skills sufficient to provide for their personal needs on campus. If this is not the case, the student must, at their own expense, employ a personal attendant or mobility aide. Students requiring specialized medical care beyond that ordinarily offered through the Student Health Center must be prepared to bear the expense of this care through a general hospital or a private physician/ clinic of their choice.

It is the student’s responsibility to provide diagnosis and supporting documentation to establish the severity of their condition and the implications on major life activities. Upon receipt of relevant documentation and assessment data, the student shall receive reasonable and necessary accommodation, including adjustments and aids.

The ADA defines an individual with a disability as a person who

1. has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities of that person,
2. has a record of such an impairment, or
3. is regarded as having such an impairment.

Major life activities can include caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, and working.

Syllabi Notification (For Faculty)

Faculty are requested to include the following statement in their syllabi: “Students desiring accommodations on the basis of physical, learning, or psychological disability for this class are to contact the Office of Student Services. Student Services is located in Student Affairs.”

REQUESTING SERVICES AND ACCOMMODATIONS

Students requesting services or accommodations must self-identify and make an appointment with the Office of Student Services. Students who request accommodations/services of other faculty and staff are to be referred to Student Services.

The Office of Student Services will evaluate all requested accommodation and services. Factors involved in the evaluation of the request include the nature of the disability, the impact of such condition upon various aspects of a student's life (academic, social, access issues, etc.), and the type and extent of the requested accommodation. If a student is requesting accommodations and services, the student is responsible for providing appropriate documentation.

Student Services reserves the right to contact appropriate faculty and staff to discuss requests.

Temporary Accommodations

Students may be approved for temporary accommodations at the discretion of the Office of Student Services. In most cases, students will have submitted some form of clinical documentation prior to receiving temporary accommodations. Temporary accommodations may also be implemented to assist students with short-term physical or psychological impairments (e.g. broken limb, Adjustment Disorder). Temporary accommodations will generally not exceed one academic semester.

PROCEDURES FOR REQUESTING SERVICES AND ACCOMMODATIONS

- 1. Make an appointment with the Office of Student Services.** A student must make an appointment with the Office of Student Services and provide documentation of an eligible condition. The eligible condition must have been verified by an appropriate professional/physician within the last three years. Students applying specifically for Learning Disability services must provide an assessment.
- 2. Receive professor notification letter.** Students who are approved for academic accommodations will receive professor notification letters from the Dean of Students to take to their professors. These letters will clearly state the recommended accommodations for each specific course. Clinical information about students will not appear in these letters.
- 3. Present notification letter to professors.** Students are responsible for presenting the accommodation letter to the faculty member, and are expected to discuss the implementation of the accommodations with their professor. For example, if a student is eligible for extended time on examinations in a separate distraction-reduced environment, the student should discuss with the professor the arrangements for taking examinations under these conditions. Professors are encouraged to contact Student Services with any questions or concerns regarding accommodations.

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS AND SUPPORT SERVICES

The Office of Student Services will identify and provide appropriate accommodations upon receiving appropriate documentation and meeting with the student on an individual basis, or, as the case may be, make a request to the faculty to provide such accommodation for the student.

- Alternative testing arrangements (additional time, oral responses, use of reader and/or scribe, enlarged print, etc.) for eligible students. If a student needs the Office of Student Services to coordinate with the instructor on specific test administration, arrangements should be made with the Office of Student Services at least three working days prior to the scheduled test in order to ensure staff availability.
- Reader services to visually impaired students. If a student has a documented learning disability, the student may also qualify for reader services with proper documentation.
- Counseling services are provided for personal situations which may impact the student's ability to succeed in college.
- Housing accommodations such as rooms with a bathtub seat or wheelchair accessible shower, a visual doorbell, or specific location may all be requested based on need. Disability Services also reviews requests for an Assistance Animal (also known as an Emotional Support Animal) to live in the residence halls.
- Paid note takers are available upon request when student's disability requires such a service (having a note taker is NOT a substitute for attending class. Note-taking services during an absence will be provided only when the absence is directly related to the disability and has been arranged in advance with the faculty member and Student Services).
- Transportation services are provided during regularly scheduled shuttle hours by coordinating with the Manager of Shuttle Services.
- Copy services for text in large print, orientation prior to the start of classes, priority registration before the general student population registers, and ample and conveniently located accessible parking spots may be provided.

Disclaimer

The university is not required to provide accommodations which are fundamental alterations of academic requirements. The accommodations approved at SUA are considered reasonable for certain classes or educational settings at this university and may not apply to other institutions.

STUDENT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

To ensure appropriate accommodations are met, it's important for a student to understand their rights and responsibilities.

Students have the right to:

- Voluntarily work with Student Services.
- Not be precluded from participating in any other course, program, or activity offered by the university or from receiving basic accommodations required by state and federal law.
- Receive a copy of Disability Services Policies & Procedures.
- Privacy where all records maintained by Student Services personnel pertaining to the disability(s) be protected from disclosure and be subject to all other requirements for handling of student records.

Students have the responsibility to:

- Provide Student Services with the necessary information, documentation, and/or forms (medical, educational, etc.) to verify their disability.
- Make an appointment with the Office of Student Services each year to update any changes in accommodation needs.
- Assume personal responsibility for taking any medications.
- Notify instructors when unable to attend class.
- Provide attendant care if that is necessary. This service cannot be provided by Student Services staff.

TRANSITIONING FROM HIGH SCHOOL TO UNIVERSITY

Students with disabilities often face greater transitional changes at the post-secondary level than their peers. The following are some key differences between high school and university that you should know.

	High School	University
Primary Legislation	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973	Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990
Assessment	School conducts assessment and provides you with documentations of disability	The student must provide current documentation of disability by a qualified professional
Services and Meetings	School initiates services and sets up meetings for you	The student initiates requests for services, accommodations, and meetings with university staff
Educational Goals	School often creates and monitors progress for you	The student develops and monitors their own progress
Course Workload	May be modified	Will not be modified
Homework	May consist of one to two hours of study time per day, much of it done in class	A student can expect to study two to three times or more than the number of hours spent in class per week
Reading	Requirements for classes may be done with minimal outside work	College is a reading-intensive environment—analytical skills are required
Accommodations	Determined by broader educational and legal mandates	Determined by impact of disability, qualified individual, and essential components of course

GRIEVANCES PROCEDURES

The purpose of a student grievance procedure is to provide a process by which student-related issues may be resolved in a fair and efficient manner. The procedure is intended to achieve an equitable solution to an issue with due regard for the rights of the student, the faculty, the student body, and the university.

Students with disabilities are responsible for contacting the Office of Student Services if reasonable accommodations are not implemented in an effective or timely way. The Office of Student Services works with you to resolve disagreements regarding recommended accommodations.

Students with disabilities may file a grievance with the Dean of Students if they believe they have been discriminated against on the basis of their disability. You may also appeal to the Dean of Students if an agreement between you, the faculty member, and Student Services cannot be reached.

For inquiries regarding Soka University of America disability policy, please contact the Office of Student Services at (949) 480-4018 or visit our website (www.soka.edu) under Student Services for a more detailed description of the Disabilities Services Policies and Procedures.