



# Policy for Accessibility Services

## Mission and Objectives

### Mission Statement

Mount Mary University, an urban Catholic university for women sponsored by the School Sisters of Notre Dame, provides an environment for the development of the whole person. The university encourages leadership, integrity, and a deep sense of social justice arising from sensitivity to moral values and Christian principles.

Mount Mary commits itself to excellence in teaching and learning with an emphasis on thinking critically and creatively. The baccalaureate curriculum integrates the liberal arts with career preparation for women of diverse ages and personal circumstances; the programs at the graduate level provide opportunities for both men and women to enhance their professional excellence.

### Accessibility Services Mission

Mount Mary University is committed to providing equal opportunities in higher education to academically qualified students with disabilities. We work towards an appreciation of students' abilities through partnerships with students, faculty and staff to create a campus community that values the unique talents each person brings.

### Objectives

1. Assist students with documentation protocol.
2. Establish appropriate accommodations with students and disseminate this information to appropriate university personnel.
3. Serve as a support source for students with disabilities regarding topics such as academic strategies and successful communication.
4. Provide assistance to university personnel as they accommodate otherwise qualified students with disabilities in the Universities courses, programs and activities.
5. Maintain records on disabled students' disabilities and accommodations in a confidential manner.

## University Policies and Procedures

### The University Policy on Individuals with Disabilities

Mount Mary University is committed to providing equal access to academically qualified students with disabilities. A part-time Coordinator of Accessibility Services addresses the needs of otherwise qualified students with recognized physical, learning, sensory or psychological disabilities affecting a major life activity (e.g. seeing, hearing, eating, sleeping, walking, standing, lifting, bending, speaking, breathing, learning, reading, concentrating, thinking, communicating, working, etc.). Students with disabilities have access to tools and resources that provide them with an opportunity to demonstrate mastery of course content. Mount Mary does not however, offer a specialized curriculum for

persons with disabilities nor specialized disability advisors. Requested accommodations must be reasonable and students should not assume that accommodations provided in high school will be provided at Mount Mary University. Available services will vary depending on the nature of the disability.

### Admissions Policy

University applicants with disabilities bear no obligation to disclose their disability during the application process. However, an applicant may choose to disclose his/her disability to the Admissions Office if the student believes that s/he does not meet the Universities regular admissions requirements. The disability may be taken into consideration in relationship to the student's overall achievement, the effect of the disability on the student's academic achievement, and the likelihood of the student's success in Mount Mary's programs, courses and activities.

### **Accommodations Request Process**

There are several steps to receiving accommodations for a disability at Mount Mary. They include providing documentation, establishing appropriate accommodations, communicating about accommodations. Students must allow at least 4 weeks for accommodation requests.

### Documentation

In order to be eligible for reasonable accommodations from Mount Mary University, the student must provide current (within the past three years), relevant and comprehensive documentation of the disability and the disability's impact on the student's participation in a course, program or activity. The provided documentation will be reviewed by the Coordinator of Accessibility Services and must meet the following criteria:

1. A diagnostic statement identifying the disability, date of the current diagnostic evaluation, and the date of the original diagnosis
2. A description of the diagnostic criteria and or diagnostic test used
3. A description of the current functional impact of the disability
4. Treatments, medications, assistive devices/services currently prescribed or in use.
5. A description of the expected progression or stability of the impact of the disability over time should be included
6. The credentials of the diagnosing professional(s)

Should documentation from the student be inadequate or incomplete, the University reserves the right to require additional documentation. For instance, a 504 plan or Individualized Education Program (IEP) may not meet the standards listed above, but could be used as part of a comprehensive set of documentation data. The cost of providing additional documentation will be borne by the student. The Coordinator of Accessibility Services can, at the student's request, provide contact information for off campus testing services. If it is necessary for the University to request a second professional opinion, the Coordinator will assist with the referral process. The University reserves the right to deny accommodation until all of the necessary documentation is received. Final determination of appropriate accommodations will be determined in accordance with the mandates of the

Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act, as well as court and Department of Education/ Office of Civil Rights rulings related to these two laws. Documentation of a disability does not guarantee accommodations and services.

### Establishing Accommodations

Once the University receives all necessary documentation, the Coordinator of Accessibility Services will review the materials for accommodations. The review of all student accommodation requests will include consideration of the following:

- Is the student who seeks accommodation otherwise qualified to participate in the course, program or activity?
- Did the student request accommodation from the College and provide documentation as outlined above?
- Is the requested accommodation relevant and reasonable to the documented disability?
- Will the requested accommodation fundamentally alter the affected course, program or activity?

Next, the Coordinator of Accessibility Services will identify the reasonable accommodations available in a conference with the student and, when appropriate, in collaboration with faculty members. During that meeting, the student and Coordinator will establish the student's accommodation plan and Accommodation Plan form. The accommodation plan, however, may be revised at any point during the student's course of study at the University. Necessary changes might be related to the nature of the student's disability and/or as a result of additional professional documentation that may be provided. It is the student's responsibility to keep the Coordinator of Accessibility Services informed of any additional information and/or changes relating to his/her disability that will impact the current accommodation plan.

### Communicating about Accommodations

Once the accommodation plan has been established, the student is responsible for delivering the accommodation letter to the University personnel the Accommodation Plan form. All students are encouraged to maintain open communication in conjunction with the accommodations letter with course instructors, advisors and administrators facilitating programs regarding accommodations. Such dialogue might include exchanging contact information in the case of a necessary absence, details about how technology might enhance the learning experience, which side of the room it is best for the student to sit in, etc. This dialogue should always be within the student's comfort range. Students with disabilities are also encouraged to review the rights and responsibilities section of this document.

Students experiencing difficulty in establishing accommodations and/or receiving them once the accommodation plan has been established and letters distributed should contact the Coordinator of Accessibility Services. The Coordinator will work with the student and

any appropriate party to seek resolution to such a situation. Students may utilize the Appeal Procedure outlined in this document.

### Appealing an Accommodation Request

Otherwise qualified students who request accommodation, according to the Universities' published procedures for a documented disability, and who believe that reasonable accommodation(s) has been denied, may submit a written appeal of the denial to the Dean for Student Affairs. The written appeal must be submitted within ten (10) school days of the alleged denial and identify the following:

- the date the accommodation(s) request in question was made
- identification of the student's disability
- the accommodation(s) sought
- copies of the Accommodation Request and Accommodation Plan forms verifying the current accommodation plan.

The student also must attach any additional documentation regarding the disability that the Dean for Student Affairs should review. Within ten (10) school days of his/her review, the Coordinator will inform the student as to whether the proper accommodation procedures have been followed. During the course of the appeal process, and if all preliminary procedures to request accommodations have been followed by the student, the University will continue to provide the reasonable accommodation(s) offered at the accommodation conference with the student and outlined in the Accommodation Plan form. The decision of the Dean for Student Affairs will be considered final. The student's filing of an appeal according to this procedure does not mean that the student gives up his/her right to pursue other appeal processes through outside regulatory agencies.

### **Rights and Responsibilities Relating to Students with Disabilities**

University personnel maintain the following rights and responsibilities:

- Establish and maintain the academic and technical standards for the courses, programs and activities offered and evaluate students using those standards.
- Evaluate students on the basis of their abilities, not disabilities.
- Provide reasonable accommodations for otherwise qualified students with disabilities in courses, programs or activities offered by the University.
- Maintain the confidentiality of student records, except where permitted or required by law.
- Request students to identify a disability and request accommodation in a timely manner.
- Confirm a student's disability status by requesting and receiving current, relevant documentation to support a request for accommodation.
- Deny a request for accommodation if the student fails to provide the requested documentation or if the documentation establishes that the accommodation is not warranted.
- Determine the appropriate standards for the construction and maintenance of its facilities.

- Select the reasonable accommodations to be provided from among equally effective accommodations.
- Refuse unreasonable accommodations, service requests, and/or facility-related barrier removal requests that pose a threat to health and safety and/or fundamentally alter a course, program or activity of the University.

Otherwise qualified students with disabilities have the following rights and responsibilities:

- Meet the academic and technical standards for the courses, programs and activities in which they wish to participate.
- Provide timely notice to the Coordinator of Accessibility Services when an accommodation is needed.
- Provide documentation of one's disability and the impact of the disability on the student's participation in a course, program or activity.
- Follow all required University procedures to obtain reasonable accommodations from the University.
- Participate full or equally in the Universities' courses, programs or activities with reasonable accommodations.
- Expect confidentiality with regard to records, including those related to disability.

Upon enrollment, Mount Mary University expects that each student will continue to demonstrate that they are otherwise qualified by meeting or exceeding the academic standards set by the institution whether or not accommodations have been requested and/or utilized.

### **Accommodations and Services provided by Mount Mary University:**

Depending on the nature of the disability, students at Mount Mary have access to tools and resources designed to be supportive and promote the development of self-advocacy skills while maintaining fundamental academic integrity and standards. These services include:

Academic Accommodations such as preferential seating in class, recorded lectures, volunteer note-takers, textbooks in alternative formats, enlargements of syllabus and class handouts;

Adaptive Technology such as FM System, WindowEyes, Kurzweil Reader, Dragon Naturally Speaking

Test/Quiz Accommodations such as readers, scribes, extended testing time, calculator, and computer use in our Student Success Center.

## **Confidentiality and Disclosure of Disability Information**

Disability information, like any other confidential medical record, does not become part of a student's permanent educational record. Disability information is generally housed in the Coordinator of Accessibility Services office unless the student also provides it to another campus department. Copies of disability documentation can only be provided with a written release signed and dated by the student.

Students who request services based on the reasonable accommodation plan developed with the Coordinator acknowledge that some level of disclosure to certain faculty and/or staff may be necessary in order to provide requested accommodations. Students are under no obligation to disclose a disability unless an accommodation is being requested.