

Frequently Asked Questions

What Is the Access and Disability Services (ADS)?

The ADS office provides services to students with disabilities to assure access to all facets of the HGSE community. It is the office that oversees implementation of academic and programmatic accommodations for students with disabilities.

Access and Disability Services provides leadership to ensure an accessible, welcoming learning environment for students with disabilities while ensuring compliance with federal and state regulations. Additionally ADS ensures consistent implementation of standard University disability-related practices procedures and resources including but not limited to the provision of reasonable accommodations, assistive technology and adaptive equipment.

ADS acts as a point of contact and resource at HGSE for disability related information, procedures and services. Accommodations are available to enable eligible students with disabilities to have equal access to programs, events and services at HGSE and university wide.

What defines “DISABILITY?”

According to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, ADA 2008 a disability is a mental or physical impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, regardless of duration or condition. A disability can also be defined as a chronic illness which periodically causes episodes severely limiting life activities such as thinking, learning, breathing, walking, hearing, seeing, speaking, etc.



How do students know if they are eligible for disability services?

The student contacts or is referred to the **Access and Disability Services (ADS) Office** located in Gutman Library 124 A & B (ads@gse.harvard.edu)

- Submits the ADS Request for Service Form
- Provides acceptable documentation
- Meets with the ADS Administrator as soon as possible
- Receives notification of eligibility within 10 days of intake interview and documentation review

“At first, I was hesitant to go to the ADS office because I didn’t want to be labeled as ‘disabled’... But instead of mandates and labels, I found confidentiality, collaboration, encouragement, and resources”
- Master’s Student, 2012

Can students request housing and food service alterations?

HGSE ADS office works cooperatively with Harvard University services to accommodate students’ special housing and dietary needs.

A variety of medical illness, disabilities and psychological conditions may necessitate special consideration in the housing assignment process. Students with disabilities are asked to provide medical documentation to HGSE ADS office when requesting disability related considerations for housing such as a residence with an elevator, accessible restroom, comfort animal, a single room or air conditioning.

We then verify the need for housing accommodations with the residence hall or Harvard Real Estate properties who then work directly with the eligible student.

Students must follow the housing guidelines and notification dates found on the housing website. HGSE students living in Harvard residence halls on meal plans who have special dietary needs must submit

medical documentation to HGSE ADS office to verify their dietary requirements for the dining services to offer alternatives. Keep in mind that ADS does not process requests concerning religious dictates, personal food choices or preferences, or other non-medically based dietary requirements. However students can contact dining services to process non-medically based dietary requirements.

What defines acceptable documentation?*

Guidelines for documentation should include:

- The credentials of the evaluator(s)
- A diagnostic statement identifying the disability
- A description of the diagnostic methodology used
- A description of the current functional limitations
- A description of the expected progression or stability of the disability
- A description of current and past accommodations, services and/or medications
- Recommendations for accommodations, adaptive devices, assistive services, compensatory strategies

*Association for higher education and disability guidelines



What are academic accommodations, modifications, and auxiliary aids and services?

Through ADS students can make arrangements for modifications, accommodations, auxiliary aids and services such as testing adjustments, access technologies, learning strategies, self-advocacy, testing accommodation facilities, e-text for visually impaired, captioning and CART service for hearing impaired, and facilities access and disability advising, in addition to referrals for Harvard University resources.

Reasonable and appropriate modifications and accommodations create equal opportunity to education for eligible students with disabilities, as long as an accommodation does not fundamentally alter the essential learning of the program or curriculum.

Several examples of reasonable and appropriate accommodations include extended time on assignments and tests, access technologies, e-text, CART or interpreters services for students with hearing impairments, class notes, etc. Auxiliary aids and services are also provided as accommodations.

Can faculty talk to students about their disability?

Some students may wish to keep specific disability information confidential, while others may choose to openly discuss their diagnosis and related information. The decision to disclose disability information is made by the student. You can best accommodate students by asking about their needs related to learning and fulfilling the requirements of the course, program or degree.

How are reasonable accommodations determined?

Accommodations must be supported by documentation from a qualified professional, such as a physician, psychologist or learning specialist. In general, disability

documentation must be comprehensive enough to allow the ADS to make informed decisions about reasonable accommodations. Accommodations are determined after careful consideration of disability documentation, need for accommodation and program requirements.

Can students request accessible transportation and parking?

Students requesting accessible transportation or parking submit clinical documentation to the HGSE ADS office verifying long term or short term need for service. The ADS office works with University transportation or parking services to explore possible reasonable accommodations.

For accessible transportation students submit documentation including functional limitations and frequency of needed services. If eligible, ADS notifies transportation services. The student is asked to contact transportation services directly to make arrangements for rides.

A similar process occurs with parking requests. Documentation, functional limitations and parking needs are submitted to ADS. ADS contacts the parking office with details about the students' needs. Based on what the parking services can offer for accessible parking, ADS relays that information to the students via email.

How do I ensure that students can access class materials?

If you can provide us with a complete syllabus and/or reading list in advance of the semester, that will allow us to begin scanning and formatting materials so that the students may have access to them at the same time as their classmates. We can also format new material added during the semester, the lead time required varies widely based on the quantity, the nature of the material (prose, equations, images, etc.), and the format the student requires. We often contact professors to get syllabi or reading lists for courses our clients are considering before classes begin to help them decide which classes to enroll in.

What accommodations are appropriate?

ADS grants accommodations to students with documented disabilities based on the recommendations of medical, mental health or other appropriate professionals and on the needs of the students. These accommodations do not fundamentally alter instructional programming.



ADS

HGSE Access and Disability Services

Faculty FAQ's

Opening doors.
Opening minds.
Changing attitudes.

Eileen Connell Berger
Access and Disability Services
Administrator

Office Hours
Monday – Friday 8:30am – 4:00pm
Gutman Library 124 A & B
6 Appian Way
Cambridge, MA 02138
Tel 617-495-9608
Fax 617-496-8024
ads@gse.harvard.edu