



Crafting a Letter of Accommodations for Faculty

Overview

Prior to the beginning of the semester, the disability services office can provide guidance to faculty on how to make classroom environments accessible to deaf students in their courses. This document is a guide on how to inform faculty of a deaf student's accommodation needs for their course and includes an outline of items to create your own customized letter as well as a sample letter. For an editable version of the sample letter, visit nationaldeafcenter.org/facultyletter.

The following is a list of items to consider including in the letter of accommodations to faculty:

- ✓ Notification of approved accommodations assigned to faculty's course, including these sample accommodations:
 - Assistive listening system/devices
 - Interpreter/ remote interpreter
 - Speech-to-text provider/ remote speech-to-text provider
 - Captioned media (if not already required by campus)
 - Note takers
 - Testing accommodations
- ✓ Resources and guidance on interacting with deaf students as well as tips for integrating accommodations in the classroom
- ✓ Reminders that videos need to be captioned and any audio-only media (e.g., recordings, podcasts) need to be accompanied by a transcript. Include postproduction captioning procedures based on your institution's approach (i.e., in-house captioning vs. third-party captioning vendors) and any resources on finding existing media that is already captioned.
- ✓ Applicable campus policies, procedures, and links for further information for faculty, including ways faculty can connect with disability services office staff



Building the Letter of Accommodations

Copy, paste, and customize sections below to formulate your letter.

INTRODUCTION

Dear [faculty/instructor/TA name],

The [disability services office] is in the process of coordinating an approved accommodations plan for a deaf student enrolled in your [name/dates/time of course]. Every deaf student is unique in their identity and language use. Some prefer to be called deaf, hard of hearing, late deafened, hearing impaired, deafblind, or other. Language use will vary from deaf students who speak English to those who primarily use American Sign Language (ASL) to communicate. If working with a deaf student is a new experience for you please read through the following information carefully, and reach out to our office for additional consultation if needed.

INTERACTING WITH DEAF STUDENTS

When communicating with a deaf student, please look directly at them and address the student even if the interaction involves an interpreter or speech-to-text provider. Defer to the student about academic-related questions or student progress in your course. Interpreters and speech-to-text providers are there to provide communication access in the classroom environment only. We recommend checking in with the student after the first couple of classes to ensure the accommodations set-up is effective for your classroom.

ACCOMMODATIONS EXPLAINED

Provide any definitions that might help support the instructor's understanding of accommodations.

- **Assistive listening systems** include a range of technologies that amplify sound and remove background noise to enable an individual to hear speech better.
- **Interpreters** are professionals who facilitate communication between deaf individuals using sign language and hearing individuals using spoken English.
- **Speech-to-text providers** are professionals who are trained to convert spoken English to English text and provide students with a live transcription viewable on a separate laptop, tablet, or similar equipment
- **American Sign Language** is a language, abbreviated as ASL, that is used by many deaf individuals in the United States.
- **Remote services** means interpreters and speech-to-text providers are not on location and provide services remotely via internet connectivity.
- **Note takers** are individuals who provide comprehensive classroom notes that allow deaf students to focus on understanding communication and content during class. Note takers are not tutors and having note taking accommodations is not a substitute for attending class.

VIDEO/AUDIO CONTENT

If you intend to share videos or audio-only content during class, online through [Online Learning Management System: D2L, BlackBoard, Canvas], or for homework, our campus needs to ensure these items are accessible. Audio-only content (e.g., podcasts, recordings) will need to be transcribed. If you need assistance in getting your media captioned or transcribed, our campus process is the following:

- **Search for videos that are already captioned (YouTube automatic captions do not provide equal access).**
- **Check whether audio-only files have transcripts available online.**
- **If content needs to be captioned or transcribed, contact [name, title, and email/contact info].**
- **Our campus uses [captioning/transcription vendor] and requests can be made by [request procedure].**

WORKING WITH INTERPRETERS

Interpreters provide real-time communication access in your classroom. Depending on the course length and intensity, you might have a team of interpreters in the class. Sign language interpreters often hold a national certification and/or state license. The interpreters have extensive experience in postsecondary environments and are carefully selected for each course. Interpreters follow their profession's Code of Professional Conduct (<https://rid.org/ethics/code-of-professional-conduct>), which has explicit rules regarding confidentiality and ethical decision making.

WORKING WITH SPEECH-TO-TEXT PROVIDERS

Speech-to-text professionals provide real-time communication access in your classroom. Depending on the course length and intensity, you might have a team of captionists in the class. The providers have extensive experience in postsecondary environments and are carefully selected for each course. Speech-to-text providers follow their profession's Code of Professional Conduct (<https://atpnetwork.org/code>), which has explicit rules regarding confidentiality and ethical decision making.

ACCESS TO COURSE MATERIALS FOR SERVICE PROVIDERS

[Interpreters/speech-to-text providers] prepare extensively for your course to appropriately convey your lectures and activities. To ensure that they have as much course information as possible, please provide them with a class syllabus, any course handouts, a desk copy of any textbooks if available, and online access to additional course materials. In addition, if you need assistance with adding services providers to **[Online learning management system: D2L, BlackBoard, Canvas]**, contact **[group/organization/office]**.

NOTE TAKERS

Note takers can be essential to the success of deaf students who cannot take notes and watch an interpreted or captioned message at the same time. **[Insert information about your campus note taking policies and procedures as needed.]**

IMPORTANT CONTACTS

- **Counselor/Advisor for Deaf Students: [name and email/contact information]**
- **Testing Center Coordinator: [name and email/contact information]**
- **Captioned Media Coordinator: [name and email/contact information]**
- **Interpreter/Speech-to-Text Coordinator: [name and email/contact information]**
- **Assistive Technology Coordinator: [name and email/contact information]**

CLOSING PARAGRAPH

Please contact **[disability services office]** if you want other specific resources; we would be happy to answer any questions or point you in the right direction. We look forward to working with you to ensure that your course is accessible for all students.

[Disability Services Office signature]

Sample Letter

TO: **Professor X**
FROM: **Disability Services Office**
SUBJECT: Accommodations Notice: Interpreters and Note Taker

Dear **Professor X**,

The **Disability Services Office** is in the process of coordinating an approved accommodations plan for a deaf student enrolled in your **Chemistry 101 M/W/F 8:00 a.m.–9:15 a.m.** course. Every deaf student is unique in their identity and language use. Some prefer to be called deaf, hard of hearing, late deafened, hearing impaired, deafblind, or other. Language use will vary from deaf students who speak English to those who primarily use American Sign Language (ASL) to communicate. If working with a deaf student is a new experience for you please read through the following information carefully, and reach out to our office for additional consultation if needed. This particular student will require **American Sign Language interpreting services and an in-class note taker**.

- **American Sign Language:** A language, abbreviated as ASL, that is used by many deaf individuals in the United States
- **Interpreters:** Professionals who facilitate communication between deaf individuals using sign language and hearing individuals using spoken English.
- **Note takers:** Individuals who provide comprehensive classroom notes that allow deaf students to focus on understanding communication and content during class. Note takers are not tutors. Having note taking accommodations is not a substitute for attending class.

Interpreters provide real-time communication access in your classroom. Depending on the course length and intensity, you might have a team of interpreters in the class. Sign language interpreters often hold a national certification and/or state license. The interpreters have extensive experience in postsecondary environments and are carefully selected for each course. Interpreters follow their profession's Code of Professional Conduct (<https://rid.org/ethics/code-of-professional-conduct>), which has explicit rules regarding confidentiality and ethical decision making.

Interpreters prepare extensively for your course to appropriately convey your lectures and activities. To ensure that they have as much course information as possible, please provide them with a class syllabus, any course handouts, a desk copy of any textbooks if available, and online access to additional course materials. In addition, if you need assistance with adding service providers to **D2L**, **contact the Office for Excellence in Teaching and Learning**.

Note takers can be essential to the success of deaf students who cannot take notes and watch the interpreter at the same time. **On the first day of class, the student should approach you with a note taker request letter. We ask that you announce to the class that there is a student in need of note taking accommodations. Inform the class that volunteers will receive a stipend, ask volunteers to approach you after class to share their contact information on the request letter, and have the deaf student return the letter to our office.**

If you intend to share videos or audio-only content during class, through **D2L**, or for homework, our campus needs to ensure these items are accessible. Audio-only content (e.g., podcasts, recordings) need to be transcribed. If you need assistance in getting your media captioned or transcribed, our campus process is to contact **Sally Smith, Captioned Media Coordinator, at ssmith@ndc.edu**.

ADDITIONAL CONTACTS

- **Disability Services Specialist: John Doe, jdoe@ndc.edu**
- **Testing Center Coordinator: Ben Johnson, bjohnson@ndc.edu**
- **Captioned Media Coordinator: Sally Smith, ssmith@ndc.edu**
- **Interpreter/Speech-to-Text Coordinator: Karen Long, klong@ndc.edu**

Please feel free to reach out to our office if you would like any specific resources; we would be happy to answer any questions or point you in the right direction. We look forward to working with you to ensure that your course is accessible for all students.

John Doe
Disability Services Specialist
jdoe@ndc.edu