

Students who are Blind or Visually Impaired

1. Please read aloud all text **and** provide a description of any images used in a live synchronous or recorded asynchronous presentation or lecture (e.g. PowerPoint, videos, webcasts, images, tables, graphs, etc.).
2. Chats and discussion boards are accessible to screen readers. Some students will be using phones and apps which have different access features. Please check in with your students to be sure they are able to use these features and if not consider modifying the mechanism of group communication.
3. Scanned text (articles, textbook pages, etc.) should be clear copies scanned in a straight vertical orientation.

Moving Accessibility Online for Students Who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing

1. Microsoft TEAMS is being used on campus and is easily accessible for faculty and students to set up a group chat. To ensure all students are included, if you should have someone that is using a sign language interpreter or captioning, please encourage them to contact OAS office via email at oas@potsdam.edu.
2. When communicating to students through TEAMS – We encourage you to visit the Accessibility support for Microsoft TEAMS.

See also: [Accessibility support for Microsoft Teams](#)

Emotional Needs

Many students using accommodations have hidden conditions, often emotional in nature. Many more students with mental health challenges have never requested or used accommodations. Finally, the current uncertainty and change may even precipitate new mental health challenges in your students. We encourage you to be aware of the following:

1. Remote classrooms under the best of circumstances can be disorienting and lonely for students who are used to face-to-face interactions. This can amplify pre-existing mental health challenges.
2. Be mindful of social isolation and ask students how they are managing and what you can do to help.
3. Anxiety can impact all aspects of attention. Consider building time and redundancy into your remote curriculum, assessments and messaging to students.

Managing the Flexible Attendance Accommodation

Ultimately, consider how the intersection of design of the online course intersects with the disability. The flexible attendance accommodation may or may not continue to be necessary or reasonable. As with face-to-face classes, this accommodation requires case-by-case consideration to consider how to apply it online within the parameters of the purpose of the accommodation. As always, the goal is to ensure equal access. This accommodation should not fundamentally alter the online experience or expectations in place for all students.

Quick Tips for Faculty

- 1:** Take 5-10 minutes during online lectures to allow students to process their feelings. Model compassion. Many of your students may have loved ones who are impacted by this virus and

feel helpless.

- 2: Many students with anxiety/depression/OCD will be impacted by this new online format and will be isolated. Remind students counseling services are available in a remote format.
- 3: Not everyone is comfortable with technology. Be sure to offer an opportunity to contribute in writing, or via chat vs. talking during video meetings.
- 4: Learners with processing disorders require additional time during the online discussions. Providing prompts or questions in advance allows everyone to process and develop responses in an equitable manner.
- 5: Develop a protocol for online discussions to avoid cross-talk, which can interfere with the ability to hear/process information for many students with disabilities.
 - Assign a facilitator to call on folks who indicate they are ready to talk through a physical (hand raising) or electronic (hand raising emoji or icon) means.
 - Ask participants to speak clearly and look at the camera so that all can draw on multiple modalities (including lip reading) to understand the conversation.

Testing

Students are very concerned about how they will receive their extra exam time accommodations. Many faculty will move to testing all students through open book/open notes, as it may limit the need for proctoring exams. The change in test format may create significant barriers (and necessitate significantly more time) for students whose disabilities interfere with their ability to find, read, and organize information from multiple sources as a part of the exam process. The bottom line is that it is going to be important for Office of Accommodative Services to explore the intersect between the ALTERED course design and the student's disability. If your student expresses concerns to you or notice that they did not finish a quiz or test please email the OAS office.

- Extended time is a frequently approved accommodation, and instructors should be prepared to explore strategies for providing this. (Note that an extended time accommodation is not the same as providing more time for all students; it means that the accommodated student should get an additional percentage of time above whatever other students are getting. For example, the standard test time might be one hour and an approved student gets time-and-a-half, or 1.5 hours. If the test is expanded to two hours, the accommodated student would then get three hours.)
 - Guidance on how to do this in Moodle will be provided by the CCI.
- “Breaks from class during exams” is an accommodation that may have online, timed implications. A student may have extended time or they may have extended time plus “breaks” or class time plus “breaks”. Can an online, timed test have the ability to be stopped and restarted to account for needed breaks? “If your student has breaks during exams, add in their total break time to their exam, if there is no way for the student to stop and start.”
- It is important to let your students know how questions to instructors should be addressed during an online quiz/test.

Flexibility

1. Be aware that some students may need some time to work with the Office of Accommodations and their Assistive Technology to make adjustments to their accommodations. Be flexible and adjust deadlines and strategies to create an inclusive learning environment. Students with diagnoses such as Autism or anxiety may not adjust well to abrupt changes, making flexibility even more important.
2. Be aware that some students with certain types of disabilities (low vision, migraines, seizure disorders, etc.) may not be able to spend extended time in front of a computer. Determine and provide a reasonable extended timeline for completing the work.
 - a. Consider reducing screen time for folks who get migraines or have other issues. Consider allowing students to participate in Zoom calls with voice only and no image can help reduce problems.

Accessibility of synchronous (real-time) classes

1. Disabled students may not be able to participate at a fast pace online; e.g., their assistive technology or CART (text transcription provider) may require some time to communicate the information. Fast paced classes may also be problematic for students who speak English as an additional language, students in areas with slow WiFi, etc. Consider pacing your instruction accordingly and check in with students about how your pacing is working.
2. Encourage all students to self-identify (“Hi, this is __ speaking”) as they begin comments to make clear who has the floor.” This is particularly helpful to blind students and to captioning efforts.
3. When looking for and selecting multimedia for a course, choose videos that are already accurately captioned whenever possible. When recording audio or video for your course, develop a script. It can be posted alongside the media as a transcript, and can also help you to create a better recording. CCI is working on creating materials to address this.
4. Do not penalize students for spelling or grammatical mistakes. The extra cognitive load of so much typing (or text production via voice transcription technology) may make things difficult for them.
5. Don’t assume that all students can see or make the same sense of your visual display as you intend. For accessibility, get in the habit of describing whatever is happening visually on the screen.
 - o If you are showing a picture of bunnies while talking about animal testing, say, ‘Here is a picture of bunnies, which are often used as the subject of animal testing particularly in the cosmetics industry.’ By the same token, get in the habit of being verbally explicit, especially while walking students through a screen demonstration.
 - o Because students use different devices, it is recommended against using directional language in this context. It's better to say "the arrow-shaped icon that says Share; it's between Polling and Chat". And remember that students access the Zoom or Teams interface from different kinds of devices, including mobile phones, tablets and laptops, so your verbal descriptions should account for those differences.

Accessibility of asynchronous (self-paced) classes

Asynchronous teaching, by its nature, is likely to be accessible to more individuals: Assistive technology users don’t have to worry about keeping up with the pace of the rest of the class,

users who benefit from reviewing information multiple times will be able to easily do so, and users who have access to slower WiFi won't be left out. However, it will still have the same requirements for accessible accompanying materials, captioning, etc. as synchronous classes.

Accessibility of websites and documents

The CCI is working on creating materials and training sessions. In addition, below may be some helpful information on how to start.

Accessibility Quick Tips on web access as you create online course materials to ensure inclusive learning experiences:

- **Text Contrast:** Use black text on a white background to ensure that the text stands out on the page. Pure white backgrounds may cause problems with glare or distraction for some students. Consider using off-white or light grey backgrounds instead.
- **Text Styles:** Do not use color alone to denote differences in emphasis and content meaning. This also applies to some graphic elements, such as charts. See [Use of Color \(WebAIM\)](#) and [Color Contrast \(WebAIM\)](#)
- **Heading Styles:** Use built-in heading styles to designate content organization. Ensure that headings are used to create a hierarchy, not just for formatting. See [Using Headings for Content Structure \(WebAIM\)](#)
- **List Styles:** Use the built-in bullet or number styles for lists.
- **Alt Text:** Provide a brief text alternative for images, graphs, and charts that answers the question: Why is this image important? [See [Alternative Text \(WebAIM\)](#) and [Creating Good ALT-Text \(RMIT University\)](#)]
- **Closed Captioning:** Captioning your media provides greater student comprehension of the material covered and provides accessible media for individuals with hearing impairments in compliance with federal regulations.
- **Link Text:** Use descriptive titles for link text, titles, and headers. [See [Link Text \(WebAIM\)](#)]
- **Tables:** Use simple tables when possible, with column and row headers [See [Data Tables \(WebAIM\)](#)]"
- **PDF:** If you use Word or a similar word processor to create a PDF, post both versions online.
- **Saving Files:** When saving your file, give it a meaningful name. Lecture Notes" or "Chapter 1" does not give students enough information. A better example would be "Lecture Notes, Chapter 1.If pulling from a website also use the articles heading.

Accessibility for Online Learning

Presentations, Text, and Images

1. Slide Presentations

a. PowerPoint

i. Formatting

1. Use predefined slide layouts
 - a. For each new slide, go to 'new slide' and select one of the templates.
 - b. Fill in the slides according to the layout, using titles and entering text into textboxes.

- c. Note: Using layouts ensures that the text can be read by a screen reader and that the exported files will transfer properly. If you do not use slides, you may need to manually adjust the reading order and input alternative text for text boxes.
 - 2. Include image descriptions
 - a. Image descriptions are brief statements that verbally convey relevant information from an image.
 - b. Explanation of image descriptions and how to use them.
 - c. Note: Try to only place images if they convey relevant information/material.
 - 3. Use descriptive links
 - a. Descriptive links are hyperlinks embedded in the text. The text should concisely describe the linked site.
 - 4. Resource for making accessible PowerPoints
- ii. **Upload as readable PDF and as a Word Document**
 - 1. PDF
 - a. Go to File, click 'Export' and select 'Create PDF/XPS Document'
 - b. Check that PDF matches PowerPoint
 - 2. Word Document
 - a. Go to File, click 'Export' and select 'Create Handouts'
 - b. Select 'Outline Only'
 - c. Press OK
 - d. Check that word document matches PowerPoint
- iii. **Best Practices**
 - 1. If you are speaking with slides, be mindful that some of your students may not be able to see the slides. It can be helpful to read the slide content aloud and orally describe images.

2. Text Content

a. Word Processor Files

i. Word

- 1. Word document files should already be accessible for most users.
- 2. Formatting
 - a. Document Structure - 'Styles'
 - i. Document structure refers to a document's logical organization into sections using headings. The Microsoft word headings are listed as 'Styles.'
 - ii. Use the 'Style' headings and subheadings to organize the document.
 - b. Tables
 - i. Create tables using Microsoft Word's built-in tools
 - 1. Include a description of the table under 'Table Properties' in the 'Alt Text' category.
 - ii. Detailed instructions for creating accessible tables in Microsoft Word.
 - c. Include Image descriptions

- i. Image descriptions are brief statements that verbally convey relevant information from an image.
 - ii. Explanation of image descriptions and how to use them.
 - d. Use descriptive links
 - i. Descriptive links are hyperlinks embedded in the text. The text should concisely describe the linked site.
 - 3. Resource for creating accessible Word Documents
 - 4. Uploading an additional copy as a PDF
 - a. Go to file, then select ‘Save as Adobe PDF.’
- b. PDF Files**
 - i. “Readable” PDF**
 1. Check if the PDF is ‘readable’
 - a. Note: A quick way to check if a PDF is readable is to try and select a sentence. If you can select individual letters, the file is likely readable. If you can only select a page at a time, the file is not readable.
 2. If the document is not readable, you can use Adobe Acrobat Pro’s ‘Make Accessible’ feature under the ‘Action Wizard’ menu or an online OCR converter.
 3. If the document is readable, it may not be fully accessible, but students should be able to access the content.
 - a. Note: If you have Adobe Acrobat Pro, you can make fully accessible PDFS by following webaim’s tutorial for converting PDFS.
 - ii. Uploading as a Word document**
 1. Export the PDF to Microsoft word
 2. Check that the document structure is organized.
- c. Note on Scans**
 - i. Avoid uploading text as an image/scanning documents without OCR (Optical Character Recognition). If your text material is only available as an image, contact Office of Accommodative Services for assistance with conversion.

3. Images/Visual Content

a. Image Descriptions

- i. Image descriptions are brief statements that verbally convey relevant information from an image.
- ii. Explanation of image descriptions and how to use them.

The information in this document was adopted and compiled from an email the NYS Disability Service list server titled “Maintaining Access to Opportunity in the Face of the Coronavirus Crisis.”