Faculty FAQ: Online Learning With SAS

Q: As I adapt my course materials for virtual instruction, what should I consider in regards to disability access? How can I best support my students?

We acknowledge the significant effort required to quickly adapt your courses for online instruction, and we want to ensure you have the tools you need to maintain access for students with disabilities through this transition. Some students (e.g., those who use assistive technology, those with medical limitations on screen usage) may encounter disability-related barriers with online instruction or assessment.

Online Learning and Academic Technology (OLAT) and the Center for Learning Excellence (CLE) at your campus are excellent resources for technical advice about captioning, using alt text for images, making accessible PDFs and more. SAS staff are available for consultation regarding best practices and accessibility. Click the links below to view brief trainings on these topics prepared by SAS and OLAT.

<div align="center">

[Webex Accessibility Tips](#)   [Faculty Forum SAS Presentation](#)

</div>

Here are some tips (adapted from [DO-IT](#)) to keep in mind as you create virtual course content:

- **Use clear, consistent layouts and organization schemes** for presenting content, and make instructions and expectations clear for activities, projects and assigned reading.
- **Offer outlines, scaffolding tools and adequate opportunities for practice** to help students learn.
- **When selecting new materials, try to find videos that are already captioned and articles that are available in a text-searchable format** (meaning you can highlight and search text within the document; [click here for an example](#)).
- **Images can be made accessible to blind and low-vision students by providing alt text into the image.** Use large, bold fonts on uncluttered pages, with plain backgrounds and high-contrast color combinations.
- **Provide flexibility and understanding, as this experience may cause disruption to the student's home life and available resources —** which could negatively impact a student's disability symptoms.
- **While many SAS students use screen readers, other students not accustomed to so much screen time may also benefit from these accessibility tools.** Blackboard has an alternative format tool called Ally, which includes a screen reader.
- **Video content within online courses must be equally accessible to all students — hearing and non-hearing alike.** This includes **captioning of all recorded or live presentations.** Please contact OLAT or your campus CLE when designing or converting your online materials.

Q: How do exam accommodations work online?

Accommodations must be provided in online classes**. Depending on a student's accommodation letter, this could mean extending time, allowing for breaks in testing, screen reader accessible tests, use of calculators or something else.** If you decide to offer alternative means of assessment (e.g. essays, project work), then extended time may no longer be applicable. If that is the case, speak with your students to let them know.

Q: Why should I provide accommodations so late in the semester?

There is no required timeframe for their letter to be distributed, and a student cannot be penalized for the timing of the letter. (Students know that services start when the accommodation letter is received).

Q: A student failed a test and then provided their letter to me after the fact. Do I have to allow them to take the test again with the accommodations?

No. Accommodations are not retroactive; they can only be applied after receipt of the letter.

Q: Will SAS proctor online exams?

SAS will not proctor in-person exams while instruction remains online, with the exception of students for whom Webex proctoring may be required. Otherwise, all exams should be administered by faculty, either online or through another remote assessment method. Faculty are responsible for setting up extended testing time in Blackboard. Please communicate with your students to discuss their exam accommodations in your courses. SAS advisers are available for consult.

Q: I extend test times for all of my students, so doesn't that also cover the SAS student?

No. The accommodation of extra time is measured by an objective tangible time. Therefore, the student always has the right for extra time over what the class is provided. Extra time will be measured by the final end time given to the class, including any time added by the instructor.

Q: I give students up to a week to complete online exams. Does that need to be extended? If so, by how much?

In most cases, a week is enough time; however, this accommodation is generally handled on a case-by-case basis. Please contact the SAS office should this become an issue.

Q: A student told me they have a disability condition and disclosed a lot of personal information, but they aren't registered with Student Accessibility Services. Now what?

Every student must disclose the nature of their condition in private to the SAS office in order for the College to recognize them as eligible for academic accommodations. The spontaneous sharing of personal medical information to you is confidential and should not be disclosed to others (except on a need-to-know basis) because, under federal confidentiality rules, the student has not granted you implied consent. Please direct the student to SAS for consult.

Q. Where can I find additional resources to support my efforts at ensuring my class is accessible?

- [Association of Higher Education Disability Resources](#)
- [National Deaf Center Online Accessibility](#)
- [Chronicle of Higher Education](#)