

GRADING STUDENTS WITH A DISABILITY

Yes, it is possible to grade a student with a disability as one would any other student. The secret centers on compliance with the civil rights laws which prohibit discrimination. These laws mandate access to education, not guaranteed academic success. When a faculty member has done all that is required, then giving the earned grade to the under-qualified student, even if it is failing, is proper and lawful. Here's a compliance checklist:

- Stand by academic standards and freedoms. Full and equitable access to academic programs serves as the foundation to standards and freedoms.
- Communicate clear and concise expectations for performance to your students. Care should be taken to distinguish between essential and non-essential components of the course.
- Allow reasonable accommodations. Accommodations are changes in the way things are done and affect only non-essential aspects of a course. They are reasonable so long as course standards are not fundamentally altered.
- Notify students of your willingness to accommodate. This can be done verbally during lectures and in writing within a course syllabus. Disability Services recommends both. One might say "Students with disabilities are welcome to discuss accommodations with me."
- Consult with the student and the Disability Services director. Any student should generate his or her own requests for accommodations. Requests ought to be backed up by evidence of the need for accommodation. A sensible link between the disability's functional limitations and the accommodation requested must be supported. Disability Services recommends that written verification come from our office. We furnish everything relevant an instructor needs to know about the general aspects of a student's situation, but the teacher may want to discuss their specific class situation with the student in light of the limitations imposed by the disability.
- Permit students to use auxiliary aides and technologies which ensure access. Depending on the disability, student may use note takers, sign language interpreters, readers, scribes, and tutors (etc.). Others may use tape recorder/players, computers, assistive listening devices and other technologies for the same purpose.
- When requested, provide alternatives to printed information such as Braille, computer electronic text, large print, and tape cassettes. If Internet resources and other technologies are used, then they must be as accessible to students with disabilities as they are for other student.
- Make academic adjustments in instruction. Some students need lecturers to face the audience while speaking. Others may need written or graphic information spoken aloud or described. Adjustments such as these may be made after the student requests them.
- Grant testing accommodations. Again, depending on the particular student, it may be necessary to extend testing times, change testing formats, test in a quiet environment, and so on. Instructors may accommodate independently or use Disability Services test accommodation services usually in the Testing Center. Accommodations outside the teacher's own area need to be arranged well in advance of the testing date.
- Regard disability-related discussions and information with the strictest confidentiality. No teacher has the right to destroy program access by ignoring confidentiality.

And there you have it. If compliance checks out give the grade earned. Although it is possible for any student to complain, it is another matter entirely to show discrimination when faculty have complied with the law.

For more information, give the folks at Disability Services a call at 496-9210 or email Disability Services Director, Wade Gordon at: gordonw@byui.edu