

# SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES POLICY AND PROCESS FOR REQUESTING ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION

## Disability Compliance

Lancaster Theological Seminary is compliant with the Americans With Disabilities Act (1990) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (1973).

Students needing special academic accommodations must identify themselves and make formal requests each semester for reasonable academic accommodations. A formal diagnosis is required by law before any academic accommodation can be made; therefore, it is necessary for the student requesting academic accommodation to meet with the appropriate personnel and provide the appropriate documentation. Academic accommodations that would change program purposes, impact necessary skills, or which do not meet licensing or accreditation standards are not considered “reasonable” under the law.

## Student Rights Under the Law

According to the 1973 Rehabilitation Act, a post-secondary student with a disability who is in need of auxiliary aids is obligated to provide notification of the nature of the disability to the Seminary and to assist the Seminary in identifying appropriate and effective auxiliary aids.

It is the Seminary’s responsibility to create an environment in which reasonable auxiliary aids and services may be utilized to ensure effective participation by students with disabilities, provided such auxiliary aids and services meet licensing and accreditation standards and do not change program purposes or impact necessary skills.

A request for academic accommodation that comes late in the semester has no bearing on academic performance prior to the request. The student bears the consequences of failing to report and request academic accommodations in a timely manner. (University of Maryland, 98/99) Casual academic accommodations negotiated between individual professors and the student are not recognized under this policy.

## PROCESS FOR REQUESTING ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION

- ❖ The students may initiate the process for requesting academic accommodations for a disability by submitting the Request for Academic Accommodation form and required documentation to the Disability Services Specialist.
- ❖ Required documentation may include the following:
  - Brain injury, learning disabilities, ADD/ADHD, or other neurological or psychological disabilities need to be documented. The areas to be tested for students with learning disabilities are: aptitude, academic achievement, and information processing.
  - Documentation must accompany Request for Academic Accommodation.
  - Documentation submitted to the Seminary is held in confidence.
  - The Request for Academic Accommodation form needs to be submitted only once, at the time the student first requests consideration for academic accommodation. However, it is the student’s responsibility to request a meeting with the Disability Services Specialist prior to each semester academic accommodation is requested.
  - Obvious physical disabilities do not need to be documented.
- ❖ Supporting documentation must satisfy the following guidelines:
  - Any assessment of disabilities must show evidence of a substantial limitation to learning or other major life activity. The areas to be tested for students with learning disabilities are: aptitude, academic achievement, and information processing.
  - Testing is to be conducted by a qualified professional: a licensed psychologist, neuropsychologist, or medical doctor. Costs for testing are borne by the student. Use of

- diagnostic terminology indicating a disability by someone whose training and experience is not in these fields is not accepted.
- Documentation should reflect testing/diagnoses not more than 3 years prior to the request. It should clearly state the diagnosis, ruling out alternative explanations for problems in learning.
  - Verification of disability must be based on a diagnostic interview and/or history conducted by the Disability Services Specialist.
  - Actual test scores should be provided in a descriptive, explanatory way to substantiate a request for an academic adjustment.
  - A clinical summary should be provided that includes the tester's observations, patterns of the student's ability, why specific academic adjustments are needed, and whatever history is available of providing such support.
  - When necessary, reevaluation may be required.
- ❖ Based upon the Disability Services Specialist's review of the documentation requested as indicated above and in consultation with the student, the Disability Services Specialist will collaborate with the student to determine an academic accommodation or modification that is supported by the documentation, is effective for the student's learning, and does not compromise the essential requirements of the program.
  - ❖ The "Education Accommodation Plan" (EAP) for reasonable and appropriate academic accommodation.
    - It is the student's responsibility to make any follow-up appointment to formulate the EAP.
    - Professors, faculty advisor, judicatory representatives and/or field education supervisors may or may not be included as EAP participants.
    - Using the "Education Accommodation Plan (EAP)" form, the Disability Services Specialist, student and/or other EAP participants will formulate a plan for academic accommodation. The student should sign the EAP form authorizing the release of the information to the EAP participants.
    - It is the student's responsibility to request a meeting with the Disability Services Specialist to formulate an updated EAP each semester academic accommodation is requested.
    - Casual academic accommodations negotiated between individual professors and the student are not recognized under this policy.
    - Accommodations or modifications are not retroactive, and cannot be used to adjust grades prior to the date a request for academic accommodation was approved.
  - ❖ If accommodation includes the need for an ASL interpreter, designated note-taker, personal needs assistant, etc., the Seminary will provide the opportunity for the student to arrange for such assistance, and will provide the space for the additional person in the classroom.
  - ❖ Following the formulation/update of the EAP, the Disability Services Specialist will send to each professor a signed "Academic Accommodations" form indicating the nature of the academic accommodation, with copies to the student and the academic file of the student. The student and professors should keep the form on file for the designated semester.
  - ❖ If the Request for Academic Accommodation is not approved, one copy of the form will be returned to the student with an explanation of the decision. The student may make an appointment with the Disability Services Specialist to discuss the decision and/or request reevaluation.