

Accessibility Resources: Accommodation Request and Appeal Policy

Academy of Art University is committed to providing an inclusive environment for students with disabilities, in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and applicable California laws. The Department of Accessibility Resources ensures equal opportunity to the University's curriculum, programs, and facilities for students with disabilities or health conditions who otherwise are unable to fully participate in classes or other University activities.

Accommodations or reasonable adjustments may be made to provide students with equal access to university programs and facilities and to protect individuals with disabilities from discrimination. The evaluation and determination of accommodations is an individualized, interactive process, as required by federal and state law, conducted to identify and implement reasonable accommodations, academic adjustments, or auxiliary aids and services that provide equal access without imposing an undue burden or fundamentally altering the nature of a course or program.

Academy of Art University has designated Accessibility Resources as the primary provider of academic adjustments, auxiliary aids and services, instructional support, and related assistance that facilitate equal educational opportunities for qualified students with disabilities, as required by federal and state law.

To initiate the accommodation process, students should review the procedures detailed below and email Accessibility Resources at accessibility@academyart.edu.

Definitions

Disability refers to a physical or mental impairment that limits one or more major life activities. This includes health or medical conditions that may affect a student's ability to participate fully in classes or university activities.

Qualified student with a disability means a student who meets the academic and technical standards for admission and can successfully perform the selected program or activity's essential requirements, either with or without reasonable accommodation.

Reasonable accommodation (academic adjustment) means a modification, adjustment, or auxiliary aid or service that enables equal access to courses, programs, services, or facilities, without fundamentally altering the nature of a program or creating an undue burden.

Auxiliary aids and services: Supports such as interpreters, captioning or transcription services, assistive technology, or note-taking assistance that ensure effective communication.

Interactive process refers to the collaborative and individualized discussion between the student and Accessibility Resources to identify barriers and determine reasonable accommodations.

Fundamental alteration means a change that would substantially modify the essential nature of a university course, program, service, or activity. An accommodation that lowers or eliminates essential academic or technical standards, or otherwise changes the fundamental nature of a program, is not required. When a requested accommodation would result in a fundamental alteration, the University will work with the student to identify reasonable alternatives that provide effective and equal access.

Undue burden means significant difficulty or expense in providing a requested accommodation, considering factors such as the nature and cost of the accommodation, the overall financial and administrative resources of the University, the effect on operations, and the number and type of facilities involved. An accommodation request may be denied if providing it would impose an undue burden; however, the University will engage in the interactive process to identify and implement an effective alternative that provides equal access to the maximum extent feasible.

Academic Accommodations

Students enrolled in the University who believe they may need an accommodation because of a disability are encouraged to contact Accessibility Resources to discuss their specific needs. Accommodations must be approved by Accessibility Resources before they are implemented in any class, program, service, or university activity. Students are encouraged to request accommodations as early as possible, preferably before the start of the semester, but may do so at any time. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive, and some accommodations may take additional time to arrange or implement.

While the accommodation preference of the individual with a disability will be taken into consideration, Academy of Art University is not required to provide the preferred accommodation as long as the alternative accommodation is reasonable, effective, and provides equal access. Accessibility Resources does not provide services of a personal nature, such as tutoring, or the provision of prescribed devices or services.

Steps for Registering for Academic Accommodations

1. Students are responsible for notifying the University of a potential need for accommodation and should contact Accessibility Resources directly to initiate the process of registering for accommodations. Faculty or staff who become aware of a student's potential need for accommodation should promptly refer the student to Accessibility Resources.
2. Students shall provide Accessibility Resources with documentation from a qualified professional (for example, a licensed clinician, evaluating specialist, or other



credentialed provider) that is sufficient to establish the existence of a disability and the need for reasonable accommodations, academic adjustments, or auxiliary aids and services. Documentation should describe the nature of the impairment, the resulting functional limitations in the relevant university environments, and any recommended accommodations that support equal access to university programs, services, and activities to accessibility@academyart.edu. Documentation must be sufficient to establish the existence of a disability as defined by federal or California law and to support the need for specific accommodations, academic adjustments, or auxiliary aids and services.

- a. If students have difficulty obtaining disability documentation, they should contact Accessibility Resources to discuss available options or temporary measures that may support access while documentation is pending.
3. Accessibility Resources will review complete accommodation requests promptly. Ordinarily, students can expect an initial response or a request for additional information within ten (10) business days of submitting their documentation.
4. Students will meet with Accessibility Resources staff to participate in an individualized, interactive process. This collaborative, good-faith dialogue between the student and Accessibility Resources includes review and discussion of documentation, disability-related barriers, and potential accommodations. It is intended to determine reasonable accommodations, academic adjustments, or auxiliary aids and services that provide effective and equal access to university programs, services, and activities.
5. Final accommodation determinations will be made promptly following completion of the steps outlined above. Accessibility Resources will determine what accommodations, adjustments, or aids and services are necessary to ensure that qualified students with disabilities are not denied the benefits of, excluded from participation in, or otherwise subjected to discrimination in the university's programs, services, or activities, consistent with applicable federal and state disability laws. Any denial of a requested accommodation will be based on a valid legal reason and explained in writing. If a request is denied, the student may file an appeal or grievance under the Accessibility Resources Appeal Policy. A student may provide additional information or documentation.

Notifying Instructors of Approved Accommodations

1. Students will be prompted before the start of each semester to request an updated copy of their accommodation letter, which will be emailed to them.
2. Students will share the accommodation letter with their instructors. If students need assistance with sharing their accommodation letter, they can contact Accessibility Resources to request assistance.

Students with specific needs should review the procedural statements defining the roles and responsibilities relating to specific accommodations (e.g., ASL interpreter, testing accommodations, excused absences).

Students may contact Accessibility Resources at any point in the semester for assistance. Students may contact Accessibility Resources to review and update accommodations as needed.

If approved accommodations are not implemented or are not effective, students should promptly contact Accessibility Resources for assistance.

The staff will make every reasonable effort to resolve the concern through the interactive process. If a student remains dissatisfied after these efforts, they may file an appeal or grievance under the Accessibility Resources Appeal Policy.

Academy of Art University reserves the right to amend these policies at any time as circumstances require.

Appeal Processes

Informal Appeal

If a student has concerns about the denial, determination, implementation, or effectiveness of reasonable accommodations, they are encouraged to promptly notify Accessibility Resources staff. Accessibility Resources will work with the student to identify possible resolutions and, when appropriate, facilitate communication or mediation with faculty, departments, or programs to address the concern. Most matters can be resolved informally through this process. If the concern is not resolved to the student's satisfaction, the student may file a formal appeal.

Formal Appeal Procedures

A formal appeal is available to students who have first attempted to resolve the matter through the informal resolution process. The student will initiate the appeal process by providing a written statement to the Vice President of Compliance, Anne Connors, AConnors@academyart.edu. The email should include a clear subject line, such as "Accessibility Resources Formal Appeal."

The statement should generally include:

- A brief description of the issue or decision being appealed;
- The approximate date or timeframe of the matter;
- The names or roles of any university employees or offices involved (if known);
- The reasons the student disagrees with the current decision or outcome;
- The resolution or outcome the student is seeking; and

- Any new, different, or supporting information the student would like considered.

The Vice President of Compliance will confirm receipt of the written statement within five (5) business days. The appeal will be reviewed, and a decision will be rendered promptly following receipt of all necessary information. The Vice President of Compliance may request additional documents or information from the student or consult with other university staff or faculty as appropriate. All parties will be notified in writing of the final decision.

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