I. Eligibility for Services

To be eligible for disability-related services through the DS office, students must (1) be otherwise qualified and admitted to TAMU-CC, (2) be a person with a disability, as defined by federal law\(^1\), and (3) self-identify as a student with a disability through the completion of the DS application process.

1. A student is considered to be otherwise qualified if they meet the academic and technical standards required for participation in the class, program, or activity; in many cases, this is determined during the admissions process for the university and/or university college, school, or program (e.g., Nursing).

2. Disability is defined by the ADA Amendments Act of 2008 as a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities; or a record of such an impairment, or being regarded as having such an impairment.

   a. A physical or mental impairment is defined as any physiological disorder or condition, cosmetic disfigurement, or anatomical loss affecting one or more body systems (i.e., neurological, musculoskeletal, special sense organs); or any mental or psychological disorder (i.e., emotional or mental illness, specific learning disabilities).

\(^1\) Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act; Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act
b. Major life activities may include functions such as caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, and working (note: the Amendments Act provides additional examples of activities and bodily functions—neither list provided in the Section 504 regulations, nor the Amendments Act, is exhaustive or exclusive).

3. The application process includes the following:

a. Complete and submit the online application, available through the DS office website.
   i. This is a brief questionnaire intended to allow students to describe the history and impact of their disability/condition and explain specific accommodations and services being requested.

b. Upload documentation that supports the request for academic accommodations (see Section II. Documentation Guidelines).
   i. Documentation submitted to the DS office is intended to establish the nature of the student’s disability/condition and related impact to the student in the educational setting.

c. Schedule and complete the initial Access Planning Meeting (APM) with Disability Services staff.
   i. After receipt and review of the student's application and documentation, DS staff will contact the student to schedule the APM. At this time, approved accommodations will be established, and students will sign appropriate agreement forms necessary to request accommodations for the current/upcoming semester.

II. Documentation Requirements

It is the responsibility of the student to provide information that verifies that the student's condition meets the definition of a disability as defined by applicable laws (i.e., Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008). Federal Law requires that requests for services for students with disabilities be considered on an individual, case-by-case basis.

Sources of information used for determining a disability and/or accommodations may include a student’s self-report, direct observation and interaction with the student, and/or documentation from qualified evaluators or professionals.

Student Self-Report:

Students should complete the Application for Services, which provides students an opportunity to describe their disability and accommodations they are hoping to receive. Students may supplement the Application with an additional narrative by providing a letter that further describes their disability and/or accommodations they are requesting. Students may consider including information about their experiences related to their disability, barriers faced, and previous accommodations (effective or ineffective).

Documentation:

Disability-related documentation should provide information on the functional impact of the disability so that effective accommodations can be identified. Criteria for the source, scope and content of documentation differs by disability type. Documentation may include assessments, reports, and/or letters from qualified evaluators, professionals, or institutions. Common sources of documentation are health care...
providers, psychologists, diagnosticians, and/or information from a previous school (e.g., accommodation agreements/letters, 504, IEP, or ARD documents).

Suggested Documentation Elements:

1. Typed on letterhead, dated, and signed by a qualified professional
2. Diagnostic Statement with any related diagnostic methodology (diagnostic criteria and/or procedures)
3. Functional limitations or symptoms (Limitations inform which accommodations are appropriate)
4. Severity and/or expected progression
5. Current medication(s) and any related side-effects
6. Current and/or past accommodations
7. Any recommended accommodations

Note: DS provides a Medical Disability Verification Form and Psychological Disability Verification Form, available on the website, that can be completed by the student’s provider, if other forms of documentation are not available or sufficient.

III. Provisional and Temporary Services

In addition to services provided to students with documented disabilities, as previously defined, the Disability Services (DS) office may provide services on a provisional or temporary basis.

1. Provisional Services: If the student provides documentation that is considered to be incomplete or insufficient with the initial application, provisional services may be provided for a period of one semester (Mini-Terms and Summer sessions will be combined and counted as one semester). This time is intended to allow the student to obtain and provide to the DS office more comprehensive and/or current documentation.

2. Temporary Services: Individuals with temporarily disabling conditions may need access to services and resources similar to individuals with permanent disabilities; eligibility will be considered on an individual, case-by-case basis, for temporary services. Examples of temporary disabilities may include but are not limited to: broken limb(s), hand injury, or short-term impairment following surgery or medical treatments.

Note: Students who need temporary accessible parking, typically less than 6 weeks, can present a note from their physician to the University Police Department to obtain a temporary accessible parking placard for campus parking. Students who may need accessible parking on and off-campus or for a longer period are encouraged to submit the Application for Persons with Disabilities Parking Placard and/or License Plate from the Texas Department of Motor Vehicles to their county tax office.

IV. Access Planning Meeting

Once a student’s application and supporting documentation are received, the student’s file will be submitted to the DS staff for a panel review and assigned to an Accommodations Counselor. After review, the Accommodations Counselor will contact the student to schedule the Access Planning Meeting. This process may take up to seven business days for students who are currently enrolled in classes. Newly admitted students will be contacted once the application and documentation are received; however, the review will not take place until after the student has attended New Student Orientation. At the postsecondary education level, students are solely responsible for decisions regarding their accommodation needs. Parents may attend meetings with their student and DS staff at the student’s discretion.

The DS office currently uses Accessible Information Management (AIM) system in order to manage student records and requests. At the Access Planning Meeting, students will be provided with information
All initial requests for accommodations (i.e., application and supporting documentation) for the current semester should be submitted no later than one week prior to the end of the last day of classes (refer to the Academic Calendar for information regarding current and future semesters); any request for services received after that time will be reviewed and considered on an individual, case-by-case basis to determine the reasonableness of initiating services at that time. In the event services are needed immediately upon submitting the initial request, the review panel will consider an “emergency review” on an individual, case-by-case basis.

1. **Determination of Accommodations:** During the Access Planning Meeting, the student and Accommodations Counselor will review the student’s file to determine appropriate academic accommodations. Students will also be provided with instructions regarding faculty notification and their responsibilities after the initial meeting, including using the AIM system to request accommodations for classes each semester.

   a. The following information will be considered in determining reasonable accommodations: student’s disability, history, experience, request, and the unique characteristics of the course, program, or requirement. Reasonableness of an accommodation is established when there is a clear understanding of the impact the disability has on the individual; although the unique attributes and requirements of the course, program, or activity must also be evaluated.

   b. TAMU-CC is not required to make adjustments or provide aids or services that would impose a fundamental alteration of the academic program or require an undue financial or administration burden on the university’s programs; accommodations should promote the student’s professional self-determination and independence. In general, the professional best practice standards of the Association for Higher Education and Disabilities (AHEAD) will be followed to determine appropriate accommodations.

   c. The student should be aware that there is often a difference in the types of accommodations provided by elementary/secondary schools and post-secondary programs. In general, there are fewer substitutions and modifications at the post-secondary level and more emphasis on student development of learning strategies and skills. Students are encouraged to review resources available through the Department of Education regarding transition to post-secondary services (https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/transitionguide.html).

2. **Agreements for Provision of Services:** To ensure that students are aware of policies and procedures related to accommodation services, they will be asked to read and acknowledge receipt of information in an electronic agreement form, as applicable to their specific accommodations. Examples of online agreements include: Agreement for Recording Class Activities and Exam Services Test Rules. Individualized agreements may need to be developed for any other accommodations with complex procedures and responsibilities. Dependent on the nature of the accommodation, some agreement forms will be required each semester during which the accommodations are requested.

3. **Verification of Disability/Faculty Notification:** The DS office will provide faculty notification letter(s) (FNL) for each semester the student registers with the office. Each semester, the student can request the FNL though AIM. It can be sent to instructors via email. Alternatively, the student may opt to obtain a hard copy of the FNL from the DS office and deliver the letter to the instructor;
however, the student should notify the DS office if this is their preference. These letters will verify that the student qualifies for academic adjustments under the Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act and the Rehabilitation Act, as well as detail the specific adjustments/accommodations that have been approved through the DS office and agreed upon with the student.

a. The faculty notification letters are written to respect the student’s confidentiality. The nature of a student’s disability is not disclosed in the FNL; this information may only be shared on a ‘need to know’ basis and/or with the student’s written permission.

b. Accommodation needs for a particular student may vary semester-to-semester depending upon the course content of the student’s classes and the nature of the student’s disability. Students are able to customize their accommodation requests each semester for each class based on the previously approved and agreed upon accommodations; the student may also modify or cancel a request at any time during the course of the semester. If the student has a request for an accommodation that has not been previously discussed, approved, and/or agreed upon (i.e., it is not available in their list of available accommodations in AIM), they must contact the DS office for review of that request (additional accommodations must be supported by appropriate documentation and will be subject to the same process as the original application for accommodations).

c. Each student is strongly encouraged to follow up with instructors, especially when the FNLs are sent by the DS office on behalf of the student via email, in order to make needed arrangements and discuss specific details and/or possible issues regarding accommodations requested for the class. While the student may choose to disclose specific information regarding the nature of their disability, this is not required.

V. Confidentiality Protections and Guidelines

1. The DS office ensures that all information and communication pertaining to a student’s disability is maintained in accordance with applicable law, including the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

   a. Only designated staff will have access to student files maintained by the DS office.

   b. Release of information is permissible with written permission from the student and with few exceptions.

      i. The student should contact the DS office in order to discuss rights pertaining to disclosure of information and available forms to provide written consent for release of information.

      ii. Disclosure of information is allowable under certain conditions, including but not limited to the following:
         1. To school officials with legitimate educational interest;
         2. In order to comply with a judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena;
         3. To appropriate officials in cases of health and safety emergencies.

2. A confidential file, in hardcopy and/or electronic format, is maintained on each student who has made a formal request for services (i.e., submitted an application). Information maintained may include: demographic information, initial application, documentation of disability, correspondence,
list of approved accommodations, and history of faculty notification requests/letters.

a. All records are managed and retained in accordance with Texas A&M University System regulations and applicable state law. For more information regarding the requirements/schedule, please contact the DS office.

b. If a student would like to request a copy of their documentation, the request must be made in writing. The student should contact the DS office to discuss available forms for the written request.

VI. Student Responsibilities

1. It is the student’s responsibility to:

   a. request their FNLs be sent to their instructors each semester, including Mini-Terms and Summer Sessions. The FNL, and thus accommodations, becomes effective once the instructor receives it. Accommodations are NOT retroactive.

   b. meet with their instructor(s), during office hours or scheduled appointment, each semester to discuss specific details and implementation of approved academic accommodations.

   c. alert the DS office immediately if information within the FNLs does not appear to be accurate or if there are any problems in the delivery of requested accommodations or the process of being accommodated.

   d. cancel or modify the FNLs, as necessary.

   e. review information regarding consent for release of information (see “Information Release Consents” in AIM) and update/make changes, as necessary.

   f. monitor their TAMU-CC email (official @islander.tamucc.edu account) for alerts from the DS office.

   g. contact the DS office if they have any questions or concerns regarding their accommodations at any time during the course of the semester.

2. Enroll in Classes: DS students are encouraged to enroll early for classes before desired classes are filled. This will require meeting with advisors early.

3. Requests for services and equipment. Students need to inform the DS office as early as possible if assistive equipment is needed. Students are also encouraged to request accommodations as early as possible so that services (i.e., Sign Language Interpreters, alternate format textbooks) may be coordinated prior to the start of the semester.

4. Exam Services: Students are expected to follow the procedures outlined below (also detailed in the “Exam Services Test Rules” agreement in AIM, which must be reviewed and acknowledged each semester). Students will use AIM in order to schedule their exams; they may also modify or cancel any scheduled exams.

   a. It is the student’s responsibility to use the AIM system in order to schedule an exam or quiz to be taken in Exam Services.
b. The ideal scheduling of exams/quizzes with Exam Services is TWO (2) BUSINESS DAYS during Summer Sessions and THREE (3) BUSINESS DAYS during Fall/Spring semesters. If exams are not scheduled within the 2 days'/3 days’ notice, reasonable effort will be made to accommodate students on a case-by-case basis with instructor approval.

c. All exams/quizzes will be administered at the regularly scheduled time of the class, unless the scheduled exam/quiz time conflicts with Exam Services hours of operation or the class schedule. In those cases, students should contact their instructor to schedule an exam for an alternate time/day, either earlier that same day or the day/time agreed upon by the instructor to ensure that the allotted time coincides with the class schedule and Exam Services hours of operation.

d. To change an exam/quiz date(s) or time(s), it is the STUDENT'S RESPONSIBILITY to reschedule the exam/quiz in AIM. The ideal notice of 2 days/3 days prior to the exam/quiz still applies. The instructor will then need to confirm the time/date. To reschedule the exam/quiz with Exam Services, please refer to “AIM Alternative Testing Instructions for Students”.

e. Punctuality is essential. Students are expected to arrive in Exam Services at the scheduled time. Students must be prepared to begin all exams with the necessary materials exactly at the scheduled time. Variation from the schedule may cause undue disturbance and disruption to the student’s and/or other’s exam/quiz accommodations. If the exam/quiz is being picked up at the class or from the instructor, the allowable time starts when the exam/quiz arrives at Exam Services. Do not assume Exam Services is picking up the exam/quiz from the class and that it will be arriving later than the scheduled time. The Exam Services staff will be consistent in enforcing the instructor’s late policy. The instructor is not required to grant a make-up exam/quiz due to tardiness.

f. Students will be allowed to use only the amount of time specified by the instructor and in accordance with the previously agreed upon accommodations, as requested.

g. Students will be allowed to use only the items (e.g., calculator, note card, formula sheet) the instructor has approved in the Alternative Testing Agreement for use on the exam/quiz. Students are to supply ALL necessary exam/quiz materials including: blue book, calculators, pencils, scantrons, etc.

h. No personal items are allowed in the testing rooms. Exceptions may include items such as medication, food and/or drink. These exceptions are subject to proctor’s approval.

i. Students are responsible for following instructions on the exam/quiz and will assume any penalties that may result from misunderstandings and misinterpretations.

j. A proctor may be present or enter the testing area from time to time. Students are allowed to wear noise-muffling headphones to assist in distraction limitation. These headphones are available from Exam Services. Breaks and trips to the restroom may be monitored by the DS staff.
k. Students suspected of cheating during an exam/quiz will need to meet with a DS staff member. The student may be required to surrender their exam/quiz and the instructor will be notified. Please see the Student Code of Conduct (Article III: Violations of the Student Code of Conduct).

5. **Report needs and problems as they arise.** In the event that accommodations previously approved/agreed upon do not meet a student’s needs or do not seem possible due to the specific requirements of a course, it is the student’s responsibility to contact DS to determine other options.

6. **Understand and follow all procedures.** Each semester, students should review the Policies and Procedures (available online or in the DS office). Other agreement forms will be required, as applicable, when the student logs in to AIM. Students are responsible for following all DS policies and procedures and for reporting any need for clarifications or changes of agreements with the DS office.

7. **Class Attendance.** According to the university’s General Academic Policies and Regulations, students are responsible for class attendance; each instructor is required to make clear the policies for their class at the beginning of the class. If a student has chronic health or other disability-related problem(s) that may cause them to miss class(es), they should discuss attendance requirements and options with all instructors and DS staff as early as possible (preferably before enrollment).

   a. The student should discuss with their instructor(s) the expectations concerning absences and their responsibility with regard to notification of absence, documenting the absence, and making up missed work for each class.

   b. Instructors will not excuse absences simply because a student has note-taking services.

   c. Students who are not able to attend class for an extended period of time (more than three class days) due to extenuating circumstances, will be referred to the Student Assistance Coordinator in the office of Student Engagement and Success.

8. **Follow the Student Code of Conduct.** All students are responsible for reviewing/adhering to the Student Code of Conduct; having a documented disability does not excuse a student from following any TAMU-CC rule, policy or procedure. The Student Code of Conduct is available online at http://studentconduct.tamucc.edu/studentcofc.html, as well as from the Office of Associate Dean of Students (OADS). If a student is experiencing a behavioral/emotional/mental health concern/disorder, they are encouraged to utilize resources available on campus, including the University Counseling Center and I-CARE.

9. **Referrals by DS office.** Students are expected to follow-up on all referrals in a timely fashion. Students should contact the DS office if a referral does not meet their needs so that other options/available resources can be discussed/determined.

10. Tutoring, Study Skills and Time Management Support. Time management and good study skills are critical to a student’s success. Students are expected to use all resources available, which may include: the Center for Academic Student Achievement (CASA); Academic Success counseling available through the University Counseling Center; Programs for Academic Student Support (PASS); Supplemental Instruction (SI), as available; and any informal or course-related study groups and seminars. The DS office does not provide tutoring services. Students are expected to
contact their Texas Workforce Commission (formerly Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services) or vocational rehabilitation counselor for additional tutorial support.

11. **Scheduling Appointments with the DS office.** Students should schedule appointments or call in advance to meet with DS staff or to ask for assistance. In the case of an emergency, students should contact the DS office as soon as possible. The DS office is open Monday through Friday 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.

### VII. Emergency Procedures

In case of an emergency, individuals on campus should call the University Police Department at 361-825-4444 (on campus ext. 4444) or dial 911 if there is an imminent threat to life and health.

1. Students with a condition that may require emergency medical assistance during classes (e.g., seizure disorder, diabetic hypoglycemia, cardiac condition) should meet with each instructor during the first week of classes, or as early as possible, to explain the condition and discuss emergency procedures. It is recommended that students obtain a letter from their physician outlining emergency procedures; however, students should be aware that university personnel will contact the University Police in the event of a medical emergency that may require medical attention (University Police are identified as first responders and when needed will contact ambulance services and escort paramedics to the scene). Students should also update emergency contact information with the University each semester; this can be done through the Office of the Registrar or online at: [http://sail.tamucc.edu/](http://sail.tamucc.edu/).

2. The **Quick Reference Guide to Campus Emergencies** available through the university’s Environmental Health and Safety office outlines the following procedures for individuals with disabilities:

   - All persons shall move towards the nearest marked EXIT. Persons with special needs may use the building elevator—but NEVER in a fire or an earthquake.
   - Assist with the evacuation of individuals with special needs if it can be done safely.
   - If assistance is not immediately available, persons with special needs should stay near the wall in the exit corridor, or on the stairwell landing. They should continue to call for help until rescued. People who cannot speak loudly should carry a whistle or have other means of attracting the attention of others.
   - Persons with physical disabilities should prepare for an emergency ahead of time by instructing faculty and classmates on how to assist them in an emergency. They should know the location of the designated evacuation stairway.
   - Persons with hearing or visual impairments working alone in isolated areas such as study rooms and labs should notify nearby building staff or University Police of their location.

3. There are Evacu-Trac evacuation chairs installed in buildings across campus. For a complete list of locations, refer to the **Quick Reference Guide to Campus Emergencies**.

4. TAMU-CC uses a comprehensive alert system to notify students, faculty, and staff during emergency notifications, including hurricane warnings, school closures, delays and evacuations.

   a. The university operates under a Hurricane/Tropical Storm Defense Plan to safeguard students, faculty and staff and to protect campus facilities in the event of a hurricane or tropical storm; for more information refer to the [Hurricane Preparedness](http://sail.tamucc.edu/) resources,
including the Hurricane/Tropical Storm Defense Plan.

VIII. Grievance Procedures

The University has established rules and procedures for reporting and resolving grade appeals, faculty and non-faculty grievances, student grievances, sexual harassment and research misconduct. While students with disabilities are advised to follow the university’s procedures for filing a complaint, students may also consider consulting with the DS staff in order to receive assistance through an informal resolution process. For details regarding university procedures, refer to the Compendium of Policies, Rules, and Regulations, which includes the following:

- Student Complaint Regarding Faculty (Non-Academic/Non-Civil Rights)
- Student Complaint Regarding Staff/Employees
- Civil Rights Compliance

As explained in the university’s Civil Rights Compliance procedures, discrimination against persons with disabilities is prohibited by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. As such, in addition to the detailed university procedures, an individual may also file a discrimination complaint with the Office for Civil Rights (OCR). For more information regarding how to file a complaint, timelines, and consideration of institutional grievance procedures, refer to OCR’s guidance on How to File a Discrimination Complaint with the Office for Civil Rights.