

A Guide to Self-Advocacy through Disability Services

Below you will find some important questions to ask yourself...

These questions are based on the LAC-DS self-advocacy model found on the reverse of this sheet.

1. **Can I describe:**

- a. My disability?
- b. My strengths?
- c. My accommodation needs?

2. **Am I willing to meet with faculty members about class performance?**

- a. During office hours
- b. Schedule an appointment
- c. Before or after class

3. **Do I understand how to set up accommodations?**

- a. Use the Student Portal Login on our website (lac.wfu.edu) to request accommodation notifications to be sent to faculty members the week before classes begin.
- b. Make an appointment to discuss accommodations with faculty members within the first two weeks of the semester.
- c. Remind your faculty member in advance of each test date (one week before would be best).

4. **Am I willing to use other support services available to all WFU students to help achieve my goals?**

Academic Support Services	Student Life Support Services
Academic Coaching with staff at the LAC-DS	Intercultural Center
Peer Tutoring through the LAC-DS	LGBTQ Center
Writing Center	Women's Center
Professor Office Hours	Chaplain's Office
Office of Academic Advising	Office of Student Engagement
ZSR Library	Wellbeing Coaching (All aspects of Wellbeing)
Math Center, Chemistry Center	Student Health Center
Center for Global Programs and Studies	University Counseling Center

5. If you need additional guidance or support, the **Learning Assistance Center & Disability Services Staff** is here to help! Contact us if you have any questions!!

Website: lac.wfu.edu. **Phone contact:** 336-758-5929. **Location:** 118 Reynolda Hall.

Michael Shuman, PhD, Director.

Jackie Friedman, PhD, Associate Director.

Kawana Neufville, MA, Assistant Director.

Ashley Heffner, PhD, Staff Psychologist.

Suzanne Hawks, Disability & Learning Specialist.

What is a Self-Advocacy Model?

Based on research findings that strongly link student Self-Advocacy to successful academic performance, most post-secondary schools (such as Wake Forest University) have adopted a Self-Advocacy model for disability accommodations. This model is based on key components of Self-Advocacy (described below) and are a vital step toward preparing for the broader world after successful completion of a Wake Forest degree. Self-Advocacy is made up of different components including....

Knowledge of Self:

The following questions can be helpful in measuring self-knowledge about disabilities: Do I believe I have a disability? If so, can I define what my disability is and explain it to someone else? Can I define what barriers I may encounter inside and outside of the classroom as a result of my disability? Can I describe specific things that have helped me in the past to lessen the impact of those barriers in the classroom and outside of the classroom? Can I describe specific things that might help me now or in the future to lessen the impact of disability related barriers? What are my responsibilities related to seeking accommodations for my disability? Do I have the skills necessary to do so? If not, how do I develop those skills?

Knowledge of Rights:

Accommodations at the college level are provided through the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504). Academic adjustments for diagnosed and documented disabilities should be provided unless doing so results in a *fundamental alteration of course requirements*. It is important to be familiar with the ADA and Section 504, and to understand how it offers protection and how that protection is somewhat different from standards for accommodations before entering the college environment. Under the ADA and Section 504, you may also seek accommodations for graduate school, including entrance exams for graduate study (such as the MCAT, GRE, LSAT, etc.) For further reading, see:
<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/transition.html>

Communication:

While knowledge is important, being able to communicate the knowledge effectively is arguably more important. Part of communication is your ability to express your knowledge directly, but understand that you may also need to use communication skills such as negotiation, persuasion, and compromise to ensure you get the accommodations that you need to be successful in academic and non-academic environments.

What does that mean for me?

If you had accommodations in high school, you may not have been able to attend team meetings where these accommodations were discussed with teachers, administrators, and your parents. As an adult college student, you are now in charge of these meetings. Part of the responsibility, now and going forward, is to develop the above steps to build Self-Advocacy. You will need to consider which courses would be most beneficial to have accommodations in, and which accommodations are most necessary. We are here to support the process, but you are “in charge” of understanding what you are eligible for under ADA and Section 504, why you are eligible for the accommodations you are asking for, and how to advocate for getting the accommodations in place in the classes where the accommodations are needed.