



Entering Student FAQ on Accommodations

General:

What is the purpose of college accommodations?

- Barriers in higher education within physical structures, policies, and formats can, at times, disproportionately affect those with disabilities. The Office of Accessibility and Accommodations works individually with students to interactively identify non-fundamental barriers (e.g., textbook font sizes, the noise level in testing rooms, assigned seating location, restroom access, etc.) and reduce the impact through accommodations. College accommodations ensure *access* to all programs, activities, and services.

Who qualifies for accommodations?

- Students with a health condition or disability experiencing a functional impairment or substantial limitation in at least one major life activity are eligible to receive accommodations specific to the impairment or limitation. This may include students diagnosed with cognitive/learning, medical, psychiatric, sensory/mobility, or temporary disabilities.

How do I request accommodations?

- The first step is to complete an online request form with the Office of Accessibility and Accommodations (OAA). You must also submit medical documentation and schedule an accommodation meeting to discuss your experience with your disability or chronic condition.

What is the timeline for the request process?

- You can submit your online request form after being accepted into Samford. Accommodation request meetings start in May and can be completed virtually or in person. Completing your request form and accommodation meeting during May-July, the summer before your first semester, is recommended. OAA staff will meet with you again at the start of the semester to send your professor notifications. The priority deadline for housing accommodation approvals is **June 1st**, so all housing accommodation requests should be made before this date, if possible. Approved requests after this date will be subject to housing availability.

Can members of my family attend my accommodation meeting with me?

- The purpose of your accommodation meeting is to hear about your direct experiences and requests for accommodations. You are welcome to invite one or two family members to your appointment if you would like. While family comments can be helpful, please keep in mind that we will be most interested in your answers and experience. Meetings are involve an informal conversation about your condition and accommodations you have used in the past (if applicable).

Do accommodations from high school transfer in?

- If you received accommodations in high school, you will likely be eligible for accommodations in college. You are welcome to request the same accommodations, and you will discuss your eligibility with OAA staff during your request meeting. College accommodations are intended to ensure access to educational programs, and therefore academic accommodations cannot alter any fundamental requirement of any course or program. Common high school accommodations NOT offered at the college level include modified test questions, testing re-takes, study guides, fill-in-the-blank notes, etc., as these would alter learning objectives and expectations in the course.

What types of accommodations are offered?

- Accommodations are offered for all Samford programs, activities, and services. Primarily, accommodations are used in the academic and living environments on campus. Common accommodations involve testing environments, classroom materials, notetaking, attendance, housing, and meal plans. Accommodations are determined on a case-by-case, individual basis.

What documentation is required to request accommodations?

- All documentation should be completed by an appropriately licensed professional and detail your assessment, diagnosis, and the current impact and symptoms of your condition. Specific guidelines and a quick tips guide are available on our website. It is typically best to start with whatever is readily available to you. If additional information is needed, we can let you know during the meeting.

Will I need to renew my accommodations each year?

- Typically, once you are approved for accommodations through OAA, you are approved for your entire time at Samford. Sometimes, temporary approvals are needed, and OAA staff will discuss the policies with you in these cases.

What if I am still deciding if I will need academic accommodations?

- Submit the form anyways! We recommend completing the process if you believe you may be eligible for accommodations. In college, using accommodations is 100% the choice of the student. You decide to use or not use your approved accommodations.

Office of Accessibility and Accommodations:

What is the role of the Office of Accessibility and Accommodations?

- The OAA office aims to promote an accessible and inclusive environment for students with disabilities. We work individually with each student to determine appropriate accommodations to ensure access to programs, activities, and services. We are available throughout your time at Samford to answer questions about your approved accommodations.

How many students are connected with OAA?

- We currently have over 900 active students connected with our office.

Will I be assigned a case manager?

- We follow a student-led model. You will not be assigned a case manager who monitors your progress. Additional support can be requested through the Academic Success Center, Counseling Dept., and your academic advisor. We are always happy to direct you to the best-equipped office if you are unsure where to go. If you are interested in disability-specific support, we recommend utilizing a skilled professional in the Birmingham area or your hometown.

How will my professors be notified of my accommodations?

- You will be given access to an online portal to send pre-formatted professor notification emails each semester. This is the **ONLY** way professors will be notified of your approved accommodations. These notifications will include information on your approved accommodations and will **not** have any information on your diagnosis, symptoms, or health. After sending your notifications, you should contact each of your professors personally to discuss the logistics of your

accommodations. You are **not** required to disclose any information about your disability to your professors to use accommodations.

Does OAA talk with my professors about my classes?

- We value privacy, confidentiality, and your legal rights as a college student and a person with a disability. OAA is **not** involved with individual classes or professors unless an accommodation concern is brought to our attention.

How do testing accommodations work?

- If you are approved for testing accommodations, a few different options are available. Some of your professors can provide your testing accommodations. Others will refer you to the OAA Testing Center. The OAA Testing Center has testing stations available that you can reserve at least one week before your test. It is your responsibility to discuss testing accommodations with your professors and reserve testing rooms in a timely manner. Testing rooms range from 1-10 students and are kept around 1/3 of room capacity. Rooms typically include sound machines, ear plugs, and dividers.

Academics:

Will my transcript, student ID, or the class roster list that I am registered with OAA?

- No! Your status with OAA is kept confidential with our office. Your courses and degree remain standard since college accommodations do not alter program requirements.

Will my professors provide me with additional help?

- Professors at Samford are committed to supporting all students. You will not receive additional assistance because you are connected with our office. All professors have office hours designated each week to help answer questions and provide recommendations to all students. If you needing additional content-specific help, we recommend contacting the Academic Success Center to learn what tutoring options are available.

Are there academic enhancement or resource classes available?

- Samford does not offer alternate programs or courses for students with disabilities. The Academic Success Center offers FOUN 101 as a first-year experience course available to all students to assist with the transition to college

at Samford. We highly recommend taking this course during your first semester. The Academic Success Center also offers open study hall hours each week.

How are my classes assigned?

- Your classes are selected by you and your academic advisor each semester.

Will my academic advisor know I am eligible for accommodations?

- Your academic advisor will not be notified of your status with OAA. You are encouraged to discuss your academic strengths and weaknesses with your advisor so that they can best assist with your class selection.

Should I try to use fewer accommodations over time?

- We view accommodations as allowing students to use strategies to reduce the impact of the environment on their condition in various settings. We do **not** believe using fewer accommodations is desired in the college setting since college accommodations do not change the requirements or academic rigor of courses. We highly recommend that all students continue to develop their own strategies related to the learning and working environments in addition to utilizing accommodations (e.g., time management, study habits, notetaking skills).

Will accommodations make me less prepared for my career?

- That depends! If a fundamental aspect of your career field is completing timed assessments in a loud, hectic environment, using extended time testing and reduced distraction testing environments during college might not be helpful preparation. However, in most cases, accommodations used during college can be naturally used in career settings. It is beneficial to research typical fundamental job requirements and office environments of various careers to identify paths that do not include fundamental barriers to you.

Are accommodations an unfair advantage?

- Accommodations in the college setting do NOT provide an advantage since they will never impact the integrity of the course. Accommodations are not *extra help* but are strategies to adjust the *extra factors* that limit access to higher education environments. Once access is established, each student is responsible for completing all requirements of their program and courses and each student has the opportunity to succeed or fail.

Samford Resources:

What support services are available?

- Academic coaching, group tutoring, and consultations are available to all students through the Academic Success Center. Guidance related to choosing a major is available in the Career Development Center. Assistance on specific writing, reading, or speaking assignments is available through the Writing Center. Samford also has a Counseling Dept., Health Services clinic, and Public Safety department.

Who do I contact with questions about my classes or assignments?

- We recommend first contacting your professor. It is also helpful to have the contact information of a few classmates in each class. If you have questions about accommodations in a specific class, please get in touch with our office.

Who do I contact with a time-sensitive question?

- Our office is primarily appointment based. OAA responds to all calls and emails within the same or following business day. Information about weekly drop-in hours is available each semester. For all emergency concerns, contact Public Safety at 205-726-2020.

How do I get connected with the disability community at Samford?

- We strongly recommend joining DREAM or the ASL Club which are both student organizations on campus connected with our office. Our office also hosts events to celebrate Disability Awareness Month in October and offers a student cadre called *Accessible Christianity* on disability justice each spring.

How do I learn more about helpful technology?

- Our office can happily recommend technology that students frequently use for various aspects of college life (e.g., notetaking, reading, organization). Technology on campus is available in the computer lab of the University Library.

How do I find information on campus accessibility (parking, sidewalks, entrances, etc.)?

- A campus accessibility map is available on our website. We have printed copies available in our office as well.

What should I do if I am concerned about access to a program, activity, or service?

- Please get in touch with OAA. Our office will work with you to address any access concerns at Samford.

Responsibilities:

What is my role as a student who uses accommodations?

- Your primary role is to request accommodations as needed throughout your time at Samford. It is your responsibility to notify professors of your approved accommodations each semester and to communicate with professors and our office regarding the logistics of using your accommodations. It is also your responsibility to contact our office whenever you have any questions or concerns about your accommodations or support services available at Samford.

What is my family's role?

- Your family's role is to support you during your college career. This can look a variety of ways. A significant change from high school to college is that all of our office's communication will be directly with you as the student. We do not communicate with families regarding accommodations or class progress. Family support at this level is now given directly to the student.

What is my professor's role?

- Professors are available to discuss your approved accommodations with you and the logistics of using your accommodations in their class. They will typically wait for you to initiate this conversation since you decide whether or not to use accommodations.

What is the Office of Accessibility and Accommodation's role?

- Our office's role is to work with students to review accommodation eligibility and to be available for questions and concerns about accommodations. We can also help direct students to various support services at Samford. We understand that the move from high school to college is a big transition. Learning to advocate for yourself is an essential skill, and we are here to help advocate alongside you throughout your Samford journey.