



**Georgia Institute  
of Technology**

# **GRADUATE TEACHING ASSISTANT GUIDE**

**To Effective and Reasonable Accommodations**



**Teaching and Working  
with College Students  
with Disabilities**

## **A NOTE TO GTA'S**

See the ADAPTS website at: [www.adapts.gatech.edu](http://www.adapts.gatech.edu) to view the full version of the Faculty Administrative Guide to effective and reasonable accommodations for more detailed information.

### **ADAPTS OFFICE**

**221 Smithgall  
Student  
Services Bldg**

404-894-2564 (voice)  
404-894-1664 (TDD)  
404-894-9928 (fax)  
[www.adapts.gatech.edu](http://www.adapts.gatech.edu)

## ATTITUDINAL BEHAVIORS

As members of the academic community, you are very much aware of the impact language has on the reader or listener. Therefore, it is very important to be aware of and apply the appropriate terminology when describing people with disabilities.

Defining a person by the disability, not the person's humanness, leads us to isolate and segregate people with disabilities. It also hurts their pride and damages their confidence. Unfounded or inappropriate attitudes can be more disabling than any diagnosed disability.

Stereotyping prevails on campus, as it does in the larger society. In college, though, it not only perpetuates the prejudicial treatment encountered by people with disabilities elsewhere, but it may undermine scholastic performance or access to educational opportunities. Stereotyping also reinforces barriers that students with disabilities are trying to overcome at critical junctures in their lives.

**Revising our perceptions and attitudes is the first step in accommodating students with disabilities.** It is vital to remember that similarities among all students are much more significant than their differences: they are all, first and foremost, students.

The most important thing to remember is to **put the person before the disability**. This puts the emphasis on the person and not his or her particular functional limitation. If you must be succinct, give an accurate and positive portrayal of the person. *Crippled, deformed, suffers from, victim of, the retarded*, etc. are never acceptable terms.

Disability groups also strongly object to euphemisms to describe disabilities. Terms such as *handicapable, mentally different, physically inconvenienced, and physically challenged* are considered condescending. They reinforce the idea that disabilities cannot be dealt with up front.

### Correct Terminology

Person who is deaf  
People who are visually impaired  
Person with a disability  
Had/has polio  
A person who is nondisabled  
Person who has a mental illness

### Incorrect Terminology

The deaf person  
The blind person  
A disabled person  
Polio victim  
Normal, able-bodied  
A mentally ill person, crazy

## ATTITUDINAL BARRIERS (cont.)

The following definitions may help clarify which terminology to use:

**Disability:** general term used for a functional limitation that interferes with a person's ability, for example, to walk, lift, hear, or learn. It may refer to a physical, mental, or sensory condition. Use a descriptive noun or adjective, such as persons who are mentally and physically disabled or a woman with a disability.

**Handicap:** not a synonym for disability. Describes a condition or barrier imposed by society, the environment, or by one's own self. Handicap can be used when citing laws and situations but should not be used to describe a disability. For example, the stairs are a handicap to her.

**Nondisabled:** appropriate term for people without disabilities. Normal, able-bodied, healthy, or whole are inappropriate.

Tips for interacting with students with disabilities

- 1) Offer assistance, but wait for acceptance
- 2) Always talk directly to the person with a disability (not to their interpreter or attendant).
- 3) When reaching a student with a hearing impairment try to face the class as much as possible to ensure clear speech reading can take place.
- 4) Don't worry about using phrases such as, "walking to your class" or "see you later" because they are general terminology used by everyone.
- 5) Always introduce yourself when interacting with a student who is blind (explain verbally information on overheads).
- 6) Be aware of classroom barriers such as furniture in aisles or doors.
- 7) Students with mobility impairments may arrive late to classes due to inaccessibility and barriers associated with a large campus.
- 8) Do not lean or rest on wheelchairs being used by persons with disabilities. The wheelchair is an extension of their body.
- 9) Start each lecture with an outline of material to be covered that period. At the conclusion, briefly summarize key points.

## **REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973**

### **Section 504**

**Federal Register/Vol. 45,  
No. 92, pp. 30937-30944**

Section 504 is designed to eliminate discrimination on the basis of disability in any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance. It provides that no qualified person with a disability shall, on the basis of disability, be excluded from participation in, be denied benefits of or otherwise be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity that receives or benefits from federal financial assistance. "Persons with disabilities" means any person who has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities, has a record of such an impairment or is regarded as having such an impairment.

### **Admissions and Recruitment**

Qualified persons with disabilities may not, on the basis of disability, be denied admission or be subjected to discrimination in admission or recruitment. Institutions may not make pre-admission inquiry as to whether an applicant for admission is a person with a disability. After admission, the university may make inquiries on a confidential basis as to disabilities that may require accommodation.

### **Academic Adjustments**

Universities shall make such modifications to academic requirements as are necessary to ensure that such requirements do not discriminate or have the effect of discriminating, on the basis of disability, against a qualified applicant or student with a disability. Academic requirements that the recipient cannot demonstrate that are essential to the program of instruction being pursued by such student or to any directly related licensing requirement will not be regarded as discriminatory within the meaning of this section. Modifications may include changes in the length of time permitted for the completion of degree requirements and adaptation of the manner in which specific courses are conducted. Universities shall take such steps as are necessary to ensure that no student with a disability is denied the benefits of, excluded from participation in or otherwise subjected to discrimination under the education program or activity operated by the school because of the absence of educational auxiliary aids for students with impaired sensory, manual or speaking skills.

All questions relating to students with disabilities are to be referred to the Office of the Dean of Students (ADAPTS Office), 221 Smithgall Student Services Building, 404-894-2564, 404-894-1664 (TDD).

## **AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA) OF 1990**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was signed into law on July 26, 1990. This act protects millions of Americans with disabling conditions from discriminatory practices in public accommodations (including colleges and universities), employment, transportation and telecommunications. The ADA extends the coverage of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

The ADA protects every person who either has, used to have or is treated as having a physical or mental disability which substantially limits one or more major life activity. Individuals who have serious contagious and noncontagious diseases such as HIV/AIDS, cancer, or epilepsy are covered under the auspices of the ADA.

### **Public Education**

State University System institutions may not discriminate against qualified individuals with disabling conditions by excluding them from participating in or denying them the benefits of the services, programs or activities of the university.

### **Public Accommodations**

Public facilities of State University System institutions, including student unions, museums, athletic arenas, auditoriums, libraries, recreational facilities, etc., must be accessible to individuals with disabling conditions.

### **Telecommunications**

Telecommunication relay for hearing and speech impaired persons must be provided.

### **Miscellaneous**

Prohibits either coercing or threatening or retaliating against the disabled or those attempting to aid people with disabilities in asserting their rights under the ADA.

## **FACULTY PROCEDURES**

### **Access Disabled Assistance Program for Tech Students (ADAPTS)**

The ADAPTS Office, located in the Office of the Dean of Students (ODOS), provides students with information and support regarding students with disabilities. Assistance is also available for meeting the requirements of ADA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. The ADAPTS Office assists students self-identifying as having a disability. Official documentation of disability is required to determine eligibility for accommodations or adaptations that may be helpful on campus. Staff members in the ADAPTS Office serve as full-time advocates for students with disabilities. Their role is to ensure that all students have physical and programmatic access to all college programs, thereby enhancing their interactions in all activities of the campus community.

### **Equal Opportunity and Fairness**

The issue of fairness and classroom accommodation is often raised. Classroom accommodations provide an opportunity to students with disabilities to compete on equal ground with the other students in the class. Accommodations for students with disabilities are a civil right and are protected by federal law. Accommodations are prescribed on an individual basis based on the student's need and the disability documentation through the ADAPTS Office; they are never frivolous or arbitrary. Accommodations ensure students complete access to and full participation in the educational process and require no adjustments to the evaluation of academic performance. Rather, accommodations allow a student with a disability to truly learn the material presented and for an instructor to fairly evaluate the student's understanding of the course.

### **Procedures for Providing Accommodations**

Any student who is requesting accommodations as a result of a disability should be referred to the ADAPTS Office. Once referred, the staff in the ADAPTS Office will work with that student to arrange for appropriate accommodations. The student will then receive an accommodation letter detailing their necessary accommodations and should make arrangements to meet with each instructor, bringing with them a letter from the ADAPTS Office detailing the identified accommodations. Should there be any discrepancies with the letter, a call should be placed to the author.

**See next page for a sample accommodation letter.**

# SAMPLE ACCOMODATION LETTER

## ADAPTS

Access Disabled Assistance Program for Tech Students

*Services for Students with Disabilities  
Faculty Accommodation Form*



Student Name: George P. Burdell  
Student ID#: 987-65-4321

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, the following student has presented documentation of a specific disability. The accommodations below are needed for this student. This information is *CONFIDENTIAL* and should be discussed privately between you and the student. To insure ADA mandated confidentiality, do not discuss/refer to a student's disability in front of others.

It is the students responsibility to request accommodations, and it is our responsibility to provide them. You are a key part to this process. Should examinations be proctored by the ADAPTS office, the student will make an appointment to discuss proper arrangements with you. Also, the appropriate accommodations for this student will have a typed **X**, please do not accept any hand written remarks. If you have further questions or concerns, please call my office or reference our website at <http://www.adapts.gatech.edu/>. Thank you for your assistance.

**CLASSROOM ACCOMMODATIONS:**

- Permission to tape lectures       Use of notetaker or lab assistant       Overhead outlines
- Permission to use laptop computer       Front row seating       Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**TESTING ACCOMMODATIONS:**

- Quiet, non-distracting test environment       Extended time on exams/quizzes (amount of extension)
- Altered exam format       Large print on exam       Reader/Taped exam
- Permission to use computer and/or Adaptive Technology
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**2000 SPRING SEMESTER SCHEDULE**

<u>Course</u>	<u>Section #</u>	<u>Instructor's Signature</u>
<div style="border: 2px solid blue; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">                     This section is to be filled out by the student                 </div>	_____	_____
	_____	_____
	_____	_____
	_____	_____
	_____	_____

The instructor's signature is needed so we can make sure that the student has made you aware of the accommodations that they will be needing throughout the quarter.

Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\*\*I hereby give permission for the ADAPTS office to discuss my situation with appropriate institute officials.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Assistant Dean of Students/ Coordinator of Disability Services  
4/894-2564

## **FACULTY PROCEDURES (cont.)**

### **Syllabus**

It is helpful for professors to include a statement on the course syllabus stating: “If a student has a disability that may require accommodation, please make an appointment with the ADAPTS office to discuss any special needs as well as setting up a meeting time with me during my office hours.” Such an invitation indicates one’s willingness to provide assistance and can relieve some of the student’s apprehension about approaching the professor. This approach also preserves the student’s right to confidentiality and acknowledges the professor’s awareness that there may be students in the classroom with hidden disabilities.

### **Failure to Accommodate**

The accommodations outlined in the ADAPTS letter are not optional and must be provided under two federal pieces of legislation (ADA and Section 504). When accommodation specific questions arise, it is the responsibility of the faculty or staff member to contact the ADAPTS Office, 404-894-2564, to discuss questions.

### **Confidentiality**

It is the policy of the Federal Government (see section on ADA of 1990), the Georgia Institute of Technology, and the ADAPTS Office that persons with disabilities are not to be discriminated upon this factor. The confidentiality of a person with a disability is also covered by this anti-discrimination clause and must be abided to at all time. The student is not required to show documentation of their disability to any person or office at Georgia Tech other than the ADAPTS Office. The ADAPTS Office retains the students file and determines the student’s accommodations with respect to their individual disability and need. A student is not to be asked about the specifics of their disability nor is their disability to be shared with anyone other than those needing to accommodate the student.

## FACULTY PROCEDURES (cont.)

### ADAPTS PROCEDURES

#### Testing Procedure

Professors required to provide testing accommodations to their students with disabilities should have received an ADAPTS accommodation letter from the student near the start of the semester. The letter should state the student's accommodations, including amount of extended time. Professors may give the exams to the students, provided that the accommodations are met (i.e., if the student requires a quiet, non-distracting environment). Professors, and often students, utilize the testing facilities in the ADAPTS Office. The ADAPTS Office requires students to sign up for their exam, date and time, in advance. The professor is responsible for getting the exam to the office prior to the student taking the exam. The exam may be faxed, e-mailed, walked over, or given to the student with the disability in a sealed envelope. **However, the preferred method is for the exam to be hand delivered by the instructor or responsible party to Room 210.** The ADAPTS Office places the student in a testing room, makes sure the student has only the required materials with them in the room, and monitors their time. The exam is then sealed with an official ADAPTS sticker and returned to the office or mailbox specified by the professor as soon as possible. All exams that were proctored through the ADAPTS Office are sealed upon their exit; please contact the ADAPTS Office as soon as possible if you receive an unsealed exam.