



UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

## **STUDENT ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES**

4000 Central Florida Blvd.  
Ferrell Commons, 7F, Room 185  
Orlando, FL 32816-0161

### **Reasonable Academic Accommodation Analysis Process**

#### **What is the purpose of the academic and housing accommodation process?**

The purpose of the disability accommodation process is to ensure a student is not discriminated against solely on the basis of disability and has the same level of access to UCF as their nondisabled peers. The goal is equal access and equal opportunity, not to facilitate a specific accommodation.

(Accommodations in the K – 12 environment may reduce standards and expectations to promote academic success because success is central to the K – 12 accommodation process. In college, the process is substantially different. The fundamental baseline in college is equal access and opportunity relative to other students.)

#### **How are reasonable academic and housing accommodation decisions made?**

SAS facilitates an interactive process to understand a student's academic and housing experiences and how any accommodations requested may be necessary to ensure nondiscrimination and equal access and opportunity. The goal is to remove adjustable academic barriers created by the college environment. Every request for accommodation is explored on an individual, case-by-case basis in which facts and relevant information are gathered. The process may be brief or involve a series of communication exchanges depending on the nature of the request. SAS strives to make initial accommodation decisions within ten days of gathering all necessary information.

We rely on the following information to make informed decisions:

- Student narrative/history
- Third-party documentation from a qualified medical/health/counseling provider (with extent of documentation needed to vary by the situation)
- Consultation with other members of the campus community (as necessary)

## **What is the role of third-party documentation in determining reasonable accommodations?**

While third-party documentation may be sufficient to establish the presence of a disability, documentation alone does not inform whether accommodations are reasonable. Medical information will be considered but is not the definitive information that informs our final decisions. We consider a multitude of factors. A medical provider's recommended accommodation does not automatically bind SAS/UCF to approve the accommodation as being reasonable. When recommendations within documentation would primarily enhance academic success or are considered outside the scope of what is necessary for equal access, the student will be referred to other resources and or given options that may be able to address the specific need.

Students benefit from providing (or may need to provide) SAS third-party documentation for two reasons:

- 1) To establish that a student has a disability.
- 2) To provide information to help us understand how and why a requested academic or housing accommodation may be reasonable, logical, and necessary to ensure nondiscrimination and equitable access relative to the disability.

Documentation that includes any of the following points, though not exhaustive in scope, may be helpful in our analysis:

### *For Academic Accommodations*

- Explanation of how the functional limitations of a disability impact a specific academic experience (such as why more time for exams is needed due to a disability).
- Objective/evaluative data with professional recommendations/analysis that suggests why an accommodation is necessary for a student to have equal access to educational or campus opportunities.
- Specific insight based on historical knowledge about how a disability limits equal access within various academic experiences (testing, reading, etc.).

### *For Housing Accommodations*

- Explanation of how the functional limitations of a disability impact a specific campus experience based on housing location and/or impact a specific element of the housing experience.
- Objective/evaluative data with professional recommendations/analysis that suggest why living on campus as an accommodation is necessary for a student to have equal access to educational opportunities and/or why an accommodation is necessary for a student to have equal access to on-campus housing.

Students are highly encouraged to provide documentation at the time of the housing accommodation request. It is recommended that providers respond to the questions listed in our provider forms available on our website.

### **What factors are considered when determining if an accommodation is reasonable?**

SAS prioritizes equity and strives to facilitate accommodations that offer the most equitable experience without fundamentally altering an essential outcome or aspect of a course or campus experience. Students with disabilities meet the same academic standards and essential course objectives as every other student. Furthermore, the overall expectations of being a college student, as required of all students at UCF, are not to be reduced.

The interactive process includes consultation with faculty and others to ensure reasonable access is facilitated, which may occur through academic accommodations or other measures (such as inclusive design).

The SAS team utilizes a structured review process for each accommodation request. An appeal process is available for students who do not agree with the initial determination.

When necessary, reasonable accommodations are facilitated when the accommodation addresses all the following:

- Establishes meaningful access or an equal opportunity to 1) Fully engage and participate in the same activities, campus services, benefits and experiences offered to a person without a disability; 2) Utilize the same information shared with everyone; and 3) Have the same opportunity to achieve.
- Logically addresses the impacts of one's disability relative to the barriers/challenges established by and rooted in the academic, housing, and/or campus environment. (Academic or housing challenges in isolation of an academic barrier are not accommodated.)
- Is logically designed to and will effectively remove the identified academic/campus barrier to equitable access.

- For Academic Accommodation Requests -- Ensures that academic requirements or technical standards do not discriminate against a student based on disability
- For Housing Accommodation Requests -- Resolves matters that the student could not otherwise address through preparation, practice, counseling/coaching/professional guidance, adjustment to expectations and routines, or implementation of other strategies that any student who lives on or off campus must consider and incorporate to continue to be successful UCF students.

**When are academic accommodations potentially not reasonable?**

Requested accommodations will not be facilitated for disability reasons or within the context of a specific academic experience if the accommodation would result in any of the following:

- Lowering an academic standard, such that it becomes inappropriately easier for a student to fulfill the mandatory elements or learning objectives required of all other students for the course, program, or degree achievement.
- Removing or waiving acquisition of an essential skill such that it becomes impossible to accurately assess the individual student's learning, knowledge, and course work relative to the required course, program, or degree goals, and/or essential elements.
- Reducing expectations of what is generally expected of all college students (including but not limited to consistent in-class participation, managing time and deadlines, content memorization, and experiencing challenges with academic content).
- A significant change in the nature of the program.
- Removing or waiving acquisition of a skill that is directly related to the health and safety of others.
- Establishing the accommodation would pose a health or safety risk to the student with a disability or others within the academic setting.
- Removing or waiving requirements that are directly related to qualifying for a professional license.
- Enhance student success without removing an academic/institutional barrier that impedes equitable access.
- Address something that the student could otherwise manage through various approaches (time management, reduced course load, different study strategies, etc.).

At times, an accommodation may be deemed reasonable for disability reasons but is not reasonable within the context of a specific academic experience after further analysis due to one or more of the above-listed factors.

## Why type of UCF housing accommodations exist?

The four broad types of housing accommodation categories include:

- **Floorplan Accommodations** – Accommodation considerations for students who have a confirmed UCF housing agreement and will be (or have been) assigned a space on campus (such as physical accessibility features, strobe light fire alarm, and private bedroom or bathroom).
- **Service Animal:** Service animal means any guide dog, signal dog, or other animal individually trained to work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability.
- **Emotional Support Animal (ESA):** An ESA is an animal that provides emotional support that alleviates one or more identified symptoms or effects of a person's disability.
- **Lottery Exemption or Waitlist Priority Placement:** An option for students who, because of a disability, seek a lottery exemption (for automatic placement in housing) during the open lottery period for returning students or who seek priority placement on the waitlist (with a housing assignment should space become available after UCF Housing has reached capacity).

## Is a student with a disability guaranteed to live on campus while at UCF?

UCF does not require any students to live on campus. In the current housing environment, most spaces are designated for incoming first-year students. Once incoming first-year students fill all spaces, a waitlist will be managed. Only a small percentage of housing spaces are allocated for returning and transfer students. With only a few exceptions, almost any student who enrolls at UCF is informed that housing is not required or guaranteed. Therefore, students should enroll at UCF with the expectation that earning a degree at UCF will naturally require living off campus for some or all their time at UCF. Students should prepare and plan for this likely reality well before the next academic year by developing the strategies, skills, and access to resources to live off-campus successfully.

Any returning or transfer student can initially apply for a housing lottery process, which determines who will be awarded a space on campus for the following academic year. After the lottery results have been communicated, students can be placed in a waitlist pool and will be offered a spot should a housing space become available.

More information on the lottery and waitlist can be found here:

<https://www.housing.ucf.edu/apply/returning/#options>

## When are housing accommodations not reasonable?

A housing accommodation due to disability is generally not provided for any of the following reasons:

- Solely to ensure the student is successful at UCF (accommodations in higher education are to provide access, not success)
- To ensure a quiet, solitary place for studying. The UCF library has spaces available for students to study.
- To increase comfort or alleviate discomfort in the housing arrangement (such as by having a specific roommate or having a roommate free experience to avoid addressing typical roommate conflicts).
- To ensure a private space for virtual appointments.
- To serve as an alternative to the student developing the skills, abilities, and practices necessary to effectively live **on** campus (through trial-and-error, counseling, life coaching, UCF resources, such as Counseling and Psychological Services or UCF Center for Autism and Related Disabilities, or other strategies).
- To serve as an alternative to the student developing the skills, abilities, and practices necessary to effectively live **off** campus should space no longer be guaranteed (through trial-and-error, counseling, life coaching, UCF resources, such as the Student Health Services Type I Diabetes resource or UCF Center for Autism and Related Disabilities, or other strategies)
- When a request is meant for the housing space to serve as part of a student's treatment plan for their diagnosis or for UCF to serve as a student's primary treatment or medical plan/resource
- To increase comfort by making it easier to manage an academic schedule (such as by not having to plan for a shuttle ride or commute time)
- To alleviate discomfort with living off campus (such as having to plan when to come to campus, where/when to eat, the number of daily trips needed to campus, etc.)
- Concerns about living independently for the first time away from on-campus housing
- For safety and/or perceived greater access to Student Health Services or UCF Police
- Due to limited transportation options
- Due to financial concerns (whether related to disability or not)

At times, an accommodation may be deemed reasonable for disability reasons but is not reasonable or immediately doable within the context of a specific housing experience after further analysis and/or discussion with Housing and Residence Life. In these situations, SAS will attempt to identify other reasonable accommodations if possible. A requested accommodation may be unreasonable or not immediately doable if:

- All rooms meeting the accommodation request are already assigned for the given semester
- Implementation would pose an undue financial or administrative burden
- Implementation would fundamentally alter university housing policies
- Facilitation poses a direct threat to the health and safety of others or to personal and UCF property