



UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

STUDENT ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES

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UCF SAS' Reasonable Academic and Housing Accommodation Analysis Process

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

The disability accommodation process in higher education, including UCF, is designed to prevent discrimination based on disability and ensure students have equal access and opportunity to the academic and campus experience relative to their nondisabled peers. Unlike the K–12 accommodation model, which may adjust, modify, or lower academic standards to promote academic success, the college accommodation process decisions are based on what a student may need for equal access and opportunity relative to other students and does not guarantee outcomes or specific accommodations. Standards and expectations are not adjusted, modified, or lowered.

How are reasonable academic and housing accommodation decisions made?

SAS works with students through a personalized, interactive process to determine reasonable accommodations that support equal access and opportunity in academics and housing. The goal is to remove environmental factors that, when combined with a disability, limit a student's access or opportunities relative to other students.

Having a disability does not automatically mean a student will receive their preferred or requested accommodations. Accommodations are approved when they help ensure equal access and opportunity for students, such as by enabling access to course materials, demonstrating knowledge, or engaging in campus experiences. In the absence of a reasonable accommodation, the disabled student would be adversely impacted relative to other students

A student's disability experience matters, but accommodations are only given when something in the UCF environment creates unequal access or limits opportunity relative to other students. Accommodations are meant to remove those barriers, not to treat the disability itself. If there are no specific environmental factors at UCF that adversely affect the student with a disability more substantially than other students, an accommodation is not required.

Having a disability and facing challenges or having preferences within the course or on campus does not automatically mean an accommodation is required. Accommodations are only provided when the student can show that a specific part of the environment affects them differently because of their disability, compared to other students. Simply wanting or requesting a certain outcome is not enough. There must be a clear, logical connection between the disability and how the environment's circumstances create an unequal impact or lost opportunity relative to other students. It is the student's responsibility to present this connection to SAS.

Each request is evaluated case-by-case, with decisions typically made within ten days of receiving 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 varied by the situation)
- Consultation with other members of the campus community, such as professors or UCF housing staff (as necessary)

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

Having documentation from a doctor or provider can help confirm a disability, but it does not guarantee specific accommodations. SAS reviews all information as part of a broader process. SAS is not required to implement a provider's recommendations, as these recommendations often do not consider the broader higher education landscape regarding disability accommodations.

UCF only approves accommodations that ensure equal access and opportunity, not those meant for the purpose of enhancing academic success, therapeutic benefit, or personal preference. When recommendations are beyond access, SAS may refer students to other campus resources for support.

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

- 1) To establish that a student has a disability.
- 2) To provide SAS with an understanding of the student's unique functional limitations and impacts of the disability relative to the academic and/or housing context. Disability impacts each student differently, which is why SAS must gather information to understand individual experiences.

- 3) To help SAS understand why a requested academic or housing accommodation may be reasonable, logical, and necessary to ensure nondiscrimination and create the same access and opportunities for a disabled student that are otherwise not readily available relative to other students.

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

Academic Accommodations

- Description of how the disability functionally impacts specific academic tasks (e.g., need for extended exam time) for the specific student.
- Objective data and professional analysis that provide context for the necessity of an accommodation for equal access and opportunity.
- Relevant history and lived experience impacts that illustrate how the disability affects academic experiences (e.g., testing, reading).

Housing Accommodations

- Explanation of how disability uniquely affects the student's opportunity to access or participate in campus housing relative to other students who will also encounter similar experiences (such as living with a roommate) or who may not have the opportunity to live on campus (if seeking a lottery exemption or waitlist priority)
- Understanding of how the student, due to disability, would be adversely affected, relative to other students, if the requested accommodation is not approved, and the student must participate within the standard housing experience or not live on campus.
- Objective data and professional analysis that provide context for the necessity for on-campus housing or specific housing modifications to ensure equal access and opportunity to the housing and campus experience

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

SAS provides accommodations that support access and opportunity without changing core academic, housing, or campus standards. Students with disabilities are expected to meet the same requirements as their peers.

Requests that would lower academic standards are unlikely to be approved. SAS may consult with faculty or others to find reasonable solutions, which could include accommodations, course adjustments, or inclusive design.

Every request goes through a structured review, and students can appeal decisions if needed.

Reasonable accommodations are most frequently provided when the accommodation would:

- Ensure equal access and opportunity, relative to peers, to learning, participation, and campus life without lowering academic standards and expectations.
- Address specific academic or campus barriers or factors within the environment that impact disabled students more than others.
- Logically and effectively remove the identified barriers or variables that negatively impact a disabled student and create the same access and opportunity for students with disabilities relative to other students in the same or similar situation.
- Not fundamentally alter the degree, course, or experience expectations, learning outcomes, technical standards, or general student experiences.
- Meet disability-related housing needs that can't be managed through personal strategies or existing campus support 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?

Determining what is a reasonable accommodation warrants case-by-case consideration of the student's disability, the functional impact of the disability, and how this impact intersects with specific barriers or limitations within the academic environment. The goal is always to ensure equal access and opportunity to the academic experience.

While what constitutes a reasonable accommodation will vary by situation, accommodations will not be approved if they:

- Are requests made only because a student has a disability without showing any connection to a barrier in the UCF environment that affects them more than other students
- Primarily enhance success or support therapeutic intervention without addressing a limitation in the academic or campus environment that is inordinately impacting a student with a disability relative to other students in the same or similar situation.
- Are preferences that would make the academic or campus experience better for the student, but do not address any specific limitation in the UCF environment that affects the student more than others
- Address challenges that can otherwise be managed through personal strategies or general student support (time management, reduced course load, different study strategies, etc.).
- Lower academic standards or essential learning objectives.
- Eliminate required skill acquisition or prevent accurate assessment of learning.
- Reduce expectations common to all college students (e.g., participation, time management, content mastery).

- Fundamentally alter the nature of a program.
- Removing or waiving acquisition of a skill that is directly related to the health and safety of others.
- Pose health or safety risks to the student or others.

Just because an accommodation was approved in K – 12 or at another college does not mean it will be approved at UCF. Each school has its own process, which does not influence SAS decisions.

Sometimes, an accommodation may be reasonable due to a disability but not be reasonable in a specific course or setting. SAS may need to consult with faculty or other UCF personnel to decide if and how approved accommodation can be implemented.

What types of UCF housing accommodations exist?

The four broad types of housing accommodation categories include:

- **Floorplan Accommodations** – Accommodation considerations (such as physical accessibility features, strobe light fire alarm, and private bedroom or bathroom) for students who have a confirmed UCF housing agreement and will be (or have been) assigned a space on campus.
- **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:** A lottery exemption means the standard housing lottery is bypassed in the exceptional event that a disability-related need is identified that requires on-campus living. If approved, the student gets a housing assignment for the next academic year.
- **Waitlist Priority:** Gives a student priority on the housing waitlist due to disability-related needs. Approval does not guarantee housing, but it increases chances if space becomes available.

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

UCF does not require students to live on campus, and housing is not guaranteed for most students. Most on-campus housing is reserved for incoming first-year students, with limited availability for returning and transfer students. Students should plan to live off campus for part or all of their time at UCF and prepare accordingly.

Returning and transfer students may enter a housing lottery for the following academic year. Those not selected may join a waitlist and be offered a space if one becomes available. For more lottery and waitlist information: <https://www.housing.ucf.edu/apply/returning/#options>

When are housing accommodations potentially not reasonable?

A housing accommodation is generally not provided for the following reasons:

- To ensure academic success (accommodations support access, not outcomes)
- To secure a quiet study space (available at the UCF library or other buildings on campus)
- To increase comfort or alleviate discomfort, such as avoiding typical roommate challenges and conflicts or lack of experience sharing a room with someone else
- To provide privacy for virtual appointments
- As a substitute for developing skills needed to live on campus (advanced preparation prior to living 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
- As part of a treatment or medical plan
- To ease academic scheduling (e.g., avoiding transportation planning, concerns about extended time gaps between classes, or concerns about being on campus all day and managing daily needs, such as meal times)
- Due to discomfort or uncertainty with off-campus living logistics
- Concerns about living independently for the first time on- or off-campus
- For perceived safety or proximity to campus services (e.g., Health Services, UCF Police)
- Due to limited transportation options
- Due to financial concerns (whether related to disability or not)

Sometimes a housing accommodation may be reasonable for disability reasons but not possible in a specific housing situation. SAS works with Housing and Residence Life to explore other options when this happens. A requested accommodation may be unreasonable or not immediately doable if:

- All suitable rooms are already assigned for the semester
- It creates undue financial or administrative challenges for UCF
- It would fundamentally change housing policies that apply to all students
- It poses a safety risk to others, the student, or property