



DRC STUDENT GUIDE

Everything You Need to Know About Requesting and Using Accommodations

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About the Disability Resource Center

The Disability Resource Center (DRC) at Berkshire Community College (BCC) has been in existence for more than 25 years. As the number of students with disabilities on campus has grown, there has been a comparable growth in the number of support services available.

The Disability Resource Center (DRC) provides accommodations and support services to students with disabilities and serves as a resource for faculty and staff to create learning environments that are usable, equitable, inclusive and welcoming. We value inclusion and equal access to our programs and activities and are committed to a climate of mutual respect and full participation.

Staff

The DRC has one full-time coordinator and one full-time academic success coach. In general, they provide assistance and information to faculty and students on meeting the requirements of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and the Americans with Disabilities Amendment Act of 2008.

Services

Pre-admission counseling, assistance with registration, help in obtaining notetaking assistance, extended testing time, and adaptive computing are some of the services available. Special scheduling is also available for students using wheelchairs or other assistive devices; however, the majority of BCC's buildings are accessible. Existing structures on campus have been modified and are continually updated for accessibility. Modifications include reserve parking spaces, curb cutouts, building approaches, wheelchair ramps, enclosed walkway, elevators, and electric doors. Accessible transportation is available through Berkshire Transit Authority (BRTA). There are several drop off points located throughout the campus.

Location

The DRC is located in the Susan B. Anthony Building, Room A-118 across from the college bookstore in the Student Support Center. The hours are 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Students can apply directly from the [DRC website](#).

Policy and Procedures for Obtaining Academic Accommodations

Berkshire Community College values inclusion and equal access to its programs and activities and is committed to a climate of mutual respect and full participation. Our goal is to create learning environments that are usable, equitable, inclusive and welcoming.

The Disability Resource Center (DRC) will help you obtain accommodations and support services to minimize the impact of your disability on learning. However, you must initiate the process.

Because the determination of accommodations and support services requires an interactive process between information you share with us, the technical standards of your major, specific course expectations and information contained in your disability documentation, we encourage you to initiate this three-step process at least one month, preferably two, before you need to take the placement test or begin your courses.

Obtaining Accommodations

To obtain accommodations, you must:

1. Let the DRC know you have a disability and need accommodations.
2. Complete the [application for disability services](#) and [submit documentation](#) of your disability.
3. Meet with DRC staff to discuss your educational goals and determine your disability-related needs. Together, we will develop your academic accommodation plan.

Placement Test: If you are required to take the placement test, let us know and we will notify the Assessment and Testing Center of your need for accommodations. They will contact you to schedule a special administration of the test. This process may take three to five weeks.

Notifying Your Professors

The DRC will email a copy of your Academic Accommodation Plan to you upon completion of our meeting. Then, you will need to complete the following steps to activate your plan:

1. Using your *BCC student email account*, send your Academic Accommodation Plan to your professors as an email attachment.
2. In the subject line, type *Disability Accommodation Plan*.
3. In the body of your email:
 - a. Introduce yourself;
 - b. Identify the course code and section (ex, ENG 101-03) for which you are enrolled;
 - c. Describe your learning strengths and challenges and how your professor can be helpful;
 - d. State which of the accommodations you will need for their specific course. You may not need all of them. It will depend on the structure and format of the course. However, it is up to you, not your professor, to determine which accommodations you will use. *You are legally entitled to these accommodations; they are not a special favor or unfair advantage. Their purpose is to minimize the impact of your disability on learning.*

Reporting Concerns

If you have concerns, or if a professor refuses to honor your accommodation(s), contact the DRC immediately. We will work with you and your professor to determine whether the accommodation is a fundamental alteration

of the course; if there is an equally effective alternative accommodation; or whether the accommodation on your plan must be implemented as described.

In the unlikely event an accommodation cannot be agreed upon, the DRC will contact the ADA/504 Compliance Officer. During the time the adjudication is in process, your professor must allow the accommodation as recommended, until a solution is determined. The ADA/504 Compliance Officer will meet with the Disability Review Board (Dean of Student Affairs or designee, Vice President of Academic Affairs or designee, Dean of appropriate program or designee, Coordinator of the DRC) to determine appropriate action.

Procedures for Specific Accommodations

Scheduling On-Campus Accommodated Exams

If you have exams on campus and need to take them with accommodations, you will need to complete the [Online Exam Proctoring Form](#) *at least one week in advance* of your test date. This will ensure we have space and a proctor available. If you do not give us a week's notice, we may not be able to accommodate you.

Please understand, you are expected to schedule your exam for the same day and time your class is taking the exam, unless you have back to back classes, are taking an evening course or the DRC is unavailable. In such instances, you will be scheduled to take your exam as close to the class date and time, as possible.

Scheduling Online Exams

If your exams are online and timed, you should ask the professor to extend your time limits based on your accommodations. Your professor(s) have the ability to do this through Moodle. Some professors need to be reminded prior to every exam, others do not. *You will need to ask your professor for their preference.*

Obtaining Note-Taking Assistance

With the use of note-taking apps, assistive technology, digital voice recorders and learning management systems, most barriers with note-taking have been removed for students with disabilities. In the rare case where a student is not able to use or benefit from technology, we will work with you and your professor to identify a peer note-taker and make arrangements for how you will obtain them.

Once you have received at least one set of notes, you should meet with your professor during an office hour to evaluate the notes to see if they are meaningful and effective. The following elements should be considered:

- Did the note-taker identify and write down at least four or five of the most important ideas that the lecture was built around?
- Did he/she make connections among them? Include supporting details?
- Did he/she leave space on the notes for a recall column – a space where you can fill in key words or phrases that will act as labels or tags for main ideas and key information covered in the notes?

If the note-taking arrangement is not working in a satisfactory manner, you must inform DRC as soon as possible, so that alternative arrangements can be made.

Recording Lectures

If your accommodations include the use of a digital recorder, smartpen or another lecture recording device, it is critical you:

- a. Understand that the recorded material is only for your personal use in study and preparation related to the class;

- b. Understand that you may not publish or quote the lecture without the written consent of the lecturer/instructor;
- c. Agree to dispose of all recordings before or at the conclusion of the semester;
- d. Understand that instructors can inform the class that lectures are being recorded; and
- e. Understand that information in the recorded lecture may be protected by state and federal copyright law and understand that violations of this agreement may subject you to disciplinary action under the Code of Conduct and/or penalties under state and federal law (e.g. copyright law).

Borrowing Assistive Technology

If your accommodation includes recording lectures or note-taker and you want to borrow a digital voice recorder or smartpen, you may pick one up at the circulation desk in the college library. You will need to show your Accommodation Plan and college ID card to verify your eligibility for the equipment.

Equipment should be returned or your loan renewed at the end of every semester. If you need an assistive listening device or access to Kurzweil 3000 – a speech to text software program, please email the DRC and we will make the necessary arrangements for you to obtain it.

When you borrow equipment from the DRC, you are agreeing to keep it in good working order and to return it when you no longer need it. If you do not return the equipment, you will be placed on academic hold and charged a replacement fee for the device you borrowed. While on academic hold, you will not be able to register for classes or request a copy of your official college transcript. Please be courteous and erase all content recorded to the device before returning it.

Requesting Accessible Textbooks

If you are a student with a documented print impairment (dyslexia, low vision, blind) and require audio formats of your textbooks, you are strongly encouraged to **purchase the e-text versions of your books**. These books are readily accessible, avoiding weeks of special orders and special permissions from publishers. However, if your book is **not** available in digital format, you will need to purchase the hard copy of the text, provide us with a receipt of purchase and complete the *Electronic Text Request* form available from the DRC, upon request.

Books ordered via special permission from the publisher can take several weeks to obtain; therefore, it is critical to submit your request early.

Requesting Sign Language Interpreters

The DRC hires sign language interpreters to provide accommodations to students who are deaf or hard of hearing. These services are available for all academic needs, meetings, workshops, etc., as well as for any other activities sponsored by the College. If you need a sign language interpreter, you must request one from the DRC with as much advance notice as possible and complete the *Request for an Interpreter* form, available upon request. Requests which do not allow at least two weeks advance notice increase the possibility that interpreters will be unavailable.

Because interpreters are costly, you are expected to notify the DRC within 48 hours of an expected absence, or when you do not need the services of a scheduled interpreter, so we may cancel the service. *Three unexcused absences or late cancellations, without good cause will result in the suspension of interpreter services until you meet with the DRC coordinator.*

If you, or the interpreter, are absent unexpectedly, please let us know as soon as possible so we may adjust our records accordingly.

Using Personal Care Attendant (PCA)

A personal care attendant (PCA) is a person who assists an individual with a disability with the activities of daily living. In the classroom, the PCA may monitor the student's adaptive equipment, serve as the student's voice when appropriate, or take notes for the student. The college recognizes that the role of the PCA is critical to the success of the student.

Guidelines

To ensure that students with disabilities are recognized as independent class members, the following guidelines are provided for personal care attendants:

- attend to the needs for which he/she was hired,
- serve as the student's voice, when appropriate, without offering his/her own perspective,
- demonstrate appropriate classroom behavior,
- abide by college policies as described in the college's policy guide,
- adhere to all college parking regulations, and
- be considered a full participating member of the class, only IF he/she is registered for that class.

Working with a Supported Education Specialist/Advocate

Supported education has been defined in the following terms: *Education in integrated settings for people with severe psychiatric disabilities for whom post-secondary education has not traditionally occurred, or for people whom postsecondary education has been interrupted or intermittent as a result of a severe psychiatric disability and who, because of their handicap, need ongoing support services to be successful in the education environment.*

Services

A Supported Education Specialist generally assists students with the following:

- identifying interests and educational preference;
- completing admissions and/or financial aid applications;
- assisting with the registration process;
- coordinating campus support service and community-based support services with the student;
- refer and accompany student to the DRC and recommend accommodations for consideration; and
- accompany student to faculty meetings to regarding clarification of student's assignments;

Advocates for students with disabilities may not do the following:

- negotiate accommodations, academic adjustments, or any other academic issue with faculty, regardless of the student's presence. All such matters must go through the DRC office. Students requiring such services must formally register with that office; or
- have access to a student's grades pursuant to The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 without written consent from the student on file in the Registrar's Office.

Requesting a Course Substitution

A student with a disability may qualify for either modification or substitution of specific course work required for a program certificate or degree based on the limits of his/her disability.

Policy

In all cases, it is your responsibility to furnish documentation verifying your disabling condition. For the purpose of course substitution, the documentation must provide clear and specific evidence that supports your inability to do the course work. Such documentation shall be submitted to the Coordinator of the DRC, who, acting for the college, will determine the nature and conditions of accommodations as they relate to the disability.

Acting with advice from the Coordinator of DRC and the appropriate department dean, the Vice President of Academic Affairs shall determine the need for the modification or substitution of course work. In such cases the following conditions must apply:

- You must be otherwise qualified to complete the program with, or without, accommodations.
- Modifications or substitutions are only granted if the college determines they are not essential to the program of study, or to particular degree requirement; and only after you have made a good faith effort to complete the course with accommodations.

This policy does not obligate the college to modify or waive other academic requirements including, but not limited to, the college's right to require appropriate substitutions for modifications made.

Procedures

The following procedures must be completed for a course substitution to be considered:

1. The student completes a *Request for Course Substitution* form based on his/her disability.
2. The student submits the form to the DRC coordinator, along with a copy of his/her disability documentation, if not already on file.
3. The DRC coordinator interviews the student and explores all possible course accommodations before a course substitution is considered.
4. When the documentation is in place, the DRC coordinator evaluates the specificity of the documentation, as it relates to the request.
5. The DRC coordinator makes a determination and, if appropriate, recommends a course substitution.
6. The DRC coordinator meets with the appropriate Assistant Dean to discuss the course substitution. At this time, the Assistant Dean may make suggestions of appropriate alternative courses, or deny the request because the request would require a substantial change in an essential element of the curriculum.
7. The Assistant Dean and Dean of Academic Affairs review the decisions, consult with the DRC coordinator, and reach a mutually agreeable recommendation. The decision is recorded on the *Course Substitution* form.
8. The DRC coordinator meets with the student and the two of them sign the *Course Substitution* form. One copy is given to the student, and one is placed in his file.

If the student is not satisfied with the decision, he has the right to follow the grievance process as outlined in the college's policy guide.

Guidelines for Flexible Attendance

Students are responsible for fulfilling the essential requirements of courses, programs and degrees. However, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) recognizes that issues related to disabilities such as chronic medical conditions, conditions that are episodic in nature or conditions that may require hospitalization, may impact attendance and the ability to meet deadlines. Attendance and participation requirements vary depending on the nature of each course. For some classes, participation is fundamental to course objectives because students may be required to interact with others in class, demonstrate the ability to think and argue critically or participate in group activities or projects. In other classes, faculty may determine that students can master course content despite some or many absences. The DRC does not have a role in determining the fundamental requirements of a course, which may include class attendance and participation. Policies regarding attendance and participation are established by faculty at the college. Students are encouraged to meet with faculty to discuss implications that absences may have on course requirements as early as possible in the semester as well as review the pertinent information in the course syllabus.

In the event a student's disability may impact their attendance in class, DRC staff will engage in an interactive process with the student and faculty to determine appropriate accommodations. Students should provide

documentation to support a request for occasional absences during the interactive process. This may include but is not limited to, flexibility with assignment due dates, alternate assignments and/or make-up quizzes and exams. Students will not incur a grading penalty due to disability-related absences. Students are advised of the following:

- Students are responsible for completing all course requirements;
- Students should attend class as much as possible;
- Student should notify the faculty member of a disability-related absence as soon as possible;
- Faculty are not required to change the essential elements of the learning outcomes of a course;
- If a course requires participation in activities such as labs, performance-based learning, group presentations, etc. flexibility in attendance may not be appropriate.

Any questions regarding this accommodation should be directed to your counselor in the DRC.