



*Office of Student Development & Counseling*

*Disability Support Services*

*Handbook*



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## **I. MISSION STATEMENT**

Essex County College is an open access community college that serves the diverse needs of students through comprehensive educational programs, training, and continuing education. Essex County College is dedicated to academic excellence and the success of its students.

Disability Support Services ensures equal opportunity and access to all students in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 *et. seq.* and all other applicable state and federal laws. The office is located at the Main Campus on the fourth floor of the Megastructure in Room 4122-I in the Office of Student Development and Counseling Center and on Tuesdays at the West Essex Campus in Room 137B. The purpose of Disability Support Services is to provide reasonable accommodations to otherwise qualified students with a disability. The procedures followed by Disability Support Services in detailed in College Regulations 5-22. (ECC College Reg 5-22)

Disability Support Services also provide students information regarding including, to not limited to Learning Center, Educational Opportunity Fund Program, and Adult Learning Center.

## **II. NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY**

It is the policy of Essex County College not to discriminate on the basis of race, creed, color, national origin, age, marital status, familial status, affectional or sexual orientation, disability, gender identity or expression, genetic information, liability for military service, or any other category protected by applicable law. This policy applies to all terms, conditions, and privileges of student recruitment/enrollment, staff employment and vocational opportunities.

Further, the College conforms to all federal and state statutes, executive orders, regulations, guidelines and amendments including but not limited to: New Jersey Law Against Discrimination; Title VI & VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; Age Discrimination Act of 1975; and the Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990.

Discrimination concern should be brought to the attention of the Chief Compliance Officer/Title IX Coordinator”.

- Title IX Coordinator/AAO: Associate Director of Human Resources, Karen Bridgett, [bridgett@essex.edu](mailto:bridgett@essex.edu), (973) 877-3461, Main Campus, Room 5100.
- Section 504 Coordinator for Students: Assistant Director of Financial Aid, Phyllis Walker, [walker@essex.edu](mailto:walker@essex.edu), (973) 877-3173.
- New Jersey Office for Civil Rights, U. S. Department of Education, Central Regional Office, 140 East Front Street: 6th Floor PO Box 090 Trenton, NJ 08625, (973) 648-2700 Fax: (973) 648-4405.

## **III. WHO IS ENTITLED TO A DISABILITY SUPPORT SERVICES AT ECC?**

A student who self-identifies a disability may be entitled to receive Disability Support Services. To receive services, a student must deem “an otherwise qualified student with a disability” by an application and required documentation to the college.

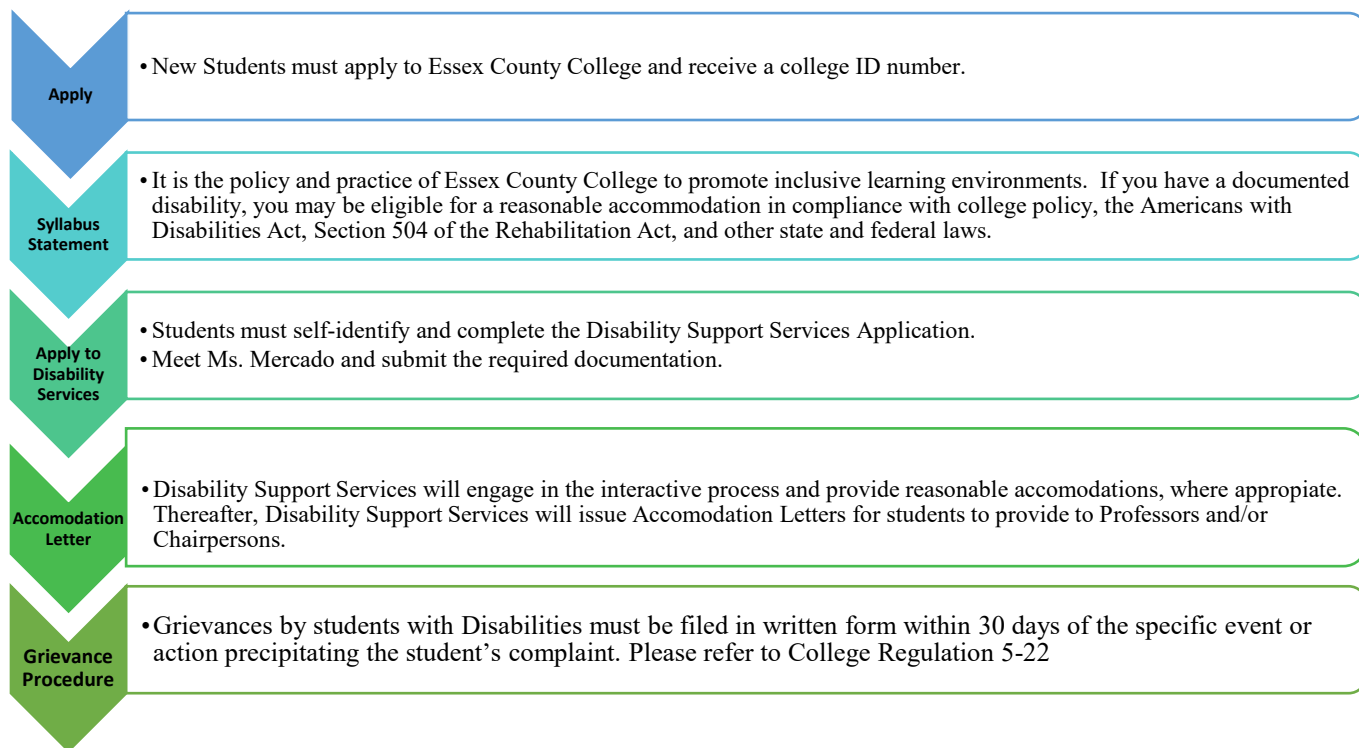
An otherwise qualified student with a disability is defined as any student who is regarded as having any mental/physical condition that substantially impairs or restricts one or more major life activities.

#### IV. HOW DO I REQUEST ACCOMMODATIONS?

Accommodation requests and approvals are an interactive and individualized process between the student, faculty, and the DS staff. Students must self-identify as having a disability by contacting the Disability Support Services and scheduling an appointment to meet with the Coordinator, Ms. Maria Mercado in room 4122-I or via email [mercado@essex.edu](mailto:mercado@essex.edu) or call (973) 877-3071.

- Please refer to College Regulation 5-22.
- Students must present required documentation per the guidelines found in the following pages. Documentation and accommodation needs are discussed together with the student.
- To receive services, a student must deem “an otherwise qualified student with a disability” by an application and required documentation to the college.
- Eligibility decisions are made within two (2) business days of meeting with the Coordinator. Once approved as eligible for reasonable accommodations, students are given a letter of accommodation, the Coordinator of the DS, which details the discussed and approved accommodations.
- Students are responsible to present and review the letter with their instructors. This should be done within the first week of the start of class.
- The copies of accommodation letters along with applications are kept at and are maintained in the students’ files. Disability Support Services Office assumes responsibility to maintain confidentiality of the evaluation and will not release any part of the documentation without the student’s informed and written consent.

#### V. DISABILITY SUPPORT SERVICES FLOW CHART



## VI. WHAT ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS?

Students who have documented disabilities may receive assistance with:

- Extra Accommodations on Assignments
  - 24 hr./ 48 hr.
- Test Accommodations
  - 1.5 /2.0 of allotted of time
- Permission to use technological in-class support (e.g., calculator, tablet, or computer)
- Modifications of learning strategies
  - PowerPoints/ Taping Lectures
- Test proctoring
  - Modify Quiet Test Locations
- Academic Advisement and Registration by the Disabilities Coordinator
- Referral to Community Resources
  - Resource Online: <https://www.essex.edu/news/mental-health-services-are-always-available-at-ecc/>

## VII. STANDARD DOCUMENTATION REQUIREMENTS

As defined by law, if a student has self-identified a disability and wishes to seek accommodations, appropriate documentation (less than 2 years old) must be submitted for evaluation. **All documents** must include *the qualifications of the evaluator, substantiation of the disability, and recommendations for reasonable accommodations*. All reports/letters should be on letterhead, typed, dated, and signed and otherwise legible. The name, title, and professional credentials of the evaluator, as well as the area of specialization should be stated clearly. The report/letter should describe the nature of the disability, description of test results, and the specific recommendations for accommodations and an explanation as to why each accommodation is recommended.

**Hearing Disabilities:** A licensed audiologist, certified by the American Speech Language Hearing Association, or a licensed medical doctor with certification in otology, or otolaryngology, will be viewed as qualified to substantiate disabilities in hearing. An Audiology Assessment with and without correction **MUST** accompany request.

**Vision Disabilities:** A licensed Doctor of Optometry or a licensed medical doctor with a certification in Ophthalmology will be viewed as qualified to substantiate disabilities in vision. A Vision Screening Assessment **MUST** accompany request.

**Physical Disabilities:** A licensed physical therapist, or licensed medical doctor will be viewed as qualified to substantiate physical disabilities.

**Learning Disabilities:** The evaluator should have experience or training in the assessment of learning problems in adolescents and adults. Clinical or educational psychologist, school psychologist, learning disabilities specialists and some medical doctors will be viewed as qualified to substantiate learning disabilities. The required documentation will be a comprehensive diagnostic evaluation report. **An IEP or 504 plan is NOT sufficient as documentation but may be attached to the comprehensive diagnostic report.** The diagnostic report should include a diagnostic interview, assessment of aptitude, academic achievement, and information processing, a specific diagnosis, test scores, and clinical summary with

recommendations for accommodations. The specific test scores, and clinical observations should support the recommendations.

**Psychiatric Disabilities:** A licensed psychologist or a licensed social work professional, licensed professional counselor, or a licensed psychiatrist will be viewed as qualified to substantiate psychiatric disabilities.

**Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder:** Professionals conducting assessments and rendering diagnosis of ADHD must have training in deferential diagnosis and the full range of psychiatric disorders. Clinical psychologists, neuropsychologists, psychiatrists, or neurologists will be viewed as qualified to substantiate ADHD. **An IEP or 504 plan is NOT sufficient as documentation.**

**Health Disabilities:** A medical practitioner will be viewed as qualified to substantiate a health disability.

You must provide the Disability Coordinator with a copy of your documents. We do **NOT** make copies of documentation.

## **VIII. WHERE SHOULD I GO FOR ADVISEMENT/ACADEMIC COUNSELING?**

Essex County College encourages students with disabilities to contact the Disability Coordinator to arrange for services and to plan their course schedules. Students requiring assistance with registration and program planning can be assisted to make the process effective and reasonable accommodations. The DS staff can also meet with students to discuss learning strategies and techniques to make the college experience more successful in academic curriculum.

## **IX. TIPS FOR STUDENT SUCCESS**

- Plan ahead! Don't wait until the last minute to register and make accommodation requests. Things go more smoothly when you take the time to plan ahead.
- Take a proactive role and introduce yourself to each of your instructors. Be sure to find out when the best time would be to meet with them individually to discuss you and your needs. Be sure to obtain their office location, office hours, office phone number, and e-mail address.
- Request a meeting each semester with DS to periodically review your accommodations and request accommodations for the upcoming semester. Use this time to discuss any questions or concerns you may have regarding accommodations.
- Pay your tuition and fees by the published deadline date for each semester. This includes making sure your financial aid is in order or that you have received and processed the proper paperwork for any third-party payments.
- Every student is different, and every situation is different. Be sure to discuss with your instructor what helps to make YOU successful in the classroom.
- Take responsibility for yourself and for your actions.
- Visit the Learning Center to find out about peer tutoring, the Writing Center, Math Lab and additional academic support.
- Get involved and stay active! Advocating for yourself extends beyond the classroom to becoming involved with student organizations, and activities. A balanced and rich college experience is what is desired for all college students.

## **X. HOW CAN I ACCESS TUTORING?**

All tutoring assistance is provided through the college's Learning Center, which offers locations at each Essex County College campus/center. Free online tutoring is also available for all Essex County College students. For more information about these services, please contact the Tutoring Center directly or visit the website at <https://www.essex.edu/student-services/tutoring-center/>. Students are encouraged to consult with the DS Coordinator if they are experiencing problems with course completion.

## **XI. WHAT ARE EXAMPLES OF TESTING ACCOMMODATIONS PROVIDED?**

Otherwise qualified students with disabilities may be afforded alternate testing arrangements if this is deemed a reasonable accommodation.

The student's specific testing needs will be determined through interactive consultation between the faculty member, the student and the DS Coordinator.

When test accommodations cannot be provided by the instructor, DS provides the service as a convenience for faculty and students. Test administrations handled by DS involve only physical assistance in accordance with the student's functional limitation (e.g., reading, writing, marking answer sheets, time extensions).

The following procedures should be followed when setting up test accommodations with Disability Services:

- The student and Coordinator of DS discuss the reasonable accommodation as needed.
- DS notifies the instructor of the disability-related need for test accommodations.
- The instructor contacts DS if the department cannot host the exam.
- The instructor decides to have the exam delivered to DS. Exams that need to be tape-recorded must arrive at DS at least three working days before the exam is to be administered. The student's name must appear on all exams.
- DS administers the exam and returns it according to pre-arranged instructions.
- If the student does not keep the appointment for the exam, the exam is returned to the instructor. It is the student's responsibility to contact the instructor to seek permission to reschedule the exam.
- Exams are to be scheduled at the same time as the regular class exam. The student may start before or run later in order to allow for extra time. This should be arranged with the instructor/proctor in advance.

## **XII. WHAT ARE THE GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES?**

### **1. PROCEDURE**

Grievances by students with Disabilities must be filed in written form within 30 days of the specific event or action precipitating the student's complaint(s). As an initial matter, all grievances shall be reviewed by Disabilities Services to determine whether they are submitted within a timely manner and/or whether they contain all required information. Disability Services will not review a grievance that is untimely or fails to contain all required information, including a clear statement of all grounds for the grievance and any attempts at prior remedies. To facilitate a clear and prompt resolution, a grievance, once initiated, shall not be expanded beyond the issues presented in the student's initial



complaint. Disability Services reserves the right to redirect a grievance to the proper grievance procedure or any other appropriate review procedure.

## 2. DESIGNATION OF RESPONSIBLE EMPLOYEE

Consistent with federal law, Essex County College has designated employees to coordinate its efforts to comply with and carry out its responsibilities, including an investigation of any complaint communicated alleging its noncompliance. The names, office address and telephone number of these employees is indicated below:

Ms. Maria Mercado, Coordinator, Disability Services  
The Office of Student Development and Counseling  
4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Room 4122-I  
Phone: 973-877-3071  
Email: [Mercado@essex.edu](mailto:Mercado@essex.edu)

## 3. INFORMAL GRIEVANCE PROCESS

As a prerequisite to initiating the formal grievance procedure, an Essex County College student shall first attempt to resolve the issue directly with the faculty member or staff member(s) involved. Second, it is also expected that the student has addressed his or her complaint informally by meeting with a representative of Disability Services and/or a department chairperson. When a student files a formal grievance, he or she will be asked to summarize the effort that has been made to resolve this issue informally both with the faculty or staff member involved as well as with a designee of Disability Services. If the grievance is not resolved informally, then the student shall have the right to invoke the appropriate formal grievance procedure.

## 4. FORMAL GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

A documented student with a disability, as defined by the ADA and the Rehabilitation Act, shall have the right to request the Director of the Office of Student Development and Counseling and/or Disability Services to review alleged denial of any requested accommodation or service by fully complying with procedures detailed below. This provision shall also apply to a student requesting an academic accommodation who believes he or she has been wrongly denied.

- The student must submit a fully completed grievance form to Disability Services within 30 days of the alleged denial of accommodations or services.
- A timely review request will not be considered to have been filed unless it includes all of the required information. The student is solely responsible for supplying all required information on the grievance request form.
- The Director of the Office of Student Development and Counseling and Disability Services shall together assess the review request and all information necessary to render a written determination.
- Within ten days following receipt of the written decision about the grievance by Disability Services, if the student disagrees, the student may seek a review by the Dean of Student Affairs.



## XV. SAMPLE OF ACCOMMODATION LETTER

**Essex County College  
Disability Services  
Office of Student Development and Counseling  
Accommodation Letter**

To Instructor (s) \_\_\_\_\_

Re: Student/ID Number: \_\_\_\_\_, ID# \_\_\_\_\_

Course (s): \_\_\_\_\_ Semester: \_\_\_\_\_ YEAR: 2023

The above student is registered for your class this semester. The student has met the stringent requirements as established by ECC to document his/her disability. The provision of reasonable accommodations is **mandated by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973**. Accommodations are designed to equalize opportunities while maintaining institutional academic standards. Accommodations are provided on an individual basis with the cooperation of the student, Coordinator of Disability Services, and you, the instructor. **Disability Information is confidential. Please do not announce it to other students in the class.** Thank you for your assistance in helping this student to achieve academic success.

The following accommodations have been determined appropriate and reasonable for this student.

**Alternative Testing/Evaluation**

- ☐ Distraction limited environment
- ☐ Extended time (1.5x, 2x) for testing
- ☐ Alternative test format (oral, essay, reader for verbally/vocabulary dominant tests/exams)
- ☐ Clarify directions for tests/assignments

**Class Accommodations**

- ☐ Taping Lectures
- ☐ Sign Language/ CART Interpreter
- ☐ Advance notice of assignments
- ☐ Scheduled meetings with professor during posted office hours to clarify questions
- ☐ Extended time for assignments
  - ☐ 24 hrs. extended time
  - ☐ 48 hrs. extended time
- ☐ Visual Supplement to auditory presentations (either copies of lecture notes or Power Point)

**Physical Environment**

- ☐ Preferential Seating
- ☐ Wheelchair access
- ☐ Opportunity to stand or move about for medical reasons
- ☐ Alternative table or chair

**Assistive Technology (in class and during testing)**

- ☐ Calculator
- ☐ Spell checker/Dictionary/Thesaurus
- ☐ Print Enlarger Equipment (Visual Impaired)
- ☐ Assistive Listening Devices (Auditory Impaired)
- ☐ Note Recorder (Visual/Auditory Impaired/Reading Impaired)
- ☐ Permission to use Laptop/Tablet/similar device

**ATTENDANCE POLICY: CLASS ATTENDANCE IS CONSIDERED AN ESSENTIAL REQUIREMENT FOR A SUCCESSFUL EDUCATION. THE INSTRUCTOR HAS THE AUTHORITY TO SET ATTENDANCE POLICIES.**

Other: Please allow the student to take pictures of the board with cell phone as a teaching strategy and allow the student to work up to their potential during exam time.

*Maria H. Mercado*

Coordinator of Disability Services

*May 10, 2023*

Date

**It is of vital importance to contact me at 973-877-3071 if you have any questions or concerns. Thank you for your collaborative support of our students.**

Form Date: May 10, 2023

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## References

- Essex County College Regulations, Retrieved from: [REG-5-22-DISABILITY-SUPPORT-SERVICES-FOR-STUDENTS.pdf \(essex.edu\)](#)
- Essex County College Lifeline, Retrieved from: [LifeLine-2020-2021.pdf \(essex.edu\)](#)
- Office of Accessibility Services Student Handbook, Passaic County Community College