



*Virginia State University*  
*Office of Student Accessibility*  
*Operational Guidelines*

## **Student Accessibility Operational Guidelines**

Virginia State University (VSU) is committed to ensuring that all students have equal access to their programs and services. The University does not discriminate against individuals based on actual or perceived disabilities and strives to provide students with disabilities with the same opportunities for success as those without disabilities. Virginia State University (VSU) complies with applicable federal laws and regulations, including the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, as amended (ADA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Fair Housing Act (FHA).

The Student Accessibility Office (SAO) is an entity within the Department of Counseling & Accessibility. The Student Accessibility Office reviews and monitors accommodation requests for students with an identified disability and/or documented need for additional support from a qualified licensed professional. Some types of accommodations may include academic, housing, animal, and dietary. Our mission is to empower student success by reducing barriers to learning and ensuring equitable access across the VSU experience. Through individualized support, advocacy, and collaboration, we empower students to fully engage and achieve their highest academic and personal potential.

### **Accommodation Determination Process**

Decisions regarding whether a student qualifies as a student with a disability, as well as what constitutes reasonable accommodations, are made by the Student Accessibility Office. The Accommodation Review Committee (ARC) serves in an advisory capacity to support the SAO in making decisions related to accommodation requests as deemed appropriate. The Committee is responsible for reviewing requests and providing guidance and insight based on members' areas of expertise to assist in the decision-making process as needed. ARC is composed of university stakeholders, including but not limited to representatives from Residence Life, Housing, the Academic Center for Excellence, Student Health Services, Student Accessibility, Counseling Services, and Academic Affairs. All accommodations are considered on a case-by-case basis. The Student Accessibility Office receives all initial requests and provides guidance, coordination, and program oversight for accommodations approved through this process.

### **Confidentiality and Information Management**

Virginia State University upholds strict standards for protecting the privacy and confidentiality of student information in accordance with FERPA. The Student Accessibility Office maintains disability-related documentation as part of the student's educational record and stores these materials in secure files separate from general academic records. Access is limited to SAO staff and university officials with a legitimate educational interest.

All disability-related documentation—including medical, psychological, and other supporting records—is treated as confidential. Information is not released to faculty, staff, or third parties without the student's written consent, except where permitted by law. When communicating approved accommodations, the SAO provides only what is necessary for implementation and

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does not share diagnostic details unless authorized by the student. All university personnel involved in providing accommodations are expected to maintain confidentiality and use information solely for delivering approved support.

### **Types of Accommodations**

Housing Accommodations: These are accommodations that pertain to living on campus or in university affiliated housing. Accommodation approvals are not automatic and are approved based on the reasonability of the request, medical documentation, and committee insight. It is imperative for students to understand that a Single Room/Single Suite request is not a reasonable accommodation for every type of disability. Also, the SAO does not assign housing and is unable to make recommendations regarding residence hall location or the specific size of a space.

Academic Accommodations: These are accommodations that pertain to the academic classroom and may include permission to record lectures, access to lecture notes, accessible seating, test proctoring, or alternate testing location. Approved accommodations in this area help ensure a student's disability does not adversely impact the academic journey in an unfair way.

Animal Accommodations: Virginia State University policy restricts pets on campus. Students who desire to bring an emotional support animal or service animal must start that process with the accessibility office. Requests are reviewed individually to determine reasonable accommodations in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Section 504, and the Fair Housing Act (FHA).

Dietary Accommodations: These accommodations pertain to campus students with a meal plan who have specific dietary needs. All meal plan accommodations will be reviewed in conjunction with Thompson Hospitality regarding dietary needs.

### **Requesting Accommodations**

There is only one application for all requested accommodations, unless otherwise noted. Please be advised that accommodation requests are not guaranteed and are determined on a case-by-case basis. Applications will not be reviewed until deemed complete.

The Student Accessibility "One App" is located on the SAO webpage. The student may click the link on the webpage to begin the process or contact the Student Accessibility Office to receive the application link. The application can only be accessed using a VSU email account and cannot be submitted without supporting documentation.

The student may use the SAO Provider Verification Form (located on the webpage) to support their accommodation request. Although this method is preferred, other supplemental documents are also acceptable.

#### Supplemental Documents may include:

- Letter from your Licensed Medical and/or Licensed Mental Health Provider

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\*Must be dated within **one-year calendar** of application submission\*

- A Licensed Mental Health Provider may include an LPC, LCSW, LMFT, LCP, Psychiatrist, Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner, etc.
  - The letter must:
    - Be on official letterhead
    - State your condition and/or diagnosis
    - Recommend specific type of accommodations
    - Explain how the accommodation impacts your level of functioning
    - Specify how long the provider has worked with you
    - NPI number
    - Be signed with credentials and date
- IEP or 504 Plan (Academics only)
  - Must be dated within 3 years and include detailed information about supports provided in high school
- Educational and/or Psychological Assessment
- Audiological and/or Visual Reports

For Religious Dietary Exemptions provide a written statement to include:

- Clearly describe the religious belief or practice
- Explain how it conflicts with the specific requirement
- Affirm that the belief is sincerely held
- Be signed and date

**\*Note:** All meal plan exemption request requires a consultation with Thompson Hospitality Services\*

Students are encouraged to submit applications in a timely manner to avoid delays in processing. Applications may take up to 30 calendar days to review (excluding University closures). As accommodations are not retroactive, delays may create barriers to students receiving the appropriate level of support.

### Appeals

Students who disagree with the determination of the Student Accessibility Office regarding accommodations may appeal the decision within 10 calendar days of receiving their notification letter by visiting the Student Accessibility Office webpage and clicking the “Appeal” link. Supplemental information may be submitted at this time. The appeal will be reviewed and processed by the Student Accessibility Office to determine whether any additional information warrants a change in the original decision. If the SAO’s decision remains unchanged, the appeal will be forwarded to the Vice President of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management, or

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designee, for further review. Appeals may take up to 30 days to offer a conclusion, excluding University closures. During the appeal process, the University's initial decision remains in effect.

### Accommodation Continuation Procedures

The Student Accessibility Office offers different procedures for renewing or re-applying for accommodations, depending on the type of accommodation requested. The table below outlines the timelines associated with each process.

Accommodation	Reapply	Renew	Next Steps
<b>Academic</b>	All current students must complete an updated Intake Application at the beginning of each Fall semester. Students will receive a link to begin this process. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No additional supporting documentation is required</li> </ul>	Current students will receive a renewal link prior to the start of the Spring semester to their student email address.	Once the process is complete, accommodation letters are sent to your professors within 5 days.
<b>Housing, Animal, &amp; Dietary</b>	Students must submit a new application with medical documentation dated within one calendar year of submission.	Accommodations automatically renew for the Spring semester.  Application review for the Fall term begins in April.	If approved, the Housing Department is contacted to determine placement.

**\*\* For Winter and Summer request, please contact the SAO office for guidance on how to reapply/renew**

**\*\* If the student has taken a leave of absence for any duration of time, please contact SAO for additional guidance**

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## Definitions

**Accommodation:** Any reasonable adjustment that ensures a student with a disability has equal access to the university's programs and activities—whether inside the classroom or outside of it. Accommodations are not special treatment—they are tools that remove barriers, so students can fully participate. These adjustments do not change academic standards or fundamentally alter course requirements.

**Disability:** a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities.

**Reasonable:** a feasible and appropriate adjustment to policies, environments, services, or procedures that enables an individual with a disability to access programs, perform essential functions, or participate equally, so long as the adjustment does not create an undue hardship or fundamentally alter the nature of the program.

**Retroactive:** means something that takes effect starting from a date in the past, even though the decision or action is made now. Accommodations are **not** retroactive.