



ALTINBAŐ
UNİVERSİTESİ

ALTINBAŐ UNIVERSITY
DISABLED STUDENT SUPPORT UNIT
FACULTY AND STAFF GUIDE FOR PROVIDING
ACADEMIC SUPPORT TO STUDENTS WITH
SPECIAL NEEDS

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1. Introduction

a. Disabled Student Support Unit

Disabled Student Support Unit was established to identify academic, administrative, physical, psychological and social needs of students with disabilities accepted to Altınbaş University, and provide them with a supporting environment to meet their special needs. The aim of Disabled Students Support Unit is to make the necessary adjustments to minimize the difficulties disabled students might confront during their studies and provide them with equal access right to each type of physical conditions, academic practices and social activities.

b. Disabled Student Support Unit Team

Disabled Students Support Unit carries out its duties under the presidency of the respective Vice President. The commission consists of Undergraduate School/Graduate School/Vocational School Coordinators, Head of Health, Culture and Sports (HCS), Student Council HCS Representative, a Psychologist from Counseling and Psychological Services and Head of Construction and Technical Works Department.

c. Services We Provide

- I. Identify students with disabilities attending Altınbaş University.
- II. Identify the needs of students with disabilities in terms of academic, administrative, physical, psychological, social aspects and in relation to accommodation/housing.
- III. Consider the requests of students with disabilities.
- IV. Determine and implement instructional adaptations for students with disabilities in collaboration with Undergraduate School/Graduate School/Vocational School Disabled Students Support Unit Coordinators and Academic Advisors.
- V. Provide guidance to faculty, staff and students without disabilities in terms of communicating and establishing relationships with students with disabilities.
- VI. Monitor whether decisions and strategies are well-taken and properly implemented.

2. Different Types of Disabilities and Adaptations for Disabilities

In order to implement instructional adaptations for students with disabilities, faculty members' contribution is needed. Accordingly, faculty is required to include the below mentioned note in course descriptions so as to help both identify students with disabilities and encourage them to ask for help and support;

“In case you have any kind of disability or chronic health condition and you need instructional adaptations, please do not hesitate to contact me.”

Additionally, observing student behavior during class would help to find out whether they are experiencing any health condition. As faculty, in case you realize that a student needs support, you are strongly recommended to talk to the student in person about his/her instructional needs and then refer him/her to Disabled Students Support Unit.

Please note that;

- Disabilities may not always be visible. Students struggling with mental or chronic conditions/disorders may also need instructional adaptations.
- Sometimes people have more than one disability. In that case, instructional adaptations must be designed and implemented by taking into account each type of disability.
- Providing support to students with disabilities must be carried out not by excluding them from the learning process but including them into the learning process. So, when designing instructional adaptations, it would be better to ask ourselves, **“How can I make the student a part of learning process?”**
- Students diagnosed with the same type of disability may not have similar skills and abilities. Each student with disabilities must be evaluated individually and a customized instructional plan must be designed to enrich student learning experience.
- When designing classroom/instructional adaptations, different types of examinations and their durations, assignment submissions, class attendance and additional breaks during class must be taken into consideration.

Instructional adaptations based on disability type;

a. Visual Impairment

Visual impairment including low vision, blindness, blurred vision, color blindness and night blindness is a decreased ability to see to a degree that causes problems not fixable by usual means. As conditions, diseases or malformations like cataract, glaucoma, absent eye and orbital tumors are among the most common causes of vision loss in people, they are also referred to as visual impairments.

Instructional/classroom adaptations for students with visual impairments;

- Provide students having low vision or partial sight with a physical or digital copy of lecture notes/textbook content prior to class.
- Provide students with a study partner. In Study Partnership: a student without disability voluntarily shares his/her lecture notes with a student with disability, study with him/her on scheduled hours.
- An audio note taker or a recorder may be allowed.
- Dim brightness. Poorly designed classrooms that are too bright may negatively impact students with visual impairments.
- Students with visual impairments must be notified of changes in classroom layout, or of any announcement regarding classroom/course schedule/school in general.
- Type of examination, exam duration and location must be set in accordance with student's request and academic advisor's approval. Where necessary, students may be allowed to use computer or any other device during examination. Upon student's request, s/he may be allowed extra time to complete the examination.

b. Physical Disability

A physical disability, including cerebral palsy and developmental muscle disorders, is a limitation on a person's physical capacity and/or mobility due to injuries in skeletal and muscular system. Such impairments may affect speech, vision or coordination.

Instructional/classroom adaptations for students with physical disabilities;

- They may be allowed extra or extended breaks to take medication, rest or use the lavatory.

- In case student experiences any issue regarding physical arrangement/design of the classroom, you may contact Disabled Students Support Unit and to request collaboration in finding a proper solution.
- In case student has difficulty with fine-motor skills, s/he may be provided with a study partner.
- Students with physical disabilities must be notified of changes in classroom layout, or of any announcement regarding classroom/course schedule/school in general.
- Type of examination, exam duration and location must be set in accordance with student's request and academic advisor's approval. Where necessary, students may be allowed to use computer or any other device during examination. Upon student's request, s/he may be allowed extra time to complete the examination.

c. Hearing Loss/Impairment

Hearing loss, aka hearing impairment, is a partial or total inability to hear (deafness). Persons with partial hearing loss/impairment mostly use hearing aids to listen and communicate. Deaf persons, on the other hand, communicate with a combination of methods such as sign language and lip reading.

Instructional/classroom adaptations for students with total or partial hearing loss/impairments;

- Deaf or hearing-impaired students may be provided with a physical or digital copy of lecture notes/textbook content prior to class.
- Instructors should face the class as much as possible when writing on the chalkboard (or displaying the course material on screen) and speak clearly and audibly, without shouting. Also, on-line course materials/videos/DVDs with subtitles may be made available deaf or hearing-impaired students.
- Students must be notified of changes in classroom layout, or of any announcement regarding classroom/course schedule/school in general.
- They may be provided with a study partner.
- A sign language interpreter may participate in class as a useful accommodation to help the student.

- Instructors should be patient and kind when communicating with deaf or hearing-impaired students.
- Type of examination, exam duration and location must be set in accordance with student's request and academic advisor's approval. Where necessary, students may be allowed to use computer or any other device during examination. Upon student's request, s/he may be allowed extra time to complete the examination.

d. Speech and Language Disorders

When a person is unable to produce speech sounds correctly or fluently, or has problems with his/her voice, s/he has a speech or language disorder. Spontaneous speech and language disorders can be expected to emerge in the absence of hearing ability. Inability to comprehend language because of damage to specific brain regions (aphasia), developmental disorders, movement disorders affecting, tongue, palate and other facial muscles, and stuttering may occur with speech disorders. Speaking or giving a presentation in front of an audience may be quite stressful for people with speech disorders. Faculty and class mates should avoid being impatient when communicating with speech-impaired students, and especially **avoid finish their sentences for them.**

Instructional/classroom adaptations for students with speech and language disorders;

- Type of examination, exam duration and location must be set in accordance with student's request and academic advisor's approval. Where necessary, students may be allowed to use computer or any other device during examination. Upon student's request, s/he may be allowed extra time to complete the examination.
- For group studies or presentations, alternate assessments may be used when requested by the students.
- They should be allowed extra or extended time to express themselves clearly and correctly during class.

e. Learning Disability

Learning disability may occur in several areas of functioning in which a person has difficulty learning in a normal manner. It's a neurological disorder affecting a range of

functional and fine/gross motor skills including the ability to write, read, listen, do math, organize information and reason. Most common learning disabilities are:

- i. Dyslexia (reading disorder): Problems in spelling words, reading slowly.
- ii. Dysgraphia (deficiency in the ability to write): It's a disorder associated with impaired handwriting. The writing skills of children with dysgraphia are below those expected given a person's age measured through intelligence and education.
- iii. Dyscalculia (difficulty in comprehending arithmetic): Deficits in basic numerical skills, calculation ability (finger counting, calculation errors).

Instructional/classroom adaptations for students with learning disabilities;

- They may be provided with a physical or digital copy of lecture notes/textbook content prior to class.
- Graphic organizers may be used to teach students with learning disabilities.
- Type of examination, exam duration and location must be set in accordance with student's request and academic advisor's approval. Where necessary, students may be allowed to use computer or any other device during examination. Upon student's request, s/he may be allowed extra time to complete the examination.
- Exam questions should be as clear and concrete as possible. For instance, during the examination, students may be asked questions whose answers are explicitly stated in the textbook.
- An audio note taker or a recorder may be allowed for practicing.

f. Asperger's Syndrome

Asperger's Syndrome is a developmental disorder characterized by introversion (not for all cases), monotone intonation, social impairment, odd facial expressions and clumsy gestures, insensitivity to others, taking figures of speech literally. Although there are similarities between classic autism and Asperger's Syndrome, the latter differs from autism in its symptoms becoming more evident with age, when the person moves into more complex social situations; signs and symptoms of autism, on the other hand, appear in infancy and early childhood.

Instructional/classroom adaptations for students with Asperger's Syndrome;

- Type of examination, exam duration and location must be set in accordance with student's request and academic advisor's approval. Where necessary, students may be allowed to use computer, calculator or any other device during examination. Upon student's request, s/he may be allowed extra time to complete the examination.
- Exam questions should be as clear and concrete as possible.
- Instructors should be careful about making jokes as students with Asperger's Syndrome may not understand jokes, irony or metaphors.
- Instructors should ensure that students have a clear idea of what needs to be accomplished in assignments and in class. As participating in group work may be difficult for them, an alternative assessment method may be devised.
- They may be provided with a physical or digital copy of lecture notes/textbook content prior to class.
- Graphic organizers may be used to teach students with Asperger's Syndrome.

g. Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder

Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder is neurodevelopmental disorder characterized by trouble paying attention, lack of focus, excessive activity, or difficulty controlling behavior. While symptoms appear in the early childhood, symptom intensity naturally decreases or disappears with age. However, restlessness/impatience, lack of focus may continue to manifest as impetuosity/quickness.

Instructional/classroom adaptations for students with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder;

- Type of examination, exam duration and location must be set in accordance with student's request and academic advisor's approval. Testing location/exam environment must be as distraction-free as possible. Where necessary, students may be allowed to use computer, calculator or any other device during examination. Upon student's request, s/he may be allowed extra time to complete the examination.
- Exam questions should be as clear and concrete as possible.
- When teaching, establish eye contact with the student so you know s/he's focused. To keep your students interested, avoid teaching in a monotone voice. Change your tone of voice and pace as frequently as possible.

- Divide assignments, projects into smaller, less complex parts. Decrease frequency of (timed) tests.
- For group studies or presentations, alternate assessments may be used when requested by the students.

h. Approach to Mental Health Disorders

Mental disorders are also known as psychiatric disabilities or mental illnesses. Episodes lasting at least two weeks and affecting personal functioning without any biological basis may indicate the presence of a mental health disorder. Patients are mostly aware of changes in their personality and behavior, sometimes they are not. For that reason, in case you notice any drastic change in a student's personality or behavior, or any impairment of his/her personal functioning, student must be absolutely referred to Counseling Services of Altınbaş University.

Mental health disorders are classified into three major categories;

Anxiety Disorders: Anxiety disorders include different conditions such as panic attack, obsessive-compulsive disorder, generalized anxiety disorder, performance anxiety and social phobia. If you notice signs of anxiety including restless over-activity, social withdrawal, poor attendance, high level of anxiety prior to assessment or when speaking in class, that all combined result in poor academic performance, then you should refer the student to counselling.

Mood Disorders: If you observe a student have signs and symptoms of mood disorders including pessimism, social withdrawal, indifference, feelings of guilt, worthlessness, poor attendance, rapid mood swings, unexplained crying spells, that all combined result in poor academic performance, then the student probably experiences difficulty to regulate his/her emotions. In such case, you should refer him/her to counselling.

Psychotic Disorders: Psychotic disorders are mainly characterized by a distorted perception of reality. Delusions, such as thinking that someone is plotting against you, constant suspicion of others, hallucinations, such as hearing, seeing, or feeling something that is not there, emotional dysregulation, social withdrawal, racing thoughts, relentless or rapid thinking, poor attendance are among the common signs and symptoms of psychotics

disorders, all affecting student's academic performance. If you observe a student experience any of the above-mentioned symptoms, then you will need to refer him/her to counseling.

Instructional/classroom adaptations for students with Mental Health Disorders;

- Make time for your student and talk to him/her in a one-on-one environment. Avoid being judgmental and labeling him/her when you tell him/her about the changes you noticed in him/her lately. If s/he says that s/he is having difficulty to deal with problems all alone by himself/herself, tell him/her that s/he can always contact the University's Counseling and Psychological Services to increase his/her will and power to fight problems.
- They may experience high levels of stress or excitement when participating in class or group works. You may help them boost their confidence through some easy-to-do exercises.
- Students undergoing psychiatric treatment may experience specific physical symptoms such as, numbness, trembling, sweating, fatigue, which may negatively affect student's academic performance. Accordingly, it is important for faculty to recognize signs and symptoms that students are exhibiting.

i. Chronic Illnesses

These are health conditions that are persistent or that comes with time. Affecting personal functioning as well as requiring continuous treatment, common chronic illnesses include diabetes, epilepsy, cancer, asthma, skin dermatologic disorders, and cardiovascular diseases.

Instructional/classroom adaptations for students with chronic illnesses;

- As students with chronic illnesses may be undergoing routine care and treatment, they must be allowed extra or extended time to take medication or faculty must provide a member of staff to help students with their special health needs.
- Due to the fact that students with diabetes need to pay attention to their food choices, special adaptations may be required to accommodate students, especially during class and assessments.

- If physical environment of the classroom increases the daily symptoms of the chronic illness, faculty may, in collaboration with the student, devise an instructional adaptation more suitable to student's needs like requesting classroom change, or student may be excused from compulsory attendance etc.

j. Albinism

Albinism is an inherited genetic disorder characterized by complete or partial absence of melanin pigment formed in the skin, hair and eyes. Affected persons typically have fair skin and white hair. It is also associated with several vision problems, such as low vision, blindness, and hyper-photosensitivity. In case of students with albinism, instructional adaptations for students with visual impairments may apply.

3. Conclusion

Everyone has his/her own way to cope with disability. While some can manage to deal with it smoothly and, easily adjust to life with a disability, others may experience difficulty to adjust, adapt accept. Performing basic activities of daily living may be more stressful and challenging for persons with disabilities. Accordingly, we need to bear this crucial fact in mind when communicating with them.

The key factor for implementing the classroom adaptations in the most successful way is to jointly choose and apply the most suitable method both for the student and the faculty.

4. References

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