

# DRC STUDENT GUIDE

Everything You Need to Know About Requesting and Using Accommodations



**Empowering Students, Enhancing Equity and Promoting a Culture of Inclusion**



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[berkshirecc.edu/DRC](http://berkshirecc.edu/DRC)

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# About the Disability Resource Center

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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 ([berkshirecc.edu/DRC](http://berkshirecc.edu/DRC)).



# Policy and Procedures for Obtaining Academic Accommodations

## Obtaining Accommodations

To request accommodations and support services, please complete the following four-step process as early as possible. Starting this process ahead of time ensures that we can provide the best possible support for you. The process includes reviewing your documentation, meeting to discuss your individual needs, identifying any potential barriers in your program, and assessing specific course requirements.

We're here to help, so please reach out early! After we receive your completed application and documentation, it may take up to 10 business days to schedule your intake appointment.

## DRC Application Process:

**Important:** To complete your application, you will need two things: documentation of your disability and a BCC student ID number (SID). To obtain an SID, you must apply to the college. If you are a non-degree student, you will receive an SID when you sign up for classes.

1. **Complete:** Fill out the [DRC Application](#) in AIM.
2. **Send:** Upload your [disability documentation](#) into your DRC Application in AIM.
3. **Meet:** Meet with the DRC to develop your accommodation plan. We will contact you by email to schedule your appointment.
4. **Request:** Once your eligibility for accommodations is confirmed, you can customize and request your Accommodation Plan for the semester in AIM.

## Implementing and Managing Your Accommodations

Every semester, you will need to [log into AIM](#) to access your Accommodation Plan (Eligibility Letter), select the courses you want them applied to, and submit them to your professors.

### Here's How to Do This:

1. [Log into AIM](#), enter your BCC email address, and press "**send confirmation code.**" If you are prompted to log into Microsoft, do so using your BCC credentials.
  - a. For future access, you can use the AIM login on our [DRC webpage](#). It's a blue box on the right-hand side of the screen.
2. Go to your BCC email to grab the authentication code. Check your spam/junk folder if you do not see this within a few minutes.

3. Copy and enter that code into the "**authentication code**" box and press "**verify code.**"
4. Under Accommodation Requests, select "**add requests.**" A list of your courses will populate.
5. Check the courses that you would like your accommodations applied and press "**submit request.**"
6. That's it! Your Accommodation Plan (Eligibility Letter) will be sent to your professors.
  - a. If you are eligible for testing accommodations, we have already given the Testing Center access to your test accommodations.

## Advocating for Yourself

Learning to advocate for yourself is a crucial part of being a college student with a disability. We highly recommend you speak with your professors about your learning strengths and challenges and how they best can support you in their courses. You can do this by visiting them during one of their office hours or by sending a letter of introduction via email. You'll be amazed at how receptive your professors are and how much they want to support you!

## 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

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## Privacy Notification

The Disability Resource Center respects your right to privacy and protects the confidentiality of your disability-related documentation. We are legally bound by the Family Educational and Privacy Act (FERPA) and as such, we do not share your files or specific information about your disability, unless there is a specific need to know.

Some examples of “need to know” include the following:

1. We may need to release or share information with a college administrator if we are concerned about your health and safety or the health and safety of others.
2. We may need to release your records if you file a grievance with the College or if we receive a subpoena from the courts.
3. Sometimes, we may need to disclose information about the specific nature of your disability with your professors, tutors, success coach, or advisor in order to identify an effective accommodation, learning strategy, or support service, and/or to advocate on your behalf.

The College will only share your disability-related information using the level of “need to know” to support your academic experience, safety related matter or by legal mandate.

Your degree and transcript will not reflect your affiliation with our office or any accommodations you receive.

## Filing a Formal Grievance

If you are not satisfied with the services you receive, you have the right to file a formal grievance. You may file a grievance with the College or through the Office of Civil Rights.

## Berkshire Community College

Berkshire Community College is an affirmative action/equal opportunity employer and does not discriminate on the basis of race, creed, religion, color, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, disability, genetic information, maternity leave, military service, and national origin in its education programs or employment.

All inquiries concerning application of the above should be directed to the Affirmative Action Officer and Coordinator of Title IX and Section 504 by calling (413) 236-1022.

## Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights

Educational institutions have a responsibility to protect every student's right to learn in a safe environment free from unlawful discrimination and to prevent unjust deprivations of that right. The office for Civil Rights enforces several federal civil rights

laws that prohibit discrimination in programs or activities that receive federal financial assistance from the Department of Education. It is the mission of the Office for Civil Rights to ensure equal access to education and to promote educational excellence throughout the nation through vigorous enforcement of civil rights.

For information on how to file an OCR complaint, visit the Office for Civil Rights [Complaint Assessment System](#) website.

## 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

By using Glean, a smartpen or other recording device in class, I understand that:

- the recorded material is for my personal use in study and preparation related to the class.
- I may not publish or quote the lecture without the written consent of the lecturer/instructor.
- all recordings must be disposed of at the conclusion of the semester.
- instructors can inform the class that lectures are being recorded
- instructor may ask everyone to stop recording and notetaking when sensitive material is being shared.
- information in the recorded lecture may be protected by state and federal copyright law and violations of this agreement may subject me 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.

## Personal Care Attendant (PCA) and/or Educational Coach

Accommodations may include the service of a personal care attendant (PCA) or an educational coach (ed coach) to address the physical and/or social-emotional needs of a student with a disability in order to fully participate in activities, services, and programs at the College. A **PCA** may assist the student with monitoring their adaptive equipment, help the student transfer from a wheelchair to a desk, or navigate the college campus. An **educational coach** may assist a student with their behavioral needs. They may prompt a student to focus, cue certain behaviors, or serve as the student's voice, when appropriate, without offering their own perspective.

The College does not provide individuals with devices or services that are personal in nature, including assistance with activities of daily living. It is the responsibility of the student with a disability to make appropriate arrangements to provide their own PCA or Ed Coach.

Berkshire Community College does not assume coordination or financial responsibilities for PCAs or Ed Coaches and is not responsible for any consequences resulting from a student's association with a PCA or Ed Coach. PCAs and Ed Coaches are not classroom assistants and have no authority to assist any academically related tasks (i.e. note taking, class participation, group activities, etc.) in the classroom or other academic settings, unless explicitly arranged between the student and DRC Staff.

### Guidelines

- Provide documentation to the DRC which indicates the need for a PCA or Ed Coach.
- Employ PCA or Ed Coach before classes begin.
- Complete the *PCA/Ed Coach Agreement* each academic year.
- Ensure that if personnel changes occur during the semester, the student and the new PCA or Ed Coach completes the *PCA/Ed Coach Agreement* prior to beginning their duties on campus.
- Ensure that each PCA or Ed Coach clearly understands their duties and supervise these activities. The student is responsible for all actions of each PCA or Ed Coach.
- Establish and maintain an alternative contingency plan should the regularly scheduled PCA or Ed Coach be unavailable.
- Follow College policies and abide by the Berkshire Community College *Student Policy Guide*.

### Personal Care Attendant/Educational Coach

- Follow all applicable Berkshire Community College (BCC) policies and abide by the BCC Student Policy Guide.
- Complete the *PCA/Ed Coach Agreement* each academic year prior to beginning work on campus.

- Provide only the agreed upon personal care /ed coach services. PCA's and Ed Coaches should refrain from participating in academically related tasks (i.e. class discussions, writing papers, in or out of class assignments, providing classroom accommodations such as note taking) in the classroom or other academic settings, unless pre-arranged and agreed upon by the student and the DRC.
- Conduct themselves in a courteous and professional manner.
- In the event of an emergency evacuation, the PCA or Ed Coach should assist the student with exiting the building safely. The PCA or Ed Coach understands the importance of seeking immediate assistance from college officials (e.g. faculty, staff) in order to evacuate the student quickly and safely, since waiting for the arrival of fire/rescue could be fatal.
- Refrain from negotiating 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
- Do not 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.



## Guidelines for Extended Deadlines for Assignments

In recognition of the unpredictable nature of some disability-related medical conditions, occasional short-term extensions on assignments may be a reasonable accommodation. These extensions are intended to support students whose documented disability may result in sudden flare-ups that temporarily impair their ability to complete academic work by the original deadline.

### Accommodation Parameters:

- Students may request a short-term extension of **up to 48 hours** on **no more than two to three assignments per semester**, per course. For extenuating circumstances, students should contact the DRC to discuss.
- Requests must be **initiated by the student as soon as possible**, preferably **prior to the assignment deadline** or **within 24 hours** of a missed deadline.
- This accommodation is **not** intended to address time management challenges or ongoing academic difficulty. Students experiencing such challenges are encouraged to work with our **Academic Success Coaches and/or Tutors**, who provide support with time management, organization, and executive functioning skills.

### Instructor Considerations:

- Instructors are expected to honor reasonable extension requests that fall within the scope of this accommodation, unless doing so would fundamentally alter the nature of the course or compromise essential learning outcomes.
- In cases where an extension cannot be granted due to the structure or time sensitivity of an assignment (e.g., group projects, in-class presentations), instructors should consult with Disability Services to determine an appropriate alternative, if any.

### Instructor Considerations:

- Students should communicate clearly and promptly with their instructors regarding the need for an extension.
- Students are responsible for staying on top of their coursework and utilizing campus resources proactively.

For any questions or clarification regarding the implementation of this accommodation, instructors and students are encouraged to contact the Disability Resource Center.