

# MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

To: MSU Faculty and Instructors

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Subject: MSU Testing Accommodation Procedure

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## MSU Testing Accommodation Procedure:

*Course instructors, in collaboration with the appropriate administrative unit (College/Department/Program), are responsible for providing testing accommodations in accordance with the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities (RCPD) Verified Individualized Services and Accommodations (VISA), which will soon be renamed Accommodation Letter, and in consultation with students and RCPD specialists. The requirement for accommodations should be presented by students to faculty at the start of a semester or at least 7 days prior to the need for the accommodation. For students who present an RCPD VISA, faculty shall engage students in individualized planning to meet accommodation needs.*



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In cases where testing accommodations are intensive – e.g., extra time allocations **exceeding** 50%, when assistive technology is prescribed in the VISA document, or where private testing rooms are stipulated – RCPD has 4 testing spaces reserved on a priority basis to facilitate intensive accommodation. Such accommodation requires coordination with RCPD at least 7 days prior to exams (14 days for finals) and must be accompanied by submission of the Alternative Testing Site Authorization (ATSA) form at:

<https://www.rcpd.msu.edu/document/8>.

### **Background:**

Nearly 8% of the MSU body registers with the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities (RCPD) after documenting a disability that affects major life activities (3,762 in 2023). Approximately 85% of the students registered with the RCPD experience some requirement for modification to the typical testing experience. On average, therefore, instructors can expect that approximately 6% of the students in a class may require some type of testing accommodation. A **majority need a testing time extension** to enable them to self-compensate for the disability challenge at hand. Others with more involved

needs rely on solutions ranging from a reduced distraction setting in the classroom, separate testing space, or specialized equipment.

The need for testing accommodation is communicated in the form of a Verified Individualized Services and Accommodations document, frequently referred to by the acronym VISA, (soon to be renamed Accommodation Letter) which is created when a student registers with RCPD. The VISA serves as the basis for a conversation with the student about how the faculty and student will work together to establish as inclusive an environment as possible.<sup>1</sup> The administration of course based evaluations/testing is in the purview of the instructors and therefore remains their responsibility. However, RCPD is a good partner in helping reach reasonable plans for testing needs of students, and an RCPD specialists of record is indicated on each VISA should the instructor and student need help implementing reasonable classroom accommodations. Instructors may also consider use of the MSU Testing Center<sup>2</sup> as a resource if a nearby space is not available.

The requirement for accommodations should be presented by students to faculty at the start of a semester or at least 7 days prior to the need for the accommodation. Under most circumstances, this will allow sufficient time to make arrangements. In some cases, significant extenuating circumstances may dictate that a student be accommodated on shorter notice. However, this is the exception – and in these cases, instructors are encouraged to work with a representative of RCPD in determining the appropriate accommodation.

Based on the VISA, the following are a few commonly used testing accommodations and how instructors can enact them:

1. **Percent (%) Extended Time** – Work with the student to formulate a plan to allow them to start a test early or finish late. When classrooms are too closely scheduled to allow enough time before or after class, work with departmental or college facilities to locate a suitable testing location available for the time needed. This might include unit conference room space. Particularly in large classes, work with the Office of the Registrar at the beginning of the semester to schedule a classroom. This can be done either through the 25 Live Academic Room Scheduling system<sup>3</sup> or by contacting Classroom Scheduling in the Office of the Registrar (avoid hallways and other public spaces that are distraction producing). See: <https://www.rcpd.msu.edu/get-started/student-accommodations/alternative-testing#item-902>
2. **Reduced Distraction Environment** – Facilitate testing in the classroom by allowing students to choose an ideal spot in the classroom for testing. This could be a table/seat in the front or back of the classroom, away from the door/windows, at the end of an aisle, etc. Students and instructors should work together to plan how this seat will be discreetly reserved. See:

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<sup>1</sup> See <https://www.rcpd.msu.edu/get-started/student-accommodations>

<sup>2</sup> See <https://testingcenter.msu.edu/proctoring-services/>

<sup>3</sup> See <https://roomscheduling.msu.edu/>

<https://www.rcpd.msu.edu/get-started/student-accommodations/alternative-testing#item-903>

3. **Separate Room** – Denotes a need to find a more extensive separation for a student. This may be due to specific disability challenges or when a reader or scribe will be involved as interactions would be distracting to others in the classroom.<sup>4</sup> Students granted this accommodation are eligible to request a space separate from the classroom for assessments. This does not automatically mean an individual space and most often means “small group” testing in a low distraction environment. See: <https://www.rcpd.msu.edu/get-started/student-accommodations/alternative-testing#item-904>

In every case, faculty are responsible for actively managing their testing needs, and faculty and units are encouraged to collaborate with RCPD as they seek solutions. In almost all cases, faculty should administer tests in a manner arranged locally and done directly under their control.

Faculty often inquire about RCPD’s ability to centrally administer tests to students requiring alternative accommodations. RCPD’s ability to facilitate testing centrally is limited. There are only 4 testing spaces at RCPD, and these are outfitted with assistive technology equipment for situations where disability needs require specialized modifications (electronic text magnification or voice input computers, as examples). Therefore, testing at RCPD is prioritized for students whose needs are distinctively linked to technology only found at the RCPD. In case where student needs involve readers or scribes, RCPD is ready to dispatch readers and scribes to remote locations where faculty are administering tests (students can request this of the RCPD as needs arise). There are inherent benefits for in class or near class administration of exams, including the ability for students to request clarity and to receive late-breaking testing updates from the instructor. Requiring students use alternative testing facilities unnecessarily can create additional barriers, particularly for classes located outside of central campus.

When testing at RCPD is necessary, students must work with instructors to facilitate the experience. Students must reserve testing space seven days in advance and 14 days before finals (allowing time to secure needed arrangements). Faculty must complete an Alternative Testing Site Authorization (ATSA) form available at <https://www.rcpd.msu.edu/document/8> establishing the parameters of testing outside the control of the instructor and deliver/retrieve testing materials to the RCPD main office in 120 Bessey Hall.

MSU is recognized internationally for our positive response to helping people reach their highest potential despite any disability challenges, and our faculty and staff remain an integral part of our success in responding to the student’s documented need. Together we can maintain this record.

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<sup>4</sup> For a more complete explanation visit: <https://www.rcpd.msu.edu/get-started/student-accommodations/alternative-testing>