



March 25, 2024

MEMORANDUM

TO: MSU Faculty and Academic Staff

FROM: Michael Hudson, Director, Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities; Alexis Travis, Assistant Provost, University Health & Wellbeing; Mark Largent, Vice Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Education; Pero Dagbovie, Vice Provost Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies

SUBJECT: MSU Procedure on Accommodated Testing for Students with Disabilities

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, in part by ensuring accommodated testing for students with disabilities.

MSU Test Accommodation Policy

Course instructors, in collaboration with their appropriate administrative unit(s) (Colleges, Departments, Schools, and/or Programs), are responsible for providing testing accommodations per the [Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities](#) (RCPD) [Accommodation Letter](#) (formerly known as a VISA) and in consultation with students and RCPD specialists.

Procedure

Students should visit RCPD for accommodation needs and obtain an Accommodation Letter. Then, they provide their instructors with an Accommodation Letter at the start of a semester or at least seven days prior to the accommodation need. Occasionally, circumstances may necessitate instructors accommodate a student on shorter notice. This situation is the exception, and instructors should work with the RCPD specialist named on the letter for assistance.

Instructors should engage students in individualized planning about their accommodation needs and take the following actions depending on context:

1. If an instructor has a student who requires accommodation **extended time, low distraction needs, or separate room needs**, the instructor can:
 - a. Work with the student directly to accommodate their needs within the unit;
 - b. Consult with their academic unit(s) to accommodate a student's needs; or
 - c. If options A and B are not viable, contact the [MSU Testing Center](#) to [proctor tests](#)—in unit spaces or at the Testing Center—at least seven days prior to the test (14 days during final exams). The instructor will provide the Testing Center with the test materials and parameters. **NOTE:** the Testing Center charges \$30 per 4-hour exam administered in the center. Hired proctors for secured spaces will cost the department \$30 per hour, per proctor and a \$10 administrative fee for each proctor hired. These accommodated test costs are the responsibility of the unit(s) offering the course: not the student nor the instructor.

2. If a student's accommodation requires specialized equipment or needs beyond extended time or separate space, the instructor should refer the student to work with the RCPD 14 days prior to the test.

APPENDIX

Background

An increasing number of students (nearly 8% in 2023) register with the [Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities](#) (RCPD) after documenting a disability that affects major life activities (3,762 in 2023). RCPD experienced a nearly 40% increase in registering students post pandemic placing new pressures on faculty and RCPD alike.

Approximately 80% of the students registered with the RCPD experience some requirement for modification to the typical testing experience. On average, instructors can expect that approximately 6% of the students in a class may require some type of testing accommodation. **Most students need a testing time extension** to enable them to self-compensate for a disability challenge. Other students with more involved needs rely on solutions ranging from a reduced distraction setting in a classroom, separate testing space, or specialized equipment.

Accommodations

The MSU RCPD issues an [Accommodation Letter](#) to communicate an accommodation need when a student registers and documents a disability with MSU. The Accommodation Letter validates needs and 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.

The administration of course-based evaluations/testing is in the purview of the instructors; however, RCPD is a partner in helping reach reasonable plans for testing needs. An RCPD specialist of record is indicated on each Accommodation Letter if the instructor and student need help implementing reasonable accommodations. Instructors may also consider the [MSU Testing Center](#) as a resource if a unit space is unavailable. Given current population growth trends, RCPD identifies the MSU Testing Center as first choice when faculty struggle to accommodate testing needs. Although the Testing Center must charge for test administration, they provide a quality proctored setting, and they partner with RCPD when readers, scribes or specialized equipment is needed.

Accommodation Types

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 unit facilities to locate a suitable testing location available for the time needed, such as a unit conference room. Large classes may have a larger number of students requiring accommodation, so instructors—or their unit schedulers—might want to secure an additional classroom space specifically for test accommodation by using the [25 Live Academic Room Scheduling System](#) 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 space 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:

<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 situation 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. Students granted this accommodation are eligible to request a space separate from the classroom for assessments. This situation 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>

Providing Accommodation

In every case, instructors are responsible for actively managing their testing needs, and we encourage them and their units to collaborate with the RCPD as they seek solutions. In almost all cases, instructors should administer tests in a manner

arranged locally and directly under their control. The [MSU Testing Center](#) may dispatch proctors or administer testing in their office using a cost recovery charge to the academic unit requesting their service.

Instructors often inquire about RCPD's ability to centrally administer tests to students requiring alternative accommodations. RCPD's ability to facilitate testing centrally is limited and secondary to the services available at the MSU Testing Center for the three main accommodation types outlined above. There are four 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, for example). As such, testing at RCPD is prioritized for students whose needs are distinctively linked to technology only found at the RCPD.

In cases in which a student's 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. Unnecessarily requiring students to use alternative testing facilities can create additional barriers, particularly for classes located outside of central campus.

In cases when testing at RCPD is necessary to meet an individual's needs, 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.