ACCESSIBILITY AND ACCOMMODATIONS GUIDELINES IN ONLINE COURSES

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Accessibility and Accommodations in Online Courses

In remote working and learning environments, we must keep in mind that accessibility and disability-related accommodations must be provided to ensure that students are provided equal access to services, programs and activities sponsored by Montgomery College. Disability Support Services (DSS) will continue to work with students and the College community to ensure that accommodations and accessibility are met in any learning environment including online courses.

Why is accessibility important?

Montgomery College is committed to radical inclusion and creating learning environments that are accessible and inclusive for all students, including those with disabilities. Accessibility is not only the right thing to do; it is also required by law. By designing your course online to be accessible to those with disabilities you will benefit all students. A course is accessible to the degree that every student can easily access and navigate course content and assignments, submit assignments, and successfully use course tools.

Accessible course design is part of universal design for learning. Instructors should use as many components of universal design for learning as possible when developing online courses and responding to specific accommodation requests. Keep in mind that DSS and the DSS counselor identified on the student's letter are a resource to both the student and you throughout the semester.

Creating Accessible Online Content

- **Include a written disability statement in the course syllabus**, and reference it when presenting the course standards to students.
    - An example of a disability statement for online courses may state: If you have a disability that may impact your access and learning in this course, please contact me to discuss your specific needs. An accommodation letter from Disability Support Services (DSS) authorizing your accommodations will be needed. Please note that accommodations needed for an online course may be different than those needed in a traditional classroom setting, so it is important that you work with DSS to determine appropriate accommodations for this course as early as possible. Since accommodations are not retroactive, it is strongly recommended that you notify me as early as possible in the term.

- **When selecting materials, find videos and audio content that are already captioned/have transcripts.** Be careful to make sure that the captions are *accurate* by turning off the sound and using captions-only to watch the material.

Professional captioning will be provided for deaf and hard of hearing students registered with DSS.

- **Scanned images of text are not accessible.** Select articles and materials that are available in a text-searchable format (meaning you can highlight and search the text within the document. Refer to this example of a searchable pdf).

- **Whenever possible, use Microsoft Word (.doc, .docx) files.** Pdf files are not ideal and can pose problems for students using assistive technology.
  - If you must use a .pdf document, test it for accessibility using the free, built-in Adobe Acrobat accessibility checker (View>Tools>Accessibility>Open. Then click "Full Check" from the Accessibility Options bar on the right-hand side).

- **Use built-in accessibility checkers to test your documents.** Both Microsoft Word and Adobe Acrobat have free, built-in accessibility checkers. Use them to test your documents before posting materials. (In Word, File>Check for Issues>Check Accessibility).

- Create accessible, well-structured documents and Blackboard pages.

Refer to the MC Emergency Remote Teaching Guidelines page for tips on how to create accessible materials.

- **Ensure that all software, eTools and apps implemented meet accessibility, security and privacy guidelines** before requiring them in your online course. Requests for accessibility evaluation can be sent to accessibility@montgomerycollege.edu.

- **Consider using multiple and alternative testing methods**, such as video presentation; portfolio; replacing tests with summaries for readings; take home exams; etc...

Resources for Implementing Accommodations Online

Many accommodations that students use in the classroom can transition to online courses with minimal modification. How accommodations are implemented in an online

environment may need to be adapted or adjusted and will depend on specific course platforms, content, and assessments.

Some of the most frequently used accommodations include extended exam time, note taking, audio recording of lectures, consideration for flexibility in class attendance (for synchronous coursework) and assignment due dates.

Other accommodations might require some adjustment or alteration when transitioning from in-class to online coursework. DSS will work with students and instructors to modify these accommodations to ensure equal access to coursework for students with disabilities. Important considerations:

- Contact the student's DSS counselor identified on the accommodation letter, DSS at 240-567-5058 or dss@montgomerycollege.edu with any questions regarding the implementation of accommodations online.

- Be flexible and adjust deadlines and pedagogical strategies to ensure an inclusive learning environment. Work with your students with disabilities to identify the best strategies to support them to be successful in your online course.

- Direct students who do not have accommodation letters to Disability Support Services.

- Students may have additional challenges that can increase during times of stress or uncertainty. Direct students to contact their DSS counselor, counseling and advising, or other student support services.

Resources for Accommodations Online

Testing Accommodations

Extended time for exams, quizzes and assessments

- Assessments such as essays, untimed exams, discussion boards do not require exam accommodations.
- If you use timed exams, quizzes and assignments, you need to verify if you have students who require extended time and breaks.
- Students taking online exams and quizzes should not be referred to the campus assessment center. The exams should be proctored online.

- Some students may require extra time and breaks during exams. In addition to adjusting for extra time, instructors need to adjust for break time, when a student has an approved break accommodation. Breaks typically amount to an additional five minutes for every 30 minutes of exam time. For instance, if a regular exam length is 50 minutes the following extended time applies:
  - Student with 1.5 extended time has 75 minutes
  - Student with 1.5 extended time AND breaks has 85 minutes
- If you need help using the extended time tools in Blackboard, you can review the Blackboard Assessments Guide for step-by-step instructions or contact ELITE.

Considerations for students who use assistive technology to complete exams

Some students need to use assistive technology (such as text to speech software, screen readers or screen magnification software) to complete exams.

- Building your exams into Blackboard will allow most students to use their assistive technology seamlessly and without additional steps on your part. If you cannot build your exams directly in Blackboard, contact DSS immediately.
- Important: If an exam requires using a lockdown browser, instructors may need to make exceptions for students who require internet-based technology during exams. Instructors may use built-in exceptions within the lockdown browser, or remove the requirement to use lockdown browsers.
- Contact DSS if you have any questions on how to implement exams for students who require the use of assistive technology.

Use of video and audio clips during exams, quizzes and assignments

Students who use sign language Interpreters, transcribers or captioning as an accommodation will need professional captioning of videos and transcripts of audio used in any portion of an exam, quiz or assignment.

- Contact Shalawn Childs, shalawn.childs@montgomerycollege.edu, to determine the best means of captioning your videos.

Implementing alternatives to computer-based testing

Some students require a paper copy of the exam. Instructors can consider giving permission to print off the exam and email it back to the instructor; providing an audio file of the exam items; or developing an alternate assignment for the student to complete.

- Contact DSS if you need support implementing test accommodations online.

Notetaking and Audio Recording

DSS offers several options for note taking: peer note taking, digital recorder, access to instructor's PowerPoints or lecture notes, or Livescribe pen. Depending on a student's disability and study preferences, one option may be a better fit than the other.

- Peer note taking should continue without interruption for both synchronous and asynchronous recorded lectures. It is important for instructors to inform note takers that note taking should continue as if classes are being held in person.
- Audio recording of lectures should continue without interruption.

Sign Language Interpreting and Transcribing

DSS can provide sign language interpreting and transcription in synchronous and asynchronous lectures.

- Synchronous lectures and discussions can be accommodated via remote sign language interpreters or remote C-print transcribers. DSS recommends using Zoom for synchronous lectures that require a remote service provider.
- Asynchronous lectures must be captioned. Please upload the file to OneDrive and share the file with Shalawn Childs, shalawn.childs@montgomerycollege.edu, and with Lori Ulrich, lori.ulrich@montgomerycollege.edu.
- Instructors may explore using pre-recorded lectures (professionally captioned is required), and create opportunities for discussion in writing only such as blackboard discussion boards and live Google Chat/Hangout.
- DSS may ask professors to give service providers access to their blackboard course as well as their Zoom. Captionists may need to be assigned a designated captionist role as well as a co-host role within Zoom by the course instructor.
- Remote interpreting and captioning may also be arranged for virtual office hour meetings. Please inform the interpreter or captionist as well as contact the Interpreter Coordinator, Julie Rogers at julie.rogers@montgomerycollege.edu.
- Students needing to call their instructor may use the Video Relay Service.
- Contact Shalawn Childs at shalawn.childs@montgomerycollege.edu for assistance.

Alternative Text Format

Many students require online content (e.g., documents, articles, textbooks) in an alternative format (e.g., audio files, large print versions, or electronic braille).

- DSS will format/convert required printed course materials into electronic formats that are accessible.
- If you need assistance to make your online course content accessible to your students, contact the appropriate person:

- for ***Germantown courses***, contact Gillian Reid-Nelson at Gillian.reid-nelson@montgomerycollege.edu;
- for ***Rockville courses***, contact Jillian Pfau at jillian.pfau@montgomerycollege.edu;
- for ***Takoma Park/Silver Spring courses***, contact Renee Gisriel at renee.gisriel@montgomerycollege.edu.

ADDITIONAL ACCESSIBILITY RESOURCES

[Accessible Teaching in the Time of Covid-19](#)

[Creating Accessible Documents in Microsoft Office](#)

[Make Your Word Documents Accessible to People with Disabilities](#)

[ELITE's *The Hub*: A Virtual Space for Teaching Resources](#)

This document was prepared by Montgomery College, Disability Support Services. Portions of this guidance are adapted, with permission, from University of Maryland, Office of Accessibility and Disability Services.