FACULTY HANDBOOK

Teaching Cadets with Disabilities

OFFICE OF DISABILITIES SERVICES

• VIRGINIA MILITARY INSTITUTE •

THE OFFICE OF DISABILITIES SERVICES (ODS)

WELCOME

Virginia Military Institute (VMI) is committed to the principle of equal access and opportunity in education and employment and full participation for persons with disabilities in all of its programs and services.

As part of our commitment, this handbook has been created as a resource to assist faculty with their disability-related questions or concerns. This handbook contains a wide range of topics such as:

- Information on the roles and responsibilities of faculty, cadets and the Office of Disabilities Services
- Resources available to support faculty as well as cadets with disabilities
- Important teaching practices that support accessibility
- Teaching strategies for cadets with specific disabilities

Please refer to the Office of Disabilities Services (ODS) website for more information.

(http://www.vmi.edu/ds)

If you cannot find the information you are seeking, or you would prefer to speak directly with the Director of Disabilities Services, please call: 464-7667.

The Office of Disabilities Services is prepared to answer your questions and assist faculty in working with cadets with disabilities. Please contact ODS at the contact information below:

LTC Sarah Jones
Director
Office of Disabilities Services
VMI Health Center
2nd Floor; Post Infirmary
Phone:540-464-7667
Jonessl10@vmi.edu
Website: www.vmi.edu/ds

Special thanks to Ohio State University and James Madison University for sharing their models of the faculty handbook.

THE OFFICE OF DISABILITY SERVICES (ODS)

OUR MISSION

The mission of the Disabilities Program at VMI is to provide services to cadets with disabilities in a manner that promotes VMI's goals of academic, personal, and leadership development while scrupulously meeting the requirements of the laws that govern disabilities services. Cadets with disabilities are encouraged to become active self-advocates, to take advantage of all the support services at VMI, and to participate fully in co-curricular activities.

The Office of Disabilities Services has three important objectives with regard to service provision:

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

To provide and coordinate accommodations, ODS establishes support services and programs that provide cadets with disabilities an equal opportunity to maximize their learning potential.

INTEGRITY

By joining with faculty, administration, and staff, ODS seeks to guard the integrity of VMI's programs and services. At the same time, ODS ensures that cadets with disabilities receive the reasonable accommodations that give them an equal opportunity to meet individual program requirements.

RESPONSIBILITY

ODS functions as an advocate for cadets with disabilities, encouraging and assisting cadets in the development of independence, responsibility, and effective self-advocacy.

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Section I:
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SECTION I: WHAT TO KNOW BEFORE YOU TEACH

DISABILITIES AND REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS

PURPOSE

The policy and procedures of the Office of Disabilities Services set forth provisions for the Institute's compliance with relevant legislation and policy and establishes the Institute's intent that qualified persons with disabilities be provided with reasonable accommodation to ensure equal access and equal opportunities with regard to the Institute's programs and services. This policy and procedures is intended to provide a method by which the Institute will process requests for accommodations.

AUTHORITY

The Americans with Disabilities Act (42 U.S.C. § 12,101 et seq.) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (29 U.S.C. §791, et seq.) prohibit discrimination against a person with a disability in the offer or conditions of employment, and in the participation or furnishing of services. Virginia Military Institute is obliged to provide reasonable accommodations to enable qualified individuals with documented disabilities to perform a job, participate in a class, or participate in other Institute functions.

DOCUMENTATION

Documentation should include the following elements:

1. A diagnostic statement identifying the specific disability, date of the most current diagnostic evaluation, and the date of the original diagnosis.
2. A description of the diagnostic tests, methods, and/or criteria used including specific test results (standardized test scores), and the examiner's narrative.
3. A description of the current functional impact of the disability. This may be in the form of an examiner's narrative, and/or an interview, but must have a rational relationship to diagnostic assessments. Current documentation is defined using adult norms.
4. A statement indicating treatments, medications, or assistive devices/services currently prescribed or in use, with a description of the mediating effects and potential side effects from such treatments.
5. A description of the expected progression or stability of the impact of the disability over time, particularly the next five years.
6. A history of previous accommodations and their impact.
7. The credentials of the diagnosing professional, if not clear from the letterhead or other forms. The diagnosing professional may not be a family member.
8. Documentation prepared for specific non-educational venues (i.e. Social Security Administration, Department of Veterans Affairs, etc.) may not meet the criteria as set forth by the ODS.
9. IEP or 504 plans will not be considered sufficient documentation unless accompanied by a current and complete evaluation.

Beyond these nine elements needed for documentation, recommendations for accommodations, adaptive devices, assistive services, compensatory strategies, and/or collateral support services will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

PROCEDURES

NOTE: Accommodation letters must be requested **EACH SEMESTER** through the ODS.

1. Cadets with disabilities who wish accommodations must first meet with the Director of Disabilities Services for an initial interview and provide copies of their documentation of a disability.

2. Cadets will complete a Request for Accommodations Letter form, an Accommodation Agreement form, and an Authorization to Exchange Information form. The Request for Accommodations form and the Accommodation Agreement form initiate your request to receive accommodations in selected courses. The Authorization to Exchange Information form allows ODS to exchange information with designated professionals to make final determinations of whether appropriate and reasonable accommodations are warranted and can be provided to the cadet.

3. In most cases, the Institute assigns authority to the Director of Disabilities Services to determine reasonable and appropriate accommodations based on the documentation provided. In the event there are issues or concerns involving accommodations, the Director reserves the right to consult with VMI's Disability Advisory Committee and faculty members before providing accommodations.

4. Once documentation has been reviewed and accommodations have been granted by the Director of Disabilities Services, cadets will receive an Accommodations Letter. This letter will serve as the cadet's documentation of a registered disability and will be used as documentation and notification of the cadet's disability with professors.

5. After picking up the Accommodations Letter from the ODS, cadets must make an appointment during office hours with each professor to deliver the Accommodation Letter and discuss specific accommodation needs. It is very important that cadets do not try to give professors the Accommodation Letter before or after class!

6. When meeting with professors, cadets should discuss their strengths and weaknesses and how they think the accommodations will help them in the classroom. Cadets do not have to disclose what their disability is; however, this disclosure often opens the door for professors to ask questions and for cadets to educate their professors about a particular disability.

7. Cadets must ensure that they have each professor sign and date their Accommodations Letter. The signed letter serves as the documentation indicating that the cadet has met their responsibility to inform the professor of their eligibility

for accommodations. Each professor will copy the signed Accommodation Letter and retain the copy in a confidential file in their office.

8. A request for extra time on a test should be discussed with the professor at least *72* hours before the test or exam is scheduled. This allows the professor enough time to make appropriate adjustments to his or her schedule.

Please note that last minute requests for accommodations as well as failure to meet with a professor in a timely manner will result in denial of, or a delay in, provision of requested accommodations.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Information about a cadet's documented disability must be kept in a file separate from the educational records in the academic unit office and this file must be kept confidential to the extent allowed by law.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF CADETS, ODS, AND FACULTY

Cadets:

- Provide medical and/or psychological documentation
- Participate in process of determining and implementing reasonable accommodations
- Inform ODS when accommodations are not working, need to be modified, or symptoms change

Office of Disabilities Services:

- Maintain medical/psychological documentation in confidential manner
- Determine if condition(s) are a disability in accordance with state and federal laws
- Identify and assist with implementation of reasonable accommodations
- Request updated documentation when symptoms change to determine if accommodations need to be modified
- Provide information and referral to Institute and community resources

Faculty:

- Refer Cadets to ODS for consultations or to establish documentation
- Participate in process to determine and implement reasonable accommodations
- Identify essential course components for accommodations to be determined
- Request assistance from ODS with accommodation, implementation, or consultation

INTERPRETATION

The authority to interpret policies and procedures regarding the provision of an accommodation for employees or cadets of VMI ultimately rests with the Superintendent.

SECTION I: WHAT TO KNOW BEFORE YOU TEACH

EIGHT POINTS TO GUIDE INSTRUCTORS

1. **The Office of Disabilities Services (ODS) is the designated VMI office to determine appropriate accommodations and auxiliary aids for cadets with disabilities.**

   The determination is based on the disability documentation provided by the cadet and the functional limitations presented by the disability. *Cadets must provide ODS with this documentation before accommodations or services are provided.* The person who documents a disability must be a qualified professional. The purpose of the accommodations and auxiliary aids is to give the cadet an equal opportunity to participate in the academic environment.

   The fact that the cadet with a disability has been admitted to VMI implies that this cadet has the same rights as other cadets to participate in Institute programs, courses, and services with reasonable accommodations that do not interfere with the academic integrity of the institute. The cadet may or may not succeed in a particular course for a variety of reasons, but they are qualified to be at VMI, and are not being given special advantage in order to make up for general lack of ability. For example, you have had cadets with learning disabilities in your class in the past, and have found that they have struggled. Because you don't want to see cadets set themselves up for failure, you actively discourage cadets who identify as learning disabled from taking your class. In this case, even though your intentions are good, your actions are discriminatory. You can't act on assumptions or stereotypes about a particular group. Cadets registered with a disability have met all of the same admission requirements as those cadets not registered and are entitled the same rights and privileges.

2. **Cadets have the responsibility for making their disability-related accommodation needs known to you—your syllabus statement welcomes cadets to do so.**

   Cadets with disabilities are encouraged to make their accommodation needs known to you in a timely fashion so that the appropriate arrangements can be made (they are not, however, required to discuss their disability). You can facilitate this process by including a statement on your syllabus that invites cadets with disabilities to meet with you to discuss their needs. Here is an example of a syllabus statement:

"VMI abides by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 which mandate reasonable accommodations are provided for all cadets with documented disabilities. If you have a registered disability and may require some type of instructional and/or examination accommodations, please contact me early in the semester so that I can provide or facilitate provision of accommodations you may need. If you have not already done so, you will need to register with the Office of Disabilities Services, the designated office on campus to provide services for cadets with disabilities. The office

is located on the 2nd floor of the VMI Health Center. Please call or stop by the office of LTC Jones, Director of Disabilities Services, for more information, 464-7667 or jonessl10@vmi.edu.

"

3. **Cadets with disabilities have a right to meet with you privately regarding disability matters and their confidentiality must be maintained.**

   Treat all disability-related information as confidential medical information. Conduct disability-related meetings in a private location. Provide plenty of opportunities for cadets to meet with you to describe their disability-related needs, to arrange test accommodations, to ask for clarification about what was presented in class, to get help with in-class note taking, etc.

4. **Accommodations should NOT be provided to a cadet who has not provided appropriate documentation to ODS**.

   ODS is the only office designated to review documentation of a disability and determine eligibility for specific accommodations. Faculty should not request or accept documentation from a cadet, but should refer him/her to the Office of Disabilities Services before providing any accommodations.

5. **If a cadet with a disability does not request accommodations, you are under no obligation to provide academic assistance.**

   In other words, you are not asked to initiate, guess, or predetermine what a cadet may need. Cadets may also choose not to use accommodations.

6. **Faculty have the right to identify and establish the abilities, skills, and knowledge that are fundamental to their academic programs/courses and to evaluate each cadet's performance on that basis.**

   In higher education, disability accommodations are provided to people who meet admission requirements and have the academic ability to learn the core information from their courses and apply it as required. This is what the term "otherwise qualified" means and the standards are no different from those to which all cadets are held. For cadets with disabilities, however, the Institute must remove barriers to learning that are less related, or unrelated to the most important course information. For example, you have a student with slow processing speed who is perfectly capable of studying and understanding Greek literature, but who can't read through and process material quickly. Understanding the literature is essential but reading questions on an exam quickly isn't because this is not related to understanding the material. By contrast, if the same student wanted faculty to alter or shorten the length of a test or exam, the Institute is under no obligation to do so. In that case, the cadet must demonstrate mastery of course content and would be provided with extended time on tests /exams to ensure equal educational opportunity.

   Individuals with disabilities have the same range of behaviors as non-disabled individuals. Some may do well in your course, while others may struggle. Some are easy

to get along with; some are more difficult. Some are unmotivated, while others are hardworking. Beyond providing accommodations to ensure equal access, you should treat students with disabilities the way you would treat any other student. Hold them to the same academic standards; allow them to fail if they won't do the work. Nothing about having a disability should automatically prevent a cadet from failing a course if they do badly. Any cadet who meets the prerequisites for your class has the same right as all VMI cadets to enroll and put forth his/her best effort to succeed. You should grade cadets with disabilities using the same standards you use for any other cadet. Similarly, cadets with disabilities should be held to the same standards of behavior, attendance, participation and honor as other cadets, even if their condition interacts with those things. Accommodations should not interfere with the most important requirements of the course, or excuse the cadet from any of the coursework.

7. **Cadets with disabilities need access to course materials and information presented in your classroom at the same time as all other cadets.**

   As an instructor, you play a vital role in ensuring that materials are available in alternative formats in a timely manner. Converting print materials to alternate formats--whether electronic format or enlargements--is both labor and time intensive. Therefore, it is critical that you inform ODS about the textbooks you plan to use and all other print materials as soon as you are requested to do so either by a cadet or ODS.

8. **Individual accommodation needs vary from cadet to cadet because a disability, even the same disability, may result in different functional limitations.**

   Compensation skills and strategies vary from one cadet to another, just as instructional methods vary from one instructor to another. Therefore, it is necessary for you and the cadet to discuss specific accommodations that address the particular needs of that cadet. You have the responsibility to make reasonable adjustments in the delivery, instructional method, and evaluation system for a course when these have a negative impact on a disability. It is entirely appropriate to select between equally effective methods of accommodating a cadet with a disability.

SECTION I: WHAT TO KNOW BEFORE YOU TEACH

HOW ODS ASSISTS INSTRUCTORS

ODS assists instructors in a variety of ways so that cadets with disabilities have equal access to instruction. The Director of ODS can help you in a variety of ways:

- Meet with instructors and cadets to discuss possible teaching strategies and accommodations.
- Advise in converting class materials into accessible formats or advise on other types of auxiliary aids.
- Assist in arranging for cadets to take exams with accommodations when accommodations cannot be made within academic departments.
- Consult with academic departments on issues such as assistive technology, appropriate accommodations, and classroom instruction for cadets with disabilities; conduct in-service training; and provide literature about particular disabilities.

SECTION I: WHAT TO KNOW BEFORE YOU TEACH

STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING CADETS WITH DISABILITIES

There are often special considerations when instructing cadets with disabilities. Generally, however, these instructional considerations involve good teaching practices and may benefit other cadets in the class.

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR TEACHING CADETS WITH DISABILITIES

Universal Design for Learning: "Universal design is an approach to designing course instruction, materials, and content to benefit people of all learning styles without adaptation or retrofitting." By using a universal design for instruction and designing instruction that allows cadets with disabilities access to the classroom, you may also be designing instruction that works better for everyone in the class. Classes designed with this concept in mind offer a variety of methods of content presentation, flexible teaching strategies, and options for demonstrating mastery of course content.

Expectations: Although many cadets with disabilities need accommodations, expect these cadets to perform at levels commensurate with their peers. Do not have a special grading scale or other criteria for them.

Collaboration: Don't hesitate to call ODS to arrange for a three-way meeting between you, ODS, and the cadet to work out any issues and to collaborate on the best instructional strategies for the cadet.

Guided Notes on the Web: Providing cadets with guided notes that they can access through the Web prior to class assists them with focusing on the appropriate material. It will help them to learn more effectively in the classroom as well as take better notes.

Class Notes: Some cadets with disabilities have difficulty taking notes. They may need your assistance in getting a volunteer note taker, or you may provide them a copy of your notes and/or copies of PowerPoint slides and other class materials.

Comprehensive Syllabus: A comprehensive syllabus with clearly delineated statements about expectations is helpful to cadets who need help with structure and organization.

Inappropriate Behavior: Cadets with disabilities are subject to the same code of conduct required of any cadet at Virginia Military Institute. If there are incidences of inappropriate behavior, meet privately to discuss issues of behavior and encourage cadets to seek help. Give concise and honest feedback about behaviors that are inappropriate and then follow the same procedures you would with any other cadet. You are always welcome to consult with ODS. These situations are not likely to occur, but it is wise to have a plan.

SECTION I: WHAT TO KNOW BEFORE YOU TEACH

DISABILITY SYLLABUS STATEMENT

All instructors are encouraged to include a statement in their syllabus inviting cadets with disabilities to meet with them in a confidential environment to discuss making arrangements for accommodations.

There are a number of reasons why a syllabus statement is critical:

1. The statement normalizes the accommodation process and helps create a positive and welcoming environment for cadets with disabilities.

2. The statement creates a collaborative vehicle for making legally-mandated accommodations.

3. The statement serves as a reminder to cadets who need accommodations that these arrangements need to be made in a timely manner.

The following excerpt is an example of a syllabus disability statement that can be used on your course syllabi:

" VMI abides by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 which mandate reasonable accommodations are provided for all cadets with documented disabilities. If you have a registered disability and may require some type of instructional and/or examination accommodations, please contact me early in the semester so that I can provide or facilitate provision of accommodations you may need. If you have not already done so, you will need to register with the Office of Disabilities Services, the designated office on campus to provide services for cadets with disabilities. The office is located on the 2nd floor of the VMI Health Center. Please call or stop by the office of LTC Jones, Director of Disabilities Services, for more information, 464-7667 or jonessl10@vmi.edu."

Section II:
Specific Teaching Considerations

SECTION II: SPECIFIC TEACHING CONSIDERATIONS

CADETS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

DESCRIPTION

Cadets with learning disabilities often learn differently than their peers. Although they have average or above average intelligence, there is frequently a discrepancy between their ability and their achievement in specific areas. Learning disabilities are permanent disorders that interfere with integrating, acquiring, and/or demonstrating verbal or nonverbal abilities and skills. There are generally some processing or memory deficits.

Each cadet with a learning disability has his/her own set of characteristics; one is not necessarily like another. These individuals, however, are often characterized by difficulty in the following areas:

- Reading comprehension
- Written expression
- Mathematics
- Processing speed
- Memory deficits

Keep in mind that one individual does not have difficulty with all of the above-mentioned areas, just generally a few of those areas. Also, it is not unusual for a person with a learning disability to be gifted in some areas.

SUGGESTIONS

Exam Accommodations: Assist these cadets in arranging for appropriate exam accommodations. For example, this might include having the cadet stay after class to complete the exam in your office. If you find that you are unable find suitable arrangements for extended time, you may consult with the Director of ODS for suggestions and possible alternatives.

Multi-Modality Instruction: A multi-modality approach to instruction assists these cadets in finding a modality that is consistent with their learning strength. Providing important information and assignments in both oral and written formats helps avoid confusion.

Alternative Format: Some of these cadets need print materials in alternative formats. When you receive an Accommodations Letter listing such an accommodation (such as enlarged handouts or handouts in electronic format), it is important that you be prepared to provide the cadet with alternative materials at the same time as other cadets. Therefore, it will be important for you to discuss this accommodation with the cadet and to make arrangements to supply necessary materials to the cadet when distributed to the entire class.

Study Aids: Study questions, study guides, opportunities for questions and answers, and review sessions help the cadet who needs a lot of repetition.

Exam Aids: Permit exam aids such as calculators, portable spell-checkers, as specified in Accommodations Letters.

Flexible Exam Format: Cadets who have language-based and/or writing disabilities may need more time on essay exams. Others may need to tape record answers, use a scribe, or use a computer. Be open to a flexible exam format for cadets with such listed accommodations in their Accommodations Letters as long as the cadet is able to demonstrate his/her knowledge. Faculty are responsible for assisting cadets with such accommodations and can consult with the Director of ODS about establishing and/or implementing these accommodations.

SECTION II: SPECIFIC TEACHING CONSIDERATIONS

CADETS WITH ATTENTION DEFICIT HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER

DESCRIPTION

Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is characterized by a persistent pattern of inattention and/or hyperactivity that is more frequent and severe than is typically observed in individuals at a comparable level of development (DSM-IV). Students with ADHD may have difficulty with one or more of the following areas:

- Concentration
- Distractibility
- Organization
- Completing tasks

Some cadets with ADHD take medication for their condition. This medication may be a stimulant, which actually calms them and helps them focus on tasks. Anti-depressants may also be used.

SUGGESTIONS

Assistance with Structure: A syllabus with clearly delineated expectations, due dates, and frequent opportunities for feedback provide these cadets with assistance with organization and structure. Study guides and review sheets are also helpful in providing structure.

Exam Accommodations: Many cadets with ADHD use exam accommodations, including extended time and a distraction-reduced exam space. You can discuss with the cadet how these arrangements will be executed. Again, if suitable arrangements for taking the test or exam can't be established, call the Director of ODS to consult or discuss alternatives.

Access to Class Notes: Some of these cadets have difficulty focusing and concentrating. For this reason, some cadets may need access to classroom notes. Your assistance is needed to provide the cadet with notes for class (not just PowerPoint slides) and/or designate a student in class to serve as a note taker for the cadet.

Classroom Distractions: If a cadet appears extremely distracted, it may be appropriate to encourage the cadet to sit near the front of the class, away from doors, air conditioning units, windows, or any other possible sources of distraction.

SECTION II: SPECIFIC TEACHING CONSIDERATIONS

CADETS WITH PSYCHIATRIC DISABILITIES

DESCRIPTION

Cadets with psychiatric disabilities who use services at ODS exhibit a persistent psychological disorder that adversely affects their educational access, their academic performance, and daily functioning. They frequently require medication. Some of the types of psychiatric disorders include but are not limited to the following disorders.

Depression is a major disorder that can begin at any age. Major depression may be characterized by a depressed mood most of each day, a lack of pleasure in most activities, thoughts of suicide, insomnia, and feelings of worthlessness or guilt.

Bipolar disorder causes a person to experience periods of mania and depression. In the manic phase, a person might experience inflated self-esteem and a decreased need to sleep; however, in the depressive phase, a person may experience lack of energy and less self-esteem, and disinterest in family, friends, and school.

Anxiety disorders can disrupt a person's ability to concentrate and cause hyperventilation, a racing heart, chest pains, dizziness, panic, and extreme fear.

In most situations, you will not be aware that you have a cadet with a psychiatric disability in your classroom. Because a cadet may not show any outward sign of his/her disability, you must be mindful that his/her disability is not any less disabling than a more visible one. Many of these cadets are fearful of and have faced stigmatization because of their disabilities. Some do not need or request any accommodations, and some require a variety of accommodations. For some, the disability is temporary. With medication and/or therapy, they recover. On the other hand, some cadets face a constant or a recurring battle to keep their disability under control.

SUGGESTIONS

Exam Accommodations: Assist these cadets in arranging for accommodations, typically the use of extended time, as requested in the Accommodations Letter.

Welcoming and Supportive Environment: Many cadets with psychiatric disabilities fear stigmatization because of their disabilities. If a cadet shares his/her disability with you, be supportive and welcoming when a cadet requests assistance in arranging for accommodations.

Section III:
Resources and Other Information

Section III: Resources and Other Information

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

WHAT IS ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY?

Assistive technology is hardware and software items designed or used to compensate for areas of disability or impairment. Assistive technology allows individuals with disabilities the same access to information and production as their peers who are not disabled. One example of such technology is computer-generated voice output of scanned printed material used by a cadet with a print impairment, such as dyslexia.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

The most important aspect of assistive technology is the freedom that it offers cadets with disabilities. With assistance, a cadet can have independence in reading, writing, and performance. Such independence increases work rate, employability, and self-esteem.

Assistive technology does another important thing. It helps institutions meet the letter and spirit of disability law by allowing cadets with disabilities an equal level of access to computing technology as their non-disabled peers.

CLASSROOM ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

On referral from the Office of Disabilities Services and in coordination with the Information Technology Department, classroom assistive technology may be made available to cadets with documented disabilities.

Cadets and faculty should contact the Office of Disabilities Services in order to determine the most appropriate and effective technology available for use in the classroom.

HARDWARE & SOFTWARE

The ODS may use the following technology and assistive equipment:

Specialized Hardware & Software

- Dragon Naturally Speaking: Speech recognition software
- Kurzweil Reader: Comprehensive reading, writing, and learning software
- Pulse Smartpen Livescribe: Pen that records what you hear and write

Literacy Scanning & Reading Software

- Learning Ally (formerly Recording for the Blind and Dyslexic - RFB&D)
- Natural Reader
- Adobe Reader 8

ORIENTATION & TRAINING

To set up an appointment to discuss individual technology access needs and training on the software, please contact the Office of Disabilities Services at (540) 464-7769.

Section III: Resources and Other Information

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT

There are two legal mandates that protect Virginia Military Institute cadets from discrimination and ensure that they have equal access to all aspects of Institute life. These laws include the Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

SECTION 504 STATES THAT:
"No otherwise qualified individual with a disability in the United States….shall, solely by reason of his or her disability, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance…."

TITLE II OF THE ADA STATES THAT:
"A public entity shall make reasonable modifications in policies or procedures when the modifications are necessary to avoid discrimination on the basis of disability, unless the public entity can demonstrate that making the modifications would fundamentally alter the nature of the service, program, or activity."

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q: How are the ADA and Section 504 different?
A: Section 504 requires those entities that receive federal funding to make their programs and services accessible for individuals with disabilities. The ADA extends the scope of Section 504 to include the private sector. The purpose of the ADA is to provide civil rights protections to people with disabilities by guaranteeing equal access and opportunity in employment, public accommodations, transportation, state and local government, and telecommunication.

Q: Who is considered to have a disability?
A: Section 504 and the ADA specify that persons are considered to have disabilities if they meet any one of the following criteria:

- He/she has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of their major life activities
- He/she has a record of such an impairment
- He/she is regarded as having such an impairment

A major life activity is considered a basic human function, such as seeing, hearing, walking, breathing, speaking, caring for self, learning, performing manual tasks, and working.

ODS is the designated entity on post that is responsible for determining whether a cadet has a disability as defined by both the ADA and Section 504. ODS also determines appropriate and reasonable accommodations for each cadet on a case-by-case basis. Appropriate accommodations are chosen based on the specific limitations imposed by the disability, from input from the cadet, and extensive documentation. You can rest assured that a cadet who has been approved for accommodations didn't just wander into the ODS, claim to have a disorder, and receive an Accommodations Letter. Cadets are required to provide extensive documentation of a disability that is reviewed by the Director of ODS before accommodations are granted.

Q: Who is a qualified individual?
A: A qualified individual is a person who meets the essential requirements of the program to which they are applying and without reasonable accommodations. In this case, a qualified cadet is one who has met Virginia Military Institute's admissions criteria and has the capability to meet the academic standards at this institution of higher education.

Q: A cadet just told me he/she has a disability. What do I do?
A:

1. Ask them if they have registered with the Office of Disabilities Services and refer them to ODS if they have not.

2. Feel free to ask them how their disability affects them in order to gain a greater understanding of what specific challenges they might be facing.

3. Consult with ODS regarding the impact of the disability on advising, scheduling, etc.

4. Do not provide a requested accommodation at this time. Wait until the cadet presents you with an Accommodations Letter from ODS before you provide requested accommodations.

Q: What is a reasonable accommodation?
A: A reasonable accommodation is a modification or an adjustment to policies, procedures, practices, and facilities so that a qualified cadet can participate fully in the Institute environment. An accommodation or service is not mandated if it fundamentally alters the program or service, or if it would impose an undue financial hardship for the institution.

Section III: Resources and Other Information

GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES

Any cadet who feels he or she has been unfairly denied an accommodation may obtain a review of the decision by submitting a written request to the Disabilities Advisory Committee. If the cadet feels the committee's response is unsatisfactory, he or she may then submit a written request of further review to the Dean of the Faculty. The Superintendent may make the final review. A cadet who is not satisfied with VMI's response may appeal to:

Office of Civil Rights
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Ave, SW
Washington, DC 20202-1475
Phone: (202) 245-8300
TTY: (877) 521-2172
Fax: (202) 245-8301

While the review is in process, the cadet is entitled to continue to receive any accommodation recommended by the Director of Disabilities Services.

Any faculty or staff member who wishes to question an accommodation or related ruling concerning a cadet should first contact the Director of Disabilities Services. If the Director's response is found to be unsatisfactory, a written appeal can then be made to the Disabilities Advisory Committee, who will consult with the Dean of the Faculty. The Superintendent may make the final review. While the review is in process, the cadet is entitled to continue to receive any accommodation recommended by the Director of Disabilities Services.