



# DISABILITY ACCOMMODATIONS & SUCCESS STRATEGIES



## DASS FAMILY GUIDE

INFORMATION FOR FAMILIES TO GUIDE A SUCCESSFUL TRANSITION FOR SMU STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES



**Disability Accommodations & Success Strategies (DASS)**

**Southern Methodist University**

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# DASS FAMILY GUIDE

INFORMATION FOR FAMILIES AND STUDENTS ABOUT DISABILITY SERVICES AT SMU

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## VISIT US AT DASS

5800 Ownby Drive  
Suite 202 Loyd Center  
Altshuler Learning  
Enhancement Center (A-LEC)  
Entrance near Gate 3  
of Ford Stadium  
Parking in the Meadows Garage

Phone: 214.768.1470  
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[www.smu.edu/provost/saes/dass](http://www.smu.edu/provost/saes/dass)



## Welcome to SMU and DASS

This guide was developed to provide relevant information and resources for families as they prepare their student for an exciting and demanding transition to college.

The Disability Accommodations & Success Strategies (DASS) office is the primary contact for all SMU students with disabilities. The DASS team assists students with disabilities to effectively utilize resources and to work with professors and staff in obtaining appropriate and reasonable accommodations. Our staff is dedicated to providing an equal opportunity to participate in the University's curriculum, programs, and activities.

Central to our mission is a firm commitment to helping students learn to advocate for themselves. Our contacts with students include ongoing discussions and instruction to guide them towards self-accountability and success in college. Accommodations are one part of support, but mastering self-advocacy skills is the most significant factor in a seamless transition to and through college.

The framework and provision for accommodations changes between secondary (K-12) and higher education. These changes drive many of the policies, procedures, and philosophies students will encounter in college related to their disability. This guide provides an overview of what students can expect and how their families can best prepare them to manage their academic success at SMU.

Each member of the DASS team brings unique training and experience working with students with disabilities. Our staff routinely works with other campus entities to increase awareness of disabilities at SMU. If you would like to learn more about the DASS team, please visit our website to see short bios of our staff.

Once again, welcome to The Hilltop and to DASS. We look forward to working with your new Mustang!

### The DASS team

(L to R)

Valiza Patterson, DASS Coordinator  
Candy Brown, Admin Assistant  
Jeanna Turay, DASS Coordinator  
Michelle Bufkin, Sr. DASS Coordinator  
David Tylicki, Sr. Learning Specialist  
Alexa Taylor, Director



Check out our DASS mascot. Look for him around campus and connect to DASS with the QR code!

## Transitioning to College: Roles & Responsibilities

In a higher education setting, parents will be asked to give support in a slightly different manner than in high school. Your role shifts to the subtle hand of guidance when it comes to the process involved in your student's accommodation needs.

Our office is happy to receive information from you but will be looking to your student as our primary information source. FERPA releases provide the direction we follow in communicating with others about your student's disability needs. For suggestions on how parents can help their student with a disability (SWD) make this transition successfully, see page 7.



### ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES OF *THE DASS OFFICE*

- Determine whether a student's condition(s) reaches the level of a disability and identify accommodations that could mitigate the impact of the disability.
- Work with SWD and faculty on how to put accommodations in place and ensure compliance.
- Work with faculty on alternatives if an accommodation is not reasonable or would alter the essential elements of a course.
- Provide ongoing support to SWD for referrals, academic counseling, and advocacy skills.

### ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES OF *FACULTY MEMBERS & DEPARTMENTS*

- Structure degree programs, courses, materials, and physical space so that SWD can participate equally.
- Prepare an organized syllabus with identified readings, assignments and assessments, and share with students as early as possible.
- Meet with SWD in a confidential setting (office, phone, email) to discuss accommodation requests. Use the DASS Link portal to read the DASS letter, make arrangements for implementing the requested accommodations, and maintain confidentiality at all times.
- Maintain academic integrity; do not lower standards for SWD nor expect less from them. Work with them on ways to participate fully and reach out to DASS if there is a conflict or a concern.
- Proctor students with classroom accommodations within the department or utilize the University Testing Center.

### ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES OF *THE STUDENT WITH A DISABILITY*

- Identify to DASS as a SWD, request reasonable accommodations, and provide supporting documentation for the request(s), when needed.
- Once approved, complete intake and use DASS Link portal to share letters of accommodation with faculty members. Communicate with faculty to make arrangements for the requested accommodations for each particular course.
- Request through DASS Link new letters each semester of enrollment, if applicable.
- Give adequate notice to faculty of disability-related requests with enough time to implement.
- Follow up with DASS in a timely way if there are problems or concerns. Follow DASS protocols for communication and notice.

## Transitioning to College: Legal Framework

DASS works to ensure that educational programming and services are accessible to students with disabilities. The legal framework for the review and delivery of these services changes from high school to college. High schools are governed by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Post-secondary institutions are governed by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.



In higher education, an **individual with a disability** has a civil right to have access to education. The fundamental principle at work is the assumption that individual students are responsible for themselves and are not the responsibility of the institution. For students, this means an increasing role and responsibility in requesting, securing and implementing **reasonable accommodations**. It also means their accommodations may change between high school and college. For a summary of the differences between high school and college accommodations, see the chart on page 5. These distinctions form the basis for the changes your student will see in college in the following areas:

**Evaluation:** It is the responsibility of the student to seek evaluation for a disability. The student bears the burden of proof of documenting a disability.

**Documentation:** Colleges have the right to request documentation that clearly shows diagnosis, impact, and recommended accommodations. 504 Plans and IEP's, while helpful to a review, are likely not sufficient to determine a need for accommodation.

**Accommodations:** In college, accommodations provide equal access. They are not designed to guarantee success. The limitations of the disability, due to barriers in the environment, not the disability itself, determine if accommodations are recommended and provided.

**Self-Advocacy:** College students with disabilities are expected to handle the disclosure of and management of their accommodation needs. This means the student, not the parent, must be the one requesting accommodations. It also means students will discuss their accommodation needs directly with their faculty members in order to implement them in the classroom.

Civil rights laws and reasonable accommodations are not intended nor are they able to guarantee success. At most, students who are **otherwise qualified individuals with a disability** can expect an equal chance to do the same work as their peers. The sum effect of these changes is an expanding reliance on not only accommodations but on successful academic strategies and personal responsibility to support a student's particular needs. DASS and SMU provide a broad range of [student support services](#) to foster self-advocacy skills.

## Definitions

### **An "individual with a disability" used in Section 504 and the ADA is:**

An individual who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities and is qualified to be a student. In college, students must also meet the admission criteria and meet or maintain standards and requirements that are required to continue participation in a program of study or for graduation, whether they have a disability or not.

### **A "reasonable accommodation" is:**

An adaptation designed to help the student display knowledge around the learning barriers due to the disability. Reasonable accommodations are tools intended to provide access and an opportunity to succeed, not guarantee success. Accommodations cannot result in a fundamental alteration to course or program, substantially modify program requirements, or cause undue administrative or financial burden. This means that some services provided in high school may not be provided in college. Reasonable accommodations can create a level playing field, but once achieved, the student must then adequately demonstrate skills and knowledge.

### **An "otherwise qualified individual with a disability" means:**

An individual with a disability who, with or without reasonable modifications, meets the essential eligibility requirements for the receipt of services or the participation in programs or activities provided by a public entity. The student must meet academic standards. In higher education, this refers to a student's academic proficiency and ability to demonstrate learning.

### **"with or without reasonable accommodations" means:**

Students with disabilities must perform at the level that their academic and professional programs expect of all students. There is no guarantee of success, and a student with a disability has the same opportunity as other students to succeed or fail in college. Civil rights laws do not mandate a safety net. This means the student also has the right to refuse any accommodation. If a student does not request an accommodation or follow procedures, the consequences of that action belong to the student.

## Academic and Disability Issues in College vs. High School

### HIGH SCHOOL

Parents are responsible for making sure the school is accommodating the student appropriately. The school is responsible for identifying students with disabilities.

Academic adjustments are based on IEP or 504 Plans.

High schools can change academic requirements for students.

Student attendance is monitored daily by the school.

Grade recovery assignments are possible.

Student living environment is personalized for their needs.

### HIGH SCHOOL ACADEMIC ADJUSTMENTS

Shortened assignments and targeted reviews are allowed.

Students may use notes, formulas, or word banks on exams.

Teachers are allowed to explain questions using different words on tests.

A copy of teachers' notes can be made available to students.

Teachers often facilitate accommodations without prior notice from student.

**For information on documentation standards in college, see**

### COLLEGE

It is now the student's responsibility to initiate and to make DASS aware if accommodations are needed or not working. Students are required to provide and pay for documentation of their disability.

IEP and 504 Plans are no longer considered as primary documentation. Colleges are not obligated to provide the exact same accommodations as given in K-12.

Colleges are not required to reduce or waive essential course or degree requirements.

While students are expected to attend class, no one is obligated to ensure they are present each day. Students who miss class excessively must often drop the class or expect lower grades.

A student's grade will be based on pre-determined assignments and/or tests. These can be as limited as 1 or 2 each semester.

College living requires flexibility and accommodation of others needs. Residence hall rooms are not meant to be primary study space.

### COLLEGE ACCOMMODATIONS

Shortened assignments and targeted reviews are not a reasonable accommodation. Students are expected to compile course material on their own to prepare for tests.

These are not typically considered reasonable accommodations on college tests.

This is not a reasonable accommodation in college. Professors are sometimes not present during exams.

In college, peer notes or an audio recording may be reasonable accommodations for access to lecture material.

Professors and DASS expect ample notice to ensure accommodations are in place for a test or classroom needs.

**this article: [https://ldadvisory.com/college\\_no\\_iep\\_504/](https://ldadvisory.com/college_no_iep_504/).**

### Did you know.....

**Every SMU syllabus contains this statement regarding disability accommodations:**

**Disability Accommodations:** Students needing academic accommodations for a disability must first register with Disability Accommodations & Success Strategies (DASS). Students can call 214-768-1470 or visit <http://www.smu.edu/Provost/saes/DASS> to begin the process. Once approved and registered, students will submit a DASS Accommodation Letter through the electronic portal DASS Link and then communicate directly with each instructor to make appropriate arrangements. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive and require advance notice to implement.

## The Accommodations Process at SMU

Our process at DASS is simple and direct but takes time to finalize. All steps of the process are required before accommodations can be implemented. Here are the steps:

- (1) Students begin by thoroughly filling out an **Accommodation Request Form**:  
[https://smu-accommodate.symphlicity.com/public\\_accommodation](https://smu-accommodate.symphlicity.com/public_accommodation).  
It is important that the student, not the parent, completes this form thoroughly.
- (2) Students provide **diagnostic documentation** about their condition by uploading to *DASS Link*, the DASS office's online data management system, at the time of completing the Accommodation Request Form. *DASS Link* is used to streamline accommodation requests and communicate with students and instructors. Documentation guidelines for various conditions are posted on our website. Please do not give documentation to other campus departments.
- (3) When the online request form and current documentation are submitted, the DASS review team begins the **review process**, which can take two to three weeks. If questions arise during the review, we contact the student directly for clarification. Delays in the process occur if documentation needs to be updated or students delay in replying to requests. Students should regularly check their SMU emails for communication from SMU.
- (4) At the conclusion of the review, DASS will contact the student for an **intake meeting** in order to discuss reasonable accommodations. An email notification will be sent to the student's SMU email account. The student is responsible for setting up the intake. At this appointment, we build rapport with the student, execute important policies and procedures, prepare accommodation letters, and explain next steps at DASS and SMU.
- (5) The accommodation process is complete when students discuss their accommodation letter and needs with faculty, preferably during a private meeting. DASS prepares students for this meeting during the intake appointment. Students who skip this step should not assume they have accommodations in place.
- (6) Students **request new accommodation letters each semester** through *DASS Link* and discuss their letter and needs with faculty in a confidential setting (office, phone, email). This is the only way classroom accommodations are established each semester.

## Campus Resources for Families to Know About

SMU offers a wide range of support services and resources for your student!  
Keep this list handy in case your student asks for help.

**Academic Support Services** available at the A-LEC: These include tutoring and academic skills workshops (walk-in basis), Writing Center (by appointment and walk-in), UNIV 1210 (semester class for college transition skills with specific section for students with ADHD, LD or Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)). Tutor and workshop schedules are posted on the A-LEC website.



**Academic Support on campus:** Successful students use professor office hours regularly, research librarians at the Central University Libraries (CUL), and study rooms by reservation at all libraries.

**Academic Coaching** through DASS: 1:1 sessions with a DASS Learning Specialist for those with ADHD, LD, or ASD. Contact [dass@smu.edu](mailto:dass@smu.edu) for more information.

**Health and Wellness** needs: Dr. Bob Smith Health Center has a pharmacy for medication refills and offers workshops on various health topics. Counseling Services inside the Health Center offers counseling and workshops for mental health needs. Dedman Center for Lifetime Sports offers fitness classes and personal trainers.

**DASS Student Support:** DASS student support group, *Students for New Learning*, with monthly meetings; Student newsletter, *AccessAbility*, sent 2x/month with info and resources. Ask your student what is in the current issue!

For FAQ for parents of current and prospective students:

<https://www.smu.edu/provost/saes/academic-support/student-academic-success/disability-accommodations/resources-and-campus-accessibility/parents/faq>

## How Families Can Help Their DASS Student

With this information in mind, you can help your DASS student transition to SMU! As students begin assuming a direct role in their accommodations and success at SMU, take a moment to learn from a seasoned parent and professional in the field, Jane Jarrow. Her letter to parents will help you in this transition, too! Enjoy it here:

[An Open Letter to Parents of Students with Disabilities About to Enter College](#)



### THE DASS PROCESS

- ◆ Gather all pertinent documentation your student will need to request accommodations from DASS.
- ◆ Encourage your student to become familiar with his/her diagnosis and its impact. Build this ability to verbalize needs to others. Practicing this critical skill before arriving on campus can save your student weeks of struggle or delay in receiving accommodations!
- ◆ Realize that our staff will communicate primarily with the student, using SMU email. Encourage your student to check SMU email frequently and to reply promptly to requests for information.

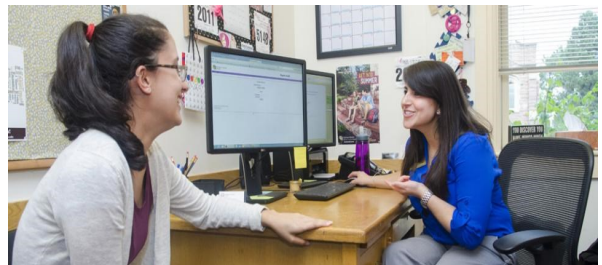
### SUPPORT SERVICES and ADVANCE PLANNING

- ◆ Visit the A-LEC and/or DASS while on campus to let your student see where these resources are located. Encourage your student to use all available SMU resources and become familiar with how to use them. Insist they pick up a Semester-At-A-Glance from the A-LEC!
- ◆ If your student has benefitted from outside support, such as tutors or coaches, expect your student to identify how they will replace that support in the college setting. Transitioning to a new setting is NOT the time to eliminate support systems that have proven critical to a student's success! Also, waiting too late in a semester to begin using these resources creates more stress, often just prior to final exams.
- ◆ Help your student work out a plan of support BEFORE arrival on campus to save time, emotions and energy. Should issues arise during the semester, your student will be prepared.
- ◆ Help your student become adept at self-reflection in order to improve academic performance and daily life on campus. Urge your student to use the time between semesters to create plans for improvement for the upcoming semester. Don't automatically offer to solve all problems. Guide your student through problem-solving scenarios so they become responsible for their solutions.



### COMMUNICATION

- ◆ Determine in advance how your student will communicate grades, finances, and other issues. Don't wait until the first crisis!
- ◆ Encourage your student to meet regularly with professors. Faculty serve as the primary resource for advice on how best to manage classroom demands. Building rapport with faculty serves students in many beneficial ways.
- ◆ DO NOT expect to interact with your student's faculty members. Your student should be the one to initiate communication with each faculty member. For questions about course selection and academic progress, your student should contact their assigned academic adviser.
- ◆ Stay informed of semester end dates for travel purposes. Final exam times and days are not negotiable. The complete semester schedule can be found on the Registrar's website:



<http://www.smu.edu/EnrollmentServices/Registrar/AcademicCalendarsCourseCatalogs/>

## When Things Go Wrong

Sometimes even with the best advanced planning, things can go wrong for students with disabilities. Managing symptoms and impacts of their disability, coursework deadlines, medication refills, outside appointments, decreased structure and self-management of daily living can take its toll on some students. The list below will give you some ideas on how and where to reach out for help if you are concerned about your student.



**Poor grades?** Students should contact their faculty members to discuss poor grades or difficulties in the classroom. If students have questions about their course loads or course selection, college policies or deadlines, please have them meet with their academic adviser.

**Class attendance?** For absences due to an emergency, alert the Dean of Student Life. For time management issues, encourage your student to consider academic coaching with DASS or the A-LEC Academic Counselors. Visit <http://www.smu.edu/Provost/saes/DASS/SuccessStrategies/AcademicCoaching> to learn more.

**Non-compliance** with their medication or outside appointments? Discuss the strategies to use, if indeed they stopped taking prescribed medication. Switching to a local doctor may make it easier to refill prescriptions and increase compliance.

**New impacts** from their disability? Have your student contact the DASS Coordinator to discuss accommodations.

**Temporary injuries?** For assistance with broken limbs involving mobility and help with temporary parking passes for mobility issues, contact SMU Parking Services.

Some issues where DASS has NO involvement include roommate issues, financial holds, or academic guidance related to degree plans or course selections. For these issues, we refer students to Residence Life, the Bursar, and their academic adviser, respectively.

For most issues your DASS student may bring to you, **we encourage parents to follow 3 steps:**

1. Encourage students without enabling them. Express confidence in their abilities to problem-solve independently.
2. Alert the DASS team of any concerns you may have.
3. After you take these steps, urge your student to communicate with DASS directly. Direct communication between DASS and your student can streamline the solution process and build their skills, too.

## DASS Parent Resources: Books and Digital Courses

### Online Resources:

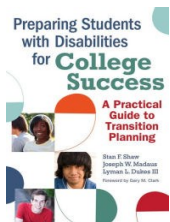
[Accessible College: Transformative Course for Supporting Students with Physical Disabilities and Health Conditions.](#)

[Students with Disabilities Preparing for Postsecondary Education](#)

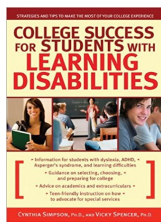
[Planning Your Future: A Guide To Transition](#)



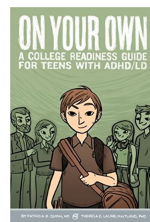
U.S. Department of Education



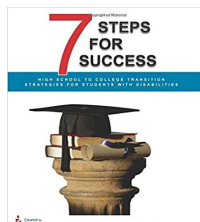
By Stan F. Shaw, Joseph W. Madaus, Lyman L. Dukes, III



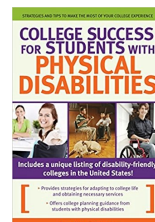
By Cynthia Simpson and Vicky Spencer



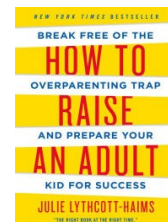
By Patricia O. Quinn and Theresa Maitland



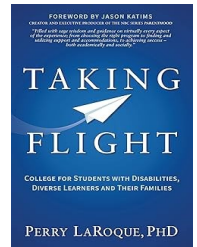
By Elizabeth Hamblet



By Chris Tiedemann



By Julie Lythcott-Haims



By Perry LaRoque

**DASS IS MORE THAN ACCOMMODATIONS.**

For resources that may be helpful to students and parents, please visit:

<http://www.smu.edu/Provost/saes/DASS/Resources>