

**To:** Teaching Assistants at Brown  
**From:** Catherine Axe, Director, Disability Support Services (DSS)  
Stephanie Vece, Assistant Director, Disability Support Services  
**Date:** September 2008  
**Re:** **Providing Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**

As things are getting underway for the semester, I wanted to remind you about the process students should be using when requesting accommodations in their courses and about students' right to confidentiality around disability. Students are expected to take an active role in the process of requesting accommodations, including registering with DSS, obtaining a letter from us to confirm their need for specific accommodations, and meeting with their professors to discuss how accommodations will work in each course. If a student requests an accommodation without providing a letter to the professor whose course you are TAing, please refer the student to Disability Support Services (x3-9588 or [dss@brown.edu](mailto:dss@brown.edu)).

We recommend that students discuss accommodations early in the semester, but students can choose to identify to professors at any point in the semester. Accommodations are not retroactive and should be requested in a timely matter. We are available for consultation if professors or TAs have questions about the reasonableness of or if anyone considers denying an accommodation.

When providing accommodations recommended by Disability Support Services, please avoid identifying a student as having a disability or marking exams in a way that indicates that the student is taking the exam with accommodations. Students have reported that announcements or indicators that force them to identify themselves to the class are particularly demeaning and embarrassing. If you ever have questions or concerns about how to administer requested accommodations, please call us.

Teaching assistants who are administering exams should be aware of the process used to provide accommodations, the students approved to use accommodations, and the accommodations each student is approved to use. We have had students report having exams removed before their extended time has been provided and some have been questioned about their need for accommodations. Such situations can be very stressful for the student and TA. The DSS office can also assist with exam accommodations. We can provide secure laptops, arrange proctors or scribes, and reserve space. Please contact us through [dss@brown.edu](mailto:dss@brown.edu) if you need any assistance.

If a student's performance in a course suggests a possible learning disability or other difficulty in learning, please alert the professor. Students can be referred to the DSS office to discuss why they are having difficulties. A puzzling inconsistency in a student's performance in different aspects of the course (e.g. classroom discussion vs. performance on exams) can be one indicator. For more information about how instructors and teaching assistants can be supportive of students with disabilities, please visit the Disability Support Services web site: <http://www.brown.edu/dss>

All the best for the semester, and thanks for working with us to make courses accessible!