

CLT Lunch and Learn:

**Tackling Ableism +
Accommodations**

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Director, Student Accessibility Support

09.13.2024

Overview

Introduction + Approach to Accessibility

- Accessibility Defined
- Why Brandeis?
- Professional Staff

Ableism

- Ableism Defined
- Stigma
- Neurodiversity + Disability

Fundamental Principles of Accommodations

- ADA Definition of Disability
- Disclosure + Confidentiality
- Purpose of Accommodations
- Interactive Process
- Essential Requirements + Fundamental Alterations
- Determining Reasonable Accommodations

Faculty Guidance for Accommodations

- The Starting Place
- Accommodations Organization
- Microsoft Office Accessible Checker
- Resource in Development



Introduction
+
Approach to
Accessibility

An Overview

- 16 years experience in higher education focused on neurodiversity, accessibility, and inclusion
- Passionate advocate balancing individual support of students with integration of university strategic plan and priorities
- Enjoy big picture thinking and digging into details
- Energized by the important, meaningful work of disability and accessibility services



Accessibility Defined

"Accessibility is about making things more equitable so that disabled people have the same opportunities and support to thrive as do nondisabled people.

It's about removing barriers to participation, engagement, and understanding so that all people, regardless of ability, can experience the world around us to the fullest extent possible in ways that work for our minds and bodies."

Emily Ladau

Demystifying Disability:

What to Know, What to Say, and How to Be an Ally

Why Brandeis?

[The SAS Director] ...

“provide[s] leadership in the development and implementation of services, initiatives, policies, and programming that ensure meaningful University access and **dignity** for qualified students with documented learning, perceptual, sensory, physical and psychological disabilities.”

Professional Staff

Kim Johnson,
Director



Elizabeth Nako,
Senior Accessibility
Specialist



Kaitlyn Rogers,
Senior Accessibility
Specialist



Emily Harrington,
Accessibility
Specialist for Incoming
Undergrads



Jaspreet Mahal,
Senior Accessibility
Specialist for Grads



Lenny Prado,
Program
Administrator



Irene Altdorf,
Exam Center
Coordinator



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Ableism

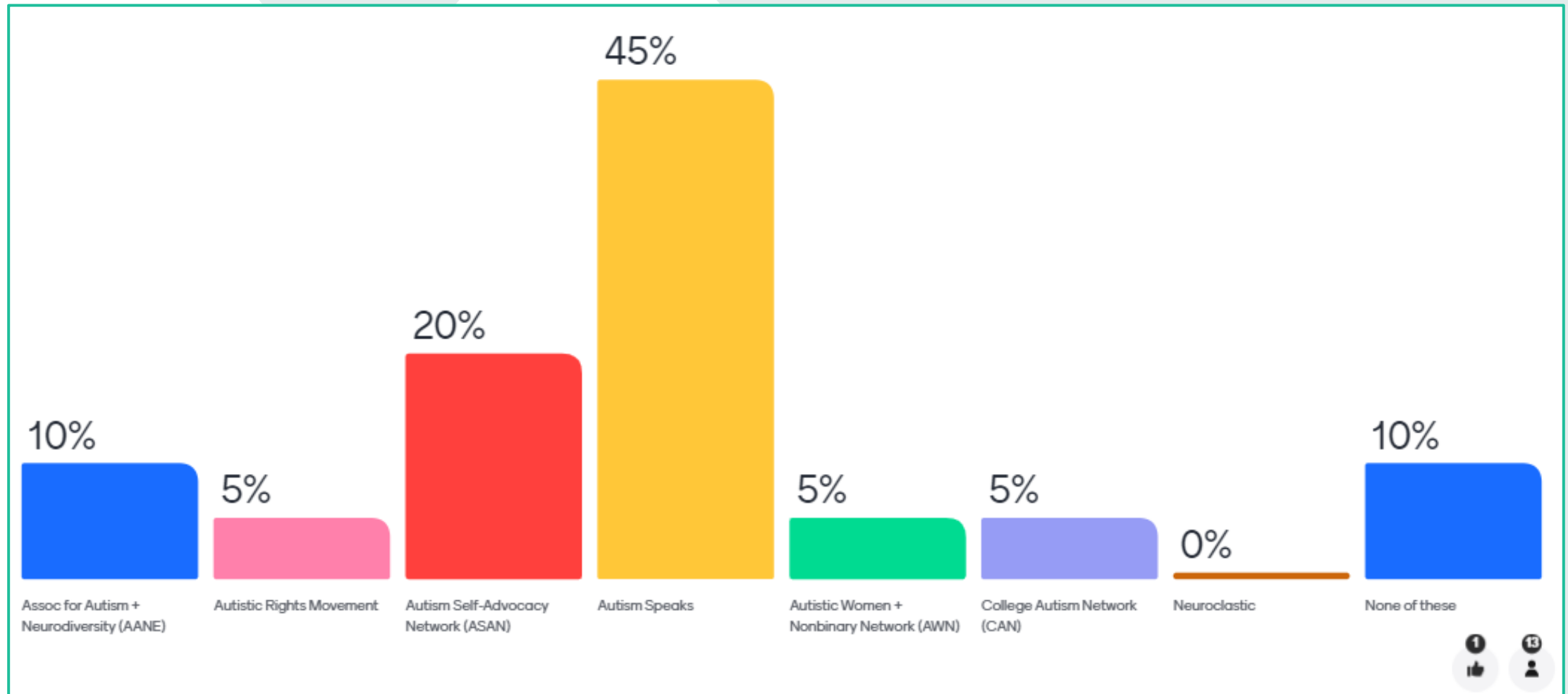
Poll: What words/characteristics would you use to explain "disability" or "person with a disability"?

(24 responses, 13 respondents)



Poll: Which Autism-focused groups have you heard of, if any?

(13 respondents)



Autism \$peaks

is considered

a

toxic hate group

by Autistic advocates, activists, and allies.



Misconception: Autism Speaks Benefits Autistic People

4 Reasons to Not Support Autism Speaks:

1. Only 1-4% of funds go to actually helping individuals + families
2. Searching to “cure Autism”, mission has since been changed to “end Autism” with funding going to research to “end Autism”
3. Board members and main contributors are not Autistic (exception: John Elder Robson a scientific advisor who resigned from the organization). Few have since been added.
4. Media Campaigns

Denounced by 60 different mental health advocacy organizations for “lack of representation, exploitative and unethical practices” ([ASAN Press Release](#))

Learn more:

[Autistic Self Advocacy Network \(ASAN\): Autism Speaks](#)

[In the Loop About Neurodiversity: The Ableist History of Autism Speaks](#)

[Biggest Autism Advocacy Group is Still Failing Too Many Autistic People](#) (Luteman, *Washington Post*)

HOW DO WE UNDERSTAND DISABILITY?



Brown, Lydia X.Z. (2021) "Neurodiversity, Disability Justice, & Radical Access in Higher Education", Keynote Presentation @ College Autism Summit.



Ableism Defined

Ableism is a set of beliefs or practices that devalue and discriminate against people with physical, intellectual, or psychiatric disabilities and often rests on the assumption that disabled people need to be 'fixed' in one form or the other.

Ableism is intertwined in our culture, due to many limiting beliefs about what disability does or does not mean, how able-bodied people learn to treat people with disabilities and how we are often not included at the table for key decisions.

Stigma

Surveys indicate widespread confusion and stigma:

- 33% of educators say that sometimes what people call a learning or attention issue is really just laziness.
- 43% of parents say that they wouldn't want others to know if their child had a learning disability.
- Doctors who recommend evaluating a child for learning and attention issues say parents follow their recommendation only 54% of the time.



That job requires an autistic attention to detail.

It's a problem of intention not attention.

Oh, [concept] that's so easy to understand.

I figured it out in like three minutes.

I didn't realize that Sally works with you. She seems so smart.

You just have to try harder.

Sorry, got distracted - ADD moment.

That sounds awful. I could never handle that. I don't know how you keep going.

Stop faking it.

You don't look disabled.

Stephen Hawking 1942-2018



Mitchell Toy, 2018

https://www.reddit.com/r/Art/comments/84e0f1/stephen_hawking_mitchell_toy_digital_2018/



Bob Englehart, 2018

<https://www.mercurynews.com/2018/03/16/cartoons-stephen-hawking-an-intellectual-giant-dies/>



Stuart Haden, 03.14.2018
<https://www.axisweb.org/p/stuarthaden/article/3579-stephen-hawking-has-died/>



ChrisSimpsonArtist, 2018
https://www.instagram.com/chrissimpsonartist/?utm_source=ig_embed

THE NEURODIVERGENT NARWHALS™ PRESENT:

NEURODIVERSITY

101



NEURODIVERSITYLIBRARY.ORG



DIVERSITY IS NATURAL NEURODIVERSITY* IS NATURAL



PLANT DIVERSITY



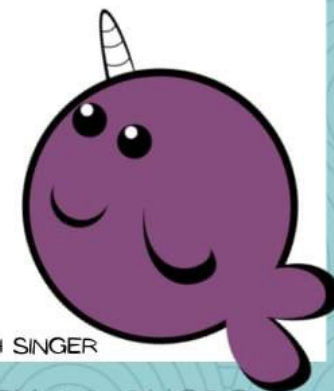
ANIMAL DIVERSITY



HUMAN DIVERSITY



BRAIN DIVERSITY = NEURODIVERSITY!



*"NEURODIVERSITY" IS A WORD COINED BY AUTISTIC SCHOLAR JUDITH SINGER

Neurodiversity Defined

“The notion that conditions like autism, dyslexia, and attention-deficit/ hyperactivity disorder (AD/HD)

should be regarded as naturally occurring cognitive variations with distinctive strengths

that have contributed to the evolution of technology and culture rather than mere checklists of deficits and dysfunctions” (Silberman, 2015, p. 16).

THE EXISTENCE OF
NEURODIVERSITY IS A FACT.



YOUR FEELINGS ABOUT THE
VALUE OF NEURODIVERSITY ARE
YOUR OPINIONS.*



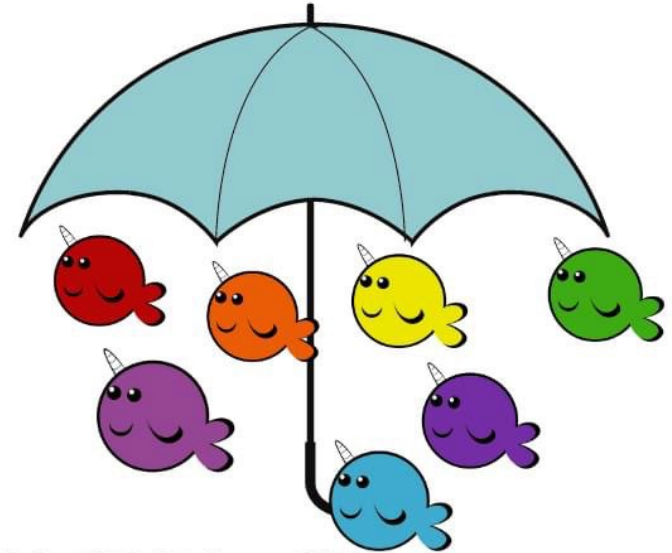
*OPINIONS THAT ARE LIKELY INFLUENCED BY SYSTEMIC ABLEISM
& SURVIVING IN A CAPITALIST SOCIETY

Neurodiversity Defined Cnt'd

“Neurodiversity is the diversity of human minds, the infinite variation in neurocognitive functioning within our species.”

(Walker, 2021).

NEURODIVERGENCE= DEVELOPMENTAL, INTELLECTUAL, PSYCHIATRIC & LEARNING DISABILITIES LIKE AUTISM, ANXIETY, DOWN SYNDROME, DEPRESSION, ADHD*, MOOD DISORDERS* & A WHOLE LOT MORE!



THE BIG UMBRELLA OF
NEURODIVERGENCE INCLUDES MORE
THAN IT EXCLUDES!

*NO BRAIN IS ACTUALLY DISORDERED!, THAT'S PATHOLOGY PARADIGM TALK!

NEURODIVERSITYLIBRARY.ORG

Putting the “Neuro” in Neurodiversity

Autism / Asperger
Syndrome

Specific Learning
Disability in Reading

Specific Learning
Disability in Writing

Specific Learning
Disability in Math

Nonverbal Learning
Disability

Central Auditory
Processing

Expressive/Receptive
Language Processing
Disorder

Attention Deficit
Disorders
(all subtypes)

Intellectual
Disabilities

Tourette’s Syndrome

Initially conceptualized to include the above.
More recently, broader application
(“different types of brains”)

Usage & A Mini Grammar Lesson

Neurodiversity: the diversity of human minds with infinite variation of neurocognitive functioning

Neurodivergent (ND): Having a brain that functions in ways that diverge from dominant societal standards of “normal” (**one** person)

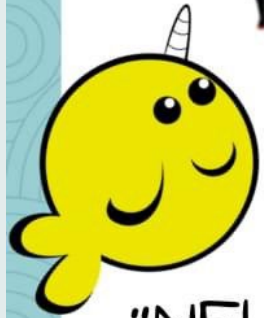
Neurotypical (NT): Having a neurocognitive style that falls within the dominant societal standards of “normal” (**one** person)

Neurodiverse: group of individuals where multiple neurocognitive styles are represented

(Walker, 2021).



THESE PEOPLE ARE NEURODIVERSE.



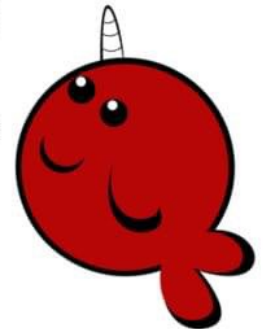
"NEURODIVERSE" IS A GROUP
OF PEOPLE WITH DIFFERENT
KINDS OF BRAINS!

NEURODIVERSITYLIBRARY.ORG

A "NEUROTYPICAL" PERSON IS SOMEONE
WHOSE BRAIN WORKS IN WAYS THAT
SOCIETY VIEWS AS NORMAL.

A "NEURODIVERGENT"* PERSON IS A
PERSON WHOSE BRAIN WORKS IN WAYS
THAT DIFFER FROM WHAT SOCIETY VIEWS
AS NORMAL..

WHO DECIDES
WHAT'S
NORMAL
ANYWAY???



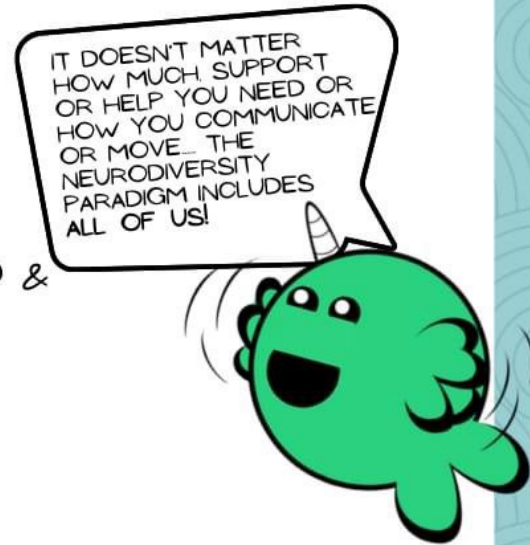
*"NEURODIVERGENT" IS A WORD COINED BY AUTISTIC POC &
ACTIVIST, KASSIANE ASASUMASU

NEURODIVERSITYLIBRARY.ORG

THE NEURODIVERSITY PARADIGM IS A WAY OF THINKING ABOUT NEURODIVERSITY.

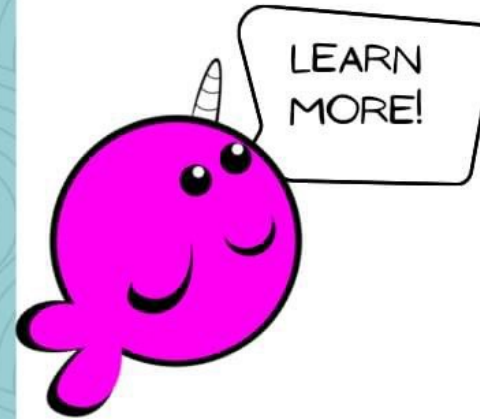
THE NEURODIVERSITY PARADIGM SAYS:

- DISABILITY & NEURODIVERGENCE ARE NORMAL & NATURAL
- NEURODIVERSITY IS GOOD & VALUABLE
- THERE IS NO ONE RIGHT KIND OF BRAIN



NEURODIVERSITYLIBRARY.ORG

THIS IS COMPILED FROM A WEALTH OF COMMUNITY KNOWLEDGE INCLUDING BUT CERTAINLY NOT LIMITED TO SOME OF THESE GREAT RESOURCES.



[NEUROCOSMOPOLITANISM.COM/NEURODIVERSITY-SOME-BASIC-TERMS-DEFINITIONS/](https://neurocosmopolitanism.com/neurodiversity-some-basic-terms-definitions/)

[NEUROCOSMOPOLITANISM.COM/THROW-AWAY-THE-MASTERS-TOOLS-LIBERATING-OURSELVES-FROM-THE-PATHOLOGY-PARADIGM/](https://neurocosmopolitanism.com/throw-away-the-masters-tools-liberating-ourselves-from-the-pathology-paradigm/)

[DIVERGENTMINDS.ORG/UNDERSTANDING-NEURODIVERSITY/](https://divergentminds.org/understanding-neurodiversity/)

[THINKINGAUTISMGUIDE.COM/2018/02/WHAT-NEURODIVERSITY-MOVEMENT-DOES-AND.HTML](https://thinkingautismguide.com/2018/02/what-neurodiversity-movement-does-and.html)

[BLOGS.SCIENTIFICAMERICAN.COM/OBSERVATIONS/CLEARING-UP-SOME-MISCONCEPTIONS-ABOUT-NEURODIVERSITY/](https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/observations/clearing-up-some-misconceptions-about-neurodiversity/)

[AUTISTICSCHOLAR.COM/WHAT-IS-NEURODIVERSITY/](https://autisticscholar.com/what-is-neurodiversity/)



Neurodiversity + Disability

Neurodiversity = Differences are not deficits

AND

“Diagnosis” + “Disability” aren’t bad words or concepts

Until US society reaches full inclusion
+ appreciation,

COEXISTENCE

Less likely that people will fall through the cracks

Makes clear everyone has challenges that deserve support

Encourages research funding

Allows for protections under federal + state laws

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Fundamental Principles of Accommodations

*Percentage distribution of students enrolled in postsecondary institutions, by level, disability status, and selected student characteristics:
Academic year 2019–20*

Selected student characteristic	Undergraduate		Postbaccalaureate	
	Students with disabilities ¹	Students without disabilities	Students with disabilities ¹	Students without disabilities
Total	20.5	79.5	10.7	89.3
Gender				
Male	17.6	82.4	8.5	91.5
Female	21.9	78.1	11.7	88.3
Nonbinary²	53.7	46.3	39.8	60.2
Race/ethnicity				
American Indian/Alaska Native	23.7	76.3	‡	90.8
Asian	13.9	86.1	6.8	93.2
Black	18.0	82.0	10.1	89.9
Hispanic	21.3	78.7	14.0	86.0
Pacific Islander	22.1	77.9	‡	89.1
White	21.1	78.9	11.0	89.0
Two or more races	25.4	74.6	14.9	85.1
Age				
15 to 23	20.3	79.7	8.9	91.1
24 to 29	21.3	78.7	10.9	89.1
30 or older	20.7	79.3	11.0	89.0

ADA Definition of Disability

A person with a disability is someone who:

- has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities,
- has a history or record of such an impairment, or
- is perceived by others as having such an impairment.

“Major Life Activities” are defined as

Eating

Sleeping

Walking

Breathing

Standing

Lifting

Bending

Communicating

Thinking

Concentrating

Reading

Learning

Seeing

Hearing

Working

Disclosure + Confidentiality

Student's decision to disclose diagnostic information.

Information disclosed to faculty should be used specifically for implementing accommodations.

At no time should the class be informed that a student has a disability, except at the request of the student.

No: "Do you have a disability that I should know about?"

"Why do you have accommodation letters?"

Yes: "Is there anything that would be helpful for me to know to support you in this course?"

"Let's discuss how each of your accommodations will be implemented specific to this course."



Purpose of Accommodations

For students coming from K-12,
important to discuss access vs success
(IEP/504)

Established for equal access under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), ADA Amendments, and Federal Rehabilitation Act (Section 504).

Facilitate university-wide access for students with disabilities so they may:

- Engage with classwork at the same level as those without disabilities;
- Have equal use of buildings, programs and facilities; and
- Be part of University events.

Interactive Process

Student + SAS
discuss diagnostic
needs, review
syllabus, determine
accommodations



Student + professor
discuss how
accommodation will
be implemented



Student and/or
professor
communicate with
SAS regarding any
questions/concerns

Implementation conversation and agreement should happen when letters are presented.

access@branedis.edu



OCR Cases: Interactive Process

In reviewing OCR cases, many stem from the interactive process not being followed

Cannot have a "one size" fits all approach

Faculty making unilateral decisions without discussing with SAS

Must be able to prove an accommodation would be a fundamental alteration, which can only be done after the interactive process is completed

Essential Requirement + Fundamental Alteration

Students are required to meet the essential requirements of a course and program of study. Accommodations should not fundamentally alter academic standards.

Essential Requirements

Course objectives and learning outcomes

Fundamental Alteration

“a change that is so significant that it alters the essential nature of the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages, or accommodations offered”

Faculty purview:

- Determine course content and methods of teaching
- Ensure that students demonstrate knowledge of the material
- Assign an appropriate grade per essential requirements of the course.

Fundamental Alteration

[Process for
assessing a possible
fundamental
alteration](#)

Deciding whether an accommodation is a fundamental alteration is a collaborative process.

Always consult with SAS before saying no to a student if it's related to an accommodation in their letter.

Blanket denials of accommodations - including audio recording - is not permitted under university policy.

(Two-Party consent does



Determining Reasonable Accommodation

Steps to determine if Reasonable Accommodation or Fundamental Alteration:

- Individualized assessment of student's needs + the program or course requirements;
- Review of the academic program and requirements by knowledgeable decision makers;
- Consideration of a series of alternatives for the essential requirements;
- Determination of whether the requirement could be modified for the specific student with a disability; and
- If process determines that a specific standard or requirement is an essential program requirement that cannot be modified, notify the student in writing including rationale.

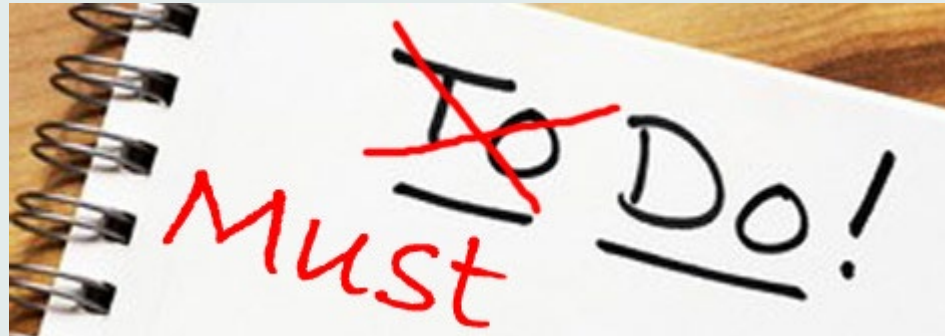


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Faculty Guidance for Accommodations

The Starting Place:

Anything in a student's accommodation letter that applies to your class is a:



... Unless you contact SAS to discuss a feasibility issue or fundamental alteration!



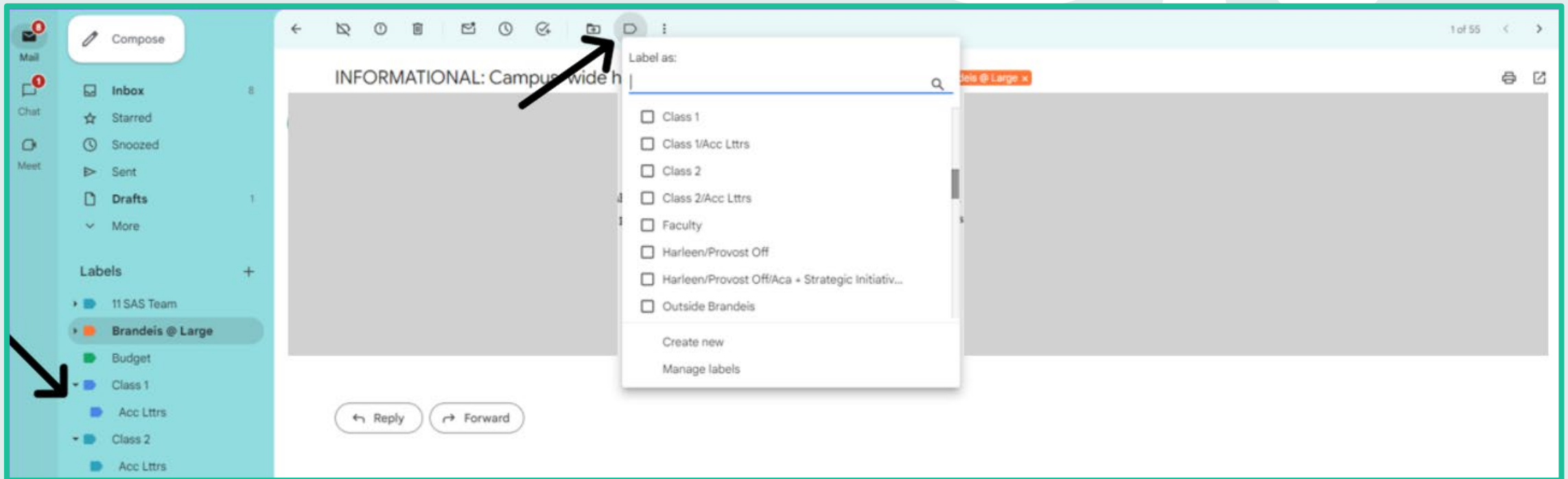
Resource Alert:

[SAS Quick Resource Guide for Faculty](#)

Quick Resource Guide for Faculty

1. [General Information for Faculty from the SAS Website](#).
2. Here's a [template for tracking accommodation letters](#) that you can download and adjust to your needs.
3. If you believe an accommodation cannot be implemented in your course, you need to reach out to SAS before communicating that to students; there is a specific process for [determining whether an accommodation fundamentally alters a class](#).
4. Important guidelines for [audio recording](#) as an approved accommodation.
5. Important guidelines for [limited extensions on assignments](#) as an approved accommodation.
6. For exam proctoring support for students with exam accommodations, you may fill out this [request form](#) or contact SASExams@brandeis.edu. We will support as many requests as we have staffing capacity for.
7. This resource provides [tips on designing and teaching inclusive classes](#).
8. Explore the [Center for Teaching and Learning](#) website for many more resources for faculty members and for graduate student instructors/TAs/CAs.

Accommodations Organization: Emails



Accommodations Organization: Letters

Google Sheet: [\[Course\] \[Semester\] - Student Accommodations Sheet](#)

Instructions for Use:

1. Open
2. Download to your hard drive or save a copy to your GDrive (Critical to ensure that your entries are not visible to others)
3. Note that there are three tabs on the bottom:
 - Non-Exam Accommodations
 - Exam Accommodations
 - Extended Time Reference/Accommodation Descriptions
4. Columns can be added by right clicking on the top letter, selecting "Insert 1 Column Left/Right", and the check boxes will be added automatically.

Accommodations Organization: Replies

You can create a template email that discusses how an accommodation can be implemented in each of your specific courses - SAS is glad to review them!

Think through the information that you would share with students about how their accommodations can be implemented in your course, acknowledging that it may vary course to course.

Example for Limited Extensions on Assignments:

Students can request extensions on individual assignments that do not involve classmate feedback. From this, the Paper 1 + 2 drafts are to be completed by deadline for in-class workshopping. Limited extensions can be requested on all other assignments by emailing me 24 hours before the due date, unless there is a disability-related reason

Accessibility Checkers

MS Office:



Microsoft: [Improve Accessibility with the Accessibility Checker](#)

Google Workspace has Accessibility Checkers for [Docs](#), [Slides](#), + [Sheets](#)

Can't guarantee it will catch everything, but it will catch a lot

Resource In Development

Repository of Accommodation Guides

Will include:

- What is the purpose?
- How it is usually implemented?
- What are key topics to discuss between faculty and student?
- How is this accommodation used to achieve equity and inclusion?



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Questions + Answers