

## **Student Disability Services**

Sofia University is committed to making reasonable accommodations to provide equal educational opportunity and full participation for qualified persons with disabilities. It is the University's policy that no qualified person be excluded from participating in any University program or activity, be denied the benefits of any University program or activity, or otherwise be subjected to discrimination with regard to any University program or activity. Sofia University and the Student Disability Services (SDS) Office reserve the right to change policies without prior notice. As changes or updates occur, SDS will make every effort to provide current policies and procedures to our students with disabilities.

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

The mission of Student Disability Services, (SDS) is to support our adult student learners with a qualified disability in participating fully in campus life, its programs and activities. Sofia University values the qualities of mindfulness, discernment, compassion and appreciation of differences and embraces whole-person education that supports personal and community transformation. We encourage growth and individual achievement for our adult learners with a disability through the provision of academic accommodations, support services, self-advocacy, and disability and related educational programs for the community.

## **GOALS**

To accomplish its mission, Student Disability Services has established five broad goals:

1. To **deliver** effective academically related services to students which support their scholarly pursuits.
2. To **advocate** for the needs and interest of students, as well as to enrich and **educate** the campus community about our values and the services we offer.
3. To **promote** and **foster** an accepting, accessible campus environment in all the programs and services Sofia University offers.
4. To **empower** students with disabilities to advocate on their own behalf, and to enrich students with the skills to be productive citizens.
5. To productively **administer** the resources available to Student Disability Services and provide quality customer service.

## **OPERATING PHILOSOPHY**

Student Disability Services (SDS) functions to determine qualified disability status and to assist students in obtaining reasonable accommodations and services. SDS strives to empower each student to become as independent as possible and is designed to encourage independence, backed by a comprehensive system of supports.

In order to foster self-advocacy skills, students are expected to articulate their accommodation needs directly to faculty and administrators. Student Disability Services staff will provide a student with a letter verifying his or her disability and stating recommended accommodations in order to establish mutual understanding. In instances where the student requests are met with questions or concerns regarding provision or appropriateness of the recommended

accommodations, SDS staff will communicate directly with faculty. Students are expected to adhere to all published deadlines, procedures, and policies for the provision of services.

## **EXPECTATIONS STATEMENT**

Students with disabilities at Sofia University must be able to function as independently as possible and to seek appropriate assistance in a reasonable and timely manner. University resources and staff cannot meet all of a student's needs associated with managing a disability. Students with disabilities must follow appropriate health regimens (e.g., medication compliance) secure appropriate medical and therapeutic assistance from qualified practitioners, and arrange necessary personal services (e.g., transportation, individual monitoring of needs, financial assistance, personal care) that the University does not provide.

Qualified students with disabilities, who are provided reasonable accommodations, must function in their respective academic environments. They must meet the requirements and expectations of their academic programs, follow established guidelines and procedures for securing practicum and internship sites and adhere to Sofia University's Student Honor Code located in the catalog and student handbook.

## **ACCESSIBILITY: THE KEY TO EQUAL OPPORTUNITY**

Sofia University, in accordance with applicable Federal and State laws and school policy, does not discriminate on the basis of disability.

Equal educational opportunity is required by federal and state law, including the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the ADA Amendments Acts of 2009, the California State Unruh Act, and California Civil Code Sections 54 through 55.2. Under federal law, a person with a disability is one who: 1) has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities; 2) has a record of such impairment; 3) is regarded as having such an impairment.

Entering students whose disabilities may require accommodations must bring their written requests for reasonable accommodations and required documentation to the attention of the Student Disability Services office as early as possible before the beginning of the term. Continuing students have an affirmative duty to notify Student Disability Services (SDS) in writing and provide the required documentation regarding requests for reasonable accommodations to a Student Disability Services staff no later than two weeks prior to the date of mid-term exams, final exams, or due dates for writing assignments. All students who require auxiliary services must also contact the SDS office and provide written documentation related to their disability from a qualified medical professional, along with a written request for auxiliary services, as early as possible before the beginning of each term.

Students who request accommodations because of a learning disability are required to provide written documentation that: (i) is prepared by a professional qualified to diagnose a learning disability, including but not limited to a licensed physician, learning disability specialist, or psychologist; (ii) includes the testing procedures followed, the instruments used to assess the disability, the test results, and an interpretation of the test results; and (iii) reflects the individual's present level of achievement. The student's documentation should be as

comprehensive as possible and dated no more than three years prior to the student's request for services, unless the student had documentation as an undergraduate. Documentation should adequately measure cognitive abilities (using the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale Revised or equivalent test) and academic achievement skills (using Woodcock Johnson Part II, Wide Range Achievement Test, Nelson Denny or equivalent test). The achievement test should sample reading, math and writing. The documentation must include test results for at least the following characteristics: intelligence, vocabulary, reading rate, reading comprehension, spelling, mathematical comprehension, memory, and processing skills.

Sofia University keeps all information pertaining to a student's disability confidential, and discloses such information only to the extent necessary to provide accommodation for the student's disability. Where it is deemed appropriate by the Student Disability Services staff, a qualified professional may be retained by the school to determine the appropriate accommodation for a disability. The Student Disability Services Office is vested with the authority to develop a reasonable accommodation plan for all qualified persons with a disability at the University under the ADA or Rehabilitation Act.

**For accommodations, please contact Student Disability Services at [student\\_services@sofia.edu](mailto:student_services@sofia.edu).**

## **DISPUTE RESOLUTION PROCEDURES**

Student Disability Services (SDS) strives to provide fair and appropriate assistance and services. If a student is dissatisfied with SDS policies or procedures, or with decisions made regarding disability status or accommodations, the student is encouraged first to attempt to resolve the matter by speaking with the SDS staff. Equitable resolution of the matter between the parties should be sought through this discussion. If after speaking with a staff the student is still dissatisfied, he or she should speak with the Dean of Student Services. If after speaking with the Dean the student is still dissatisfied with the results and wishes to appeal that decision, the student should follow the Formal Grievance Procedures as outlined in the University's academic catalog.

Any student has the right to file a complaint with the Office of Civil Rights of the U.S. Department of Education. The office will investigate and issue a Letter of Findings either supporting the student or the institution. To file a complaint with the Office of Civil Rights, please contact: U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, Wanamaker Bldg., Suite 515, 100 Penn Square East, Philadelphia, PA 19107; 215-656-8541; TDD: 215-656-8604; Statue of limitations for filing a complaint is 180 days from the time the incident occurred.

**Retaliation against any persons filing a complaint is prohibited under state and federal law.**