

Accommodating Students with Disabilities in Laboratories¹

Guidance for Staff and Course Instructors

Scope: This guidance applies to staff teaching students who have disabilities (permanent or temporary) or who need a service animal. It is not intended to substitute for student interaction with Student Accessibility Services (SAS). All students with disabilities are encouraged to access the services available through SAS. This guideline is intended for teaching laboratory staff but may be used for research laboratory applications, as well.

Goal: It is the intent of the University to help all students be safe and successful in the teaching laboratories. This goal applies to service animals, as well. To that end, it's important that each department understands the needs of the student and accommodations requested by the student. If a service animal is used, the staff need to understand how the animal has been trained to help and need as well to be mindful of how best to protect the animal. It is also important to know that Emotional Support Animals are not allowed in any university building outside of the individual student's residential hall room.

It is important to note that by law, students do not have to disclose a disability. A student cannot receive academic accommodations without the support of SAS and without presenting a letter of recommended accommodations to the instructor (and accommodations cannot be applied retroactively). However, it is possible that a student with a physical disability and/or who relies on a service animal might not go to the SAS—and yet might still reasonably expect accommodations based upon a visible condition. (For example, a student on crutches might not go to SAS to seek academic accommodations for the temporary disability—but might need accommodations in a laboratory environment.) In such cases, instructors and students can work together to reach a mutual understanding that allows the student to participate fully.

Safety Equipment: Basic Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) *as required of all students* in teaching laboratories. Such PPE may vary according to the course, the environment, and the circumstances, and the expectations should be clarified to all students. As a fundamental principle, students with disabilities may not be “singled out” by having additional expectations or requirements placed upon them.

Specific expectations can, however, be made for service animals. Service animals entering laboratories must be protected to prevent exposure to hazardous chemicals, broken glass, or other hazards that might be present in the laboratory environment. As appropriate to the environment, booties to cover the feet and a disposable lab coat must be provided by the owner. The laboratory coordinator will make available plastic-backed absorbent paper for the animal to lie on during lab to protect the animal from whatever might be on the floor. Animal beds or fabric pads are not appropriate for use in the lab.

¹ Adapted from UC-Davis' document “Accommodating Students with Disabilities in Chemistry Teaching Laboratories” (https://chemistry.ucdavis.edu/sites/g/files/dgvnsk196/files/files/page/needs-assessment_0.pdf).



Needs Assessment: Students with Disabilities in Laboratory Classes

Student Name: _____ Date: _____

Faculty: _____ Course: _____

If the student presents a permanent disability, with a service animal or not, the following questions should be asked:

1. Have you met with Student Accessibility Services? If so and appropriate, please attach a copy of your accommodation letter.

a) Specifically, what accommodations are you requesting in this lab class context?

2. Have you worked in a lab setting before? Yes No

a) If yes, what course/program? _____

b) Did you learn any new/useful adaptive techniques you can show us?

c) What equipment modifications were made for you?

3. Can you stand for a period of time in the lab? Yes No N/A

a) Do you require a stool to be readily available to you? Yes No N/A

b) Does the stool have to have a back on it? Yes No N/A

4. Can you lift your arms to be able to use tall lab equipment? Yes No N/A

5. Can you see well enough to collect data, read a thermometer, digital balance readout, etc.?

Yes No N/A Note: if you are color blind, please communicate that to your instructor, as it may be a factor in making observations on experiments.

6. Can you hear well enough to be alerted to an emergency in the lab, an unexpected occurrence with your experiment, and communicate clearly with your lab partner? Yes No N/A

7. Do you have tools (such as readers/magnifiers, gripper/grabbers, etc.) you plan to bring to class?

Yes No N/A

a) If so, please describe.

8. Do you require assistance to carry items that might weigh over a pound or two? Yes No N/A

a) Do you require assistance to turn knobs, open jars, hold and use small items (spatula, small beakers or flasks), etc.? Yes No N/A

If you're a wheelchair user:

- a) Do you require a lower counter height? Yes No N/A
- b) Can you lift your arms to use or access lab equipment on the counter? Yes No N/A
- c) Can you collect data in a format so the data can be easily shared with your lab partner?
Yes No N/A

If you use a service animal:

The "Information for Service Animal Users" sheet must be provided, discussed, and signed.

- a) Do you require the animal to be with you at all times or only under certain circumstances?
All times Circumstance-specific (What are those circumstances?)
- b) Do you need a place for the animal to stay while you're in lab and not needing the animal at that time?
Yes No N/A
- c) If you need the animal to be brought to you while you're in lab, what are those circumstances?
- d) What is the animal trained to alert to?
- e) How does the animal alert?
- f) What should the instructor do if the animal alerts?



INFORMATION FOR SERVICE ANIMAL USERS

The University is committed to your safety and success in laboratory, and if that success includes the use of a service animal, we (like you) want to make sure your animal is also safe and secure. Laboratories are dangerous places. Hazardous chemicals, open flames, glassware, and electrical equipment are all in use. It is not a good environment for a beloved and precious animal.

If you require the use of a service animal in the laboratory, faculty have been directed to ask you a series of questions to determine how best we can safely facilitate the presence of your animal. These questions are not intended to prevent you from having your animal in lab, but rather so we understand how best to accommodate your needs and the needs of your animal. The following equipment and behavioral expectations are required for your animal’s safety and for the safety of the other laboratory occupants.

Personal Protective Equipment:

Service animals entering laboratories must be protected to prevent exposure to hazardous chemicals, broken glass, or other hazards that might be present in the laboratory environment. Booties to cover the feet and a disposable lab coat *must be provided by the owner*. The instructor will make available plastic-backed absorbent paper for the animal to lie on during lab to protect the animal from whatever might be on the floor. Animal beds or fabric pads are not appropriate for use in the lab.

For kennel-trained service animals, a lightweight kennel might be appropriate. Please discuss the option of a kennel with your instructor.

Behavioral Expectations:

If the service animal is present in lab, the animal must be trained to “stay” and “leave it” (or equivalent behavior). The animal must not vocalize, bark, or growl inappropriately. If the animal is trained to alert by vocalizing, the instructor must be aware of the circumstances under which the animal would vocalize. Disruptive, extended vocalizing or barking will not be permitted, unless in proper context. The animal must not behave aggressively towards other people—snapping, snarling, growling, charging, swiping, etc. The animal must not jump up on other people. The people in the laboratory will be informed that the animal is a service animal and always working. Interaction with the animal is by permission of the owner and only outside of the laboratory.

If the service animal displays any of these behaviors, the animal will not be permitted in the laboratory until documented and demonstrated re-training has occurred.

I have read and agree to these stipulations and requirements.

Name (Print): _____ Course: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Instructor Signature: _____ Date: _____

Please submit a copy of this agreement to Student Accessibility Services.

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