ACADEMIC SUPPORT CENTER
Working with Students with Learning Disabilities or ADHD

Academic standards remain the same for all students, regardless of accommodations in classroom procedures. Individual methods for meeting academic standards may vary on a case-by-case basis to ensure equal educational opportunity for students with disabilities. The university is not required to modify academic requirements that are essential to its program of study or components of a course that a professor indicates are fundamental to the course. If you have questions about whether and how to accommodate a student, please contact an ASC counselor to consult.

Typical Characteristics of Students with Learning Disabilities
Learning disabilities are characterized by clusters of performance that reflect a significant discrepancy from an individual's overall ability or other areas of academic achievement. Individual characteristics and the degree to which they are manifested vary greatly. Students with learning disabilities may also exhibit exceptional areas of talent.

A student with a learning disability may have weaknesses in any of the following clusters.

- Reading: word attack, comprehension, speed
- Writing: organization, sentence structure, word usage, spelling, grammar, punctuation, handwriting
- Oral language: word retrieval, grammar, meaning, fluency
- Mathematics: basic facts, sequencing, word problems
- Visual-spatial skills: interpreting charts and graphs, following directions, motor coordination
- Note taking: writing while listening, organizing ideas, handwriting, distractibility
- Memory: short-term memory, visual-auditory memory, retention of information
- Social skills: reading nonverbal cues, controlling anger or anxiety related to academic demands

Typical Characteristics of Students with ADHD
Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is one of the most common childhood disorders that in most cases will persist through adolescence and adulthood. Symptoms include difficulty staying focused and paying attention, difficulty controlling behavior, and hyperactivity. ADHD has three subtypes: predominantly hyperactive-impulsive, predominantly inattentive, and combined hyperactive-impulsive and inattentive. With treatment and strategies, most people with ADHD perform well in and out of school.

The following are possible areas of difficulty for an individual with ADHD.

Attention and concentration
- has trouble paying attention in class
- is easily distracted by noise and movement
- is unable to read for long periods of time
- loses the train of thought in a conversation or discussion
- may find it difficult to engage in tasks that require sustained mental effort

Impulsivity
- speaks or acts without planning
- makes decisions without careful analysis, such as on exam questions

Hyperactivity

- is excessively restless and fidgets
- seems "driven by an inner motor"

Organization and study skills

- comes late to class or misses appointments
- does not finish tasks on time
- has difficulty handling more than one task at a time
- loses possessions
- has difficulty organizing ideas for papers and essay exams

More than half of individuals with ADHD also have some form of a learning disability. Therefore, the following list of strategies may be helpful in working with individual students with either or both diagnoses.

Lecture classes

- assist a student in finding a note-taker by making an announcement or sending an e-mail to the class using the script provided by the ASC
- vary the presentation tools used, such as visual aids and lecture outlines posted in advance
- review a sample of a student's lecture notes during office hours to check for effectiveness
- encourage teaching assistants to provide support for lecture material and review for exams

Examinations

- provide information about the type of exam you plan to give (this will also help students request
- appropriate accommodations)
- provide study guides and review sessions for exams
- provide the requested accommodations, such as extended time, if you can
- respond promptly to the online test request form if a student is asking to take an exam in the ASC

Writing papers

- offer to meet with students to clarify writing assignments
- evaluate a rough draft of a paper
- divide long-term assignments into component parts
- encourage the use of the Writing Lab and Writing Center

Suggestions to Share with Students with Learning Disabilities or ADHD

Below are a variety of strategies that have enabled students to be successful.

- work with an ASC counselor to arrange for accommodations and academic support, as needed
- provide each professor faculty an accommodations letter from the ASC early in the semester
- make accommodations arrangements at least one week before each test
- when registering for classes, consider the best schedule and workload for you
- arrange for assistance with lecture notes
- sit in the front of the classroom to reduce distractions
- work with professors or TAs during office hours
- participate in study groups and study sessions
- hire tutors
- seek writing and math assistance from faculty or one of the university tutoring labs
- use a word processor with spellcheck or assistive software to facilitate writing
- work with the assistive technology specialist to arrange for alternate format books or dictation software
- learn the available resources on campus