MEMORANDUM

To: Faculty & Instructional Staff

From: Charles D. Hoornstra, ADA Coordinator
Cathy Trueba, Director, McBurney Disability Resource Center

Date: September 7, 2007

Re: Alternative Assessment for Students with Disabilities

Pursuant to Faculty Document 1071, ensuring that students with disabilities receive appropriate testing accommodations is a shared responsibility between faculty, students and the McBurney Disability Resource Center. Instructional accommodations and alternative testing programs may be necessary in order for qualified students with disabilities to participate in instructional programs. Accommodations such as alternative testing should allow equal opportunity for qualified students to demonstrate their acquired knowledge and competence, and they should not create unfair advantage for the student or undue hardship for faculty.

Faculty are responsible for the educational activities of the institution, including the assessment of student learning in their courses. In accordance with Faculty Document 1071, they are expected to work with students to identify and provide reasonable accommodations for assessment. Like regular exams, most exams taken with accommodations are provided by the faculty or other instructional staff. By providing test accommodations within the department, students with disabilities are included in the testing experience afforded to non-disabled students. Similarly, these students have access to instructors during tests for questions, and last minute changes to the exam process can be communicated. Faculty concerns about test security, grading delays and coordination of exam delivery to and from an alternate site are eliminated.

In general, accommodations that are expected to be provided within the department include exams requiring additional time or those taken in a small group or private setting. Additionally, non-standard test accommodations, (e.g., those requiring a computer or adaptive technology) may also be provided within the department when student or departmental resources are readily available.
The Testing and Evaluation Office (T&E) serves in a limited capacity as a testing site when the department or student is unable to provide nonstandard accommodations or when exceptional circumstances interfering with a faculty member’s ability to arrange accommodations arise. T&E’s proctoring services are limited and primarily intended to support nonstandard test accommodations (e.g., adaptive equipment, a scribe, etc.). If faculty encounter an exceptional circumstance and would like to request assistance from T&E, please contact T&E before referring a student there (262-5863).

Students with disabilities are responsible for informing faculty in a timely manner of their need for such accommodations. Students should consult with faculty as early as possible -- preferably before the beginning of a semester, but not later than the first three weeks of classes. Students who incur or recognize a disability and the need for an accommodation during the semester should immediately consult with the instructor. Throughout all of these steps, the student is responsible for self-advocacy.

The McBurney Disability Resource Center assists faculty and students by verifying disability status, recommending reasonable accommodations, and providing information and training on disability related issues. Determining appropriate procedures for alternative assessment or testing may depend on the student's disability and history of accommodation; on the nature of the course material; on the design, content, and purpose of the assessment; and on the testing environment. Students having previous experience with alternative testing may also provide helpful suggestions to faculty.

Testing and assessment in courses may measure knowledge of course materials, proficiency in skills, or both. Students who have acquired such knowledge or skills may not be able to demonstrate their competency under traditional testing conditions. For example, a student whose disability reduces reading and/or writing speed may not be able to demonstrate proficiency in timed tests. If the skill or knowledge being tested does not directly require timed performance, extended time can accommodate such a student without creating unfair advantage. Similarly, a student with a visual disability may rely on audio, large print, or Braille in order to read an examination. Alternative response formats may need to be arranged, including (but not limited to) oral, large-print, or scribe- or computer-generated tests. Consideration should also be given to those students who, for documented health reasons, need to have the date and time of the test altered.

Most accommodations for alternative testing are relatively simple. For example, students may come earlier to start an extended-time examination, or large-print versions of examinations can be printed at the same time that originals are prepared. If a faculty member questions the appropriateness of a recommendation for alternative testing, he or she may consult with the McBurney Disability Resource Center in order to seek a mutually agreeable modification. If such an agreement cannot be reached, the student has a right to appeal. The faculty member may request that the departmental Access and Accommodation Resource Coordinator provide information to the student about initiating a formal appeal. Until the appeal is resolved, the faculty member should provide the best possible accommodation without assuming an undue burden or granting a demonstrably unfair advantage to the student.
Throughout the AT process, the student’s right to confidentiality shall be maintained. See the McBurney website (www.mcburney.wisc.edu) for more information about confidentiality with regard to disability documentation and the accommodation process.

If you have any questions regarding a student’s accommodations, please contact the McBurney Disability Resource Center at 263-2741. For questions regarding this policy or others pertaining to disability and accommodation, please contact Chuck Hoornstra, ADA Coordinator, at 263-7400.

Charles D. Hoornstra  
ADA Coordinator

Cathy Trubba  
McBurney Disability Resource Center