

ACCOMMODATING STUDENTS IN NEED OF A DISTRACTION-REDUCED ENVIRONMENT FOR TEST-TAKING

Faculty Guidance from ADS

There are a number of students who have disabilities that impact their capacity for sustaining cognitive focus – especially during test-taking – and thus have the accommodation of “testing in a distraction-reduced environment.”

For these students, it can be particularly challenging to be surrounded by test-takers who they can see squirming in their seats, bouncing their knees, erasing, turning pages, and (worst of all) getting up and turning in their tests long before the end is in sight for the students with this accommodation. This can have the impact of shifting their focus from what’s being asked of them to what’s going on with other students – even when they have a solid grasp of the material being assessed.

Professors, therefore, may think it best to have students with this accommodation take their exams in the Proctoring Center. But this may not actually be necessary – or even ideal.

BENEFITS TO HAVING STUDENTS TAKE THEIR TESTS WITH (OR NEAR) THEIR PROFESSORS

Some students prefer to be able to ask questions directly to their professors (and to not have to wait for a relay system to receive their answers). Some also prefer to take their exams in the same place where they learned much of the information they’re being tested on.

Faculty may also prefer to have students in or near their classroom, so that you can:

- be available if there are any questions or a need for clarification
- easily relay any new information that arises during an exam
- autonomously adapt to changing circumstances (such as needing to postpone an exam)

When appropriate, consider these strategies for implementing this accommodation:

1. Turn desks on the perimeter of the class to face the wall and put some books on them to “reserve them” for the student(s) with this accommodation.
2. Ask if the student(s) would like earplugs or to put a cardboard trifold “privacy stand” on their desk. (If so, they can obtain these from ADS.)
3. If there is an empty nearby classroom, consider having the student(s) test there – especially if there will be another class using your classroom after you. Just be sure that other room will be available for the duration of the student’s extended time.