



Guidelines for Reasonable Accommodations for Spelling

Correct spelling at the university level is expected of all students. However, students with a specific learning disability, which impacts spelling, may be eligible to receive a [reasonable](#) accommodation for in-class assignments and in-class exams. Typical accommodations have included spell-check devices or not penalizing a student for spelling errors. The academic decision of whether or not spelling is essential to the course is typically the prerogative of the instructor and/or academic unit involved. However, this decision must be made within legal parameters.

If the faculty member is concerned this accommodation is [unreasonable](#) because it will lower standards, compromise an essential component of or fundamentally alter a course or program, such concerns should be addressed to DAS upon receipt of the “Notification of Academic Accommodations” email. The determination that an accommodation is unreasonable is an institutional decision that must meet legal and educational requirements. Faculty members should not unilaterally render and attempt to implement a judgment that an accommodation is unreasonable.

Process

- DAS will notify faculty if the student’s documentation indicates specific cognitive difficulties that would support the need for spelling accommodation.
- The faculty member should contact DAS if s/he has any concerns regarding this accommodation.
- If the faculty member believes this accommodation is not reasonable, then the process for an [accommodation dispute](#) should be followed.
- Faculty must complete an Alternative Testing Agreement and should identify the method that will be used to accommodate the disability: spell check device or the student will not be penalized for spelling errors.
- If the student/faculty selects a hand-held spell checker as the accommodation, the student will be held to the same spelling standards as other students.
- The spell checking device should not provide access to definitions or synonyms.
- This accommodation pertains to in-class assignments and in-class exams.
- Students must select this accommodation when scheduling course exams.

It is important to note:

- Given the specific analysis for each course, it is entirely possible that the use of a spelling aid may be allowable for some exams, and not allowable for others.
- DAS will consider requests for use of a spelling aid on a case-by-case basis.
- DAS will not approve use of spelling aides as reasonable accommodations when using them undermines academic standards.