

Accommodations

Northeastern University has a legal and moral commitment not to discriminate against qualified students with disabilities. To ensure that students with disabilities obtain access to the full range of activities at the law school, Northeastern is required to provide reasonable accommodations, if requested, so long as the changes and modifications requested do not fundamentally alter its educational program or result in an undue burden on the institution. The primary contacts for disability access at the law school are the associate dean for student and academic services and the associate dean for belonging.

Seeking Accommodations in Class

Students who are admitted to the law school are encouraged to make a decision as soon as possible whether to disclose a disability and request reasonable accommodations. In deciding whether to disclose a disability and to seek accommodation from the law school, students may want to discuss their disability confidentially with the associate dean for belonging. If the student seeks to discuss these issues confidentially, this advisor will respect the request for nondisclosure, unless instructed otherwise. This means that the student's confidential communication will not amount to a formal notice of disability/request for accommodation to the law school.

Information and test results that students provide to the Office of Academic and Student Affairs will be kept confidential within that office and separate from the student's academic records. Similarly, conversations about disabilities shall be confidential. At the student's request, the associate dean for student and academic services and ASA will assist the student in disclosing appropriate information to faculty, administrators, and staff. Such disclosure will be aimed at receiving reasonable accommodations and will otherwise be confidential. Such disclosure will not adversely affect academic evaluations.

If a student might benefit from some type of accommodation—including instructional, course load, or exam modifications, auxiliary services such as interpreters or note takers, or other accommodations—the student should contact the associate dean for student and academic services or the associate dean for belonging as soon as possible to discuss next steps, including outreach to Disability Access Services for further screening and assessment. DAS provides free support services including advocacy, assistance in obtaining interpreters, exam modifications, and other accommodations to all students with disabilities. For more information about DAS, the process for requesting accommodations, and DAS documentation requirements, visit the DAS website (<https://disabilityaccessservices.northeastern.edu/>) or the DAS student portal.

Seeking Accommodations on Co-op

Because the school's co-operative education program is part of the academic program, the law school has an obligation to ensure that qualified students with a disability have an equal educational opportunity to participate in the co-op program. The nature of the obligation is complicated by the fact that students on co-op have two statuses, one as a student and one as an employee.

With regard to the student status, the law school is obligated to ensure that the co-op process as described in the co-op rules (including access to job postings, on-campus interviews, and training sessions and materials) reasonably accommodates the diverse needs of students with disabilities so that they have equal access to the range of services and opportunities available for all students.

With regard to the employment status, the employer is responsible for providing reasonable accommodations to students on co-op; the law school cannot and does not assume the obligation to ensure an employer's compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Co-op employers have an exclusive and independent legal obligation under the ADA and other applicable state and federal law not to discriminate against qualified individuals with a disability in any employment decisions. For example, employers may not make pre-hiring inquiries about a co-op applicant's disability, although in some instances a postemployment inquiry is permissible. Once hired, a student may decide whether to waive confidentiality and disclose a disability to request an accommodation that the student deems necessary and appropriate. The employer is under no legal obligation to accommodate the student unless the student requests an accommodation and provides any required documentation. Once the student does this, it is the legal obligation of the employer to provide a reasonable accommodation. Co-op office advisors, the associate dean for student and academic services, and the associate dean for belonging are available to consult with students regarding such matters.

Because of the law school's obligation to ensure nondiscrimination in the co-op program and because of its interest in ensuring that students successfully complete each co-op experience, the law school may request that students on co-op provide information about whether they have requested a reasonable accommodation from the employer and, if so, what the nature of the accommodation is and whether the employer is meeting its obligation. In these circumstances, it may be desirable for the student to waive confidentiality in communications between the employer and the school so that they can communicate about effective accommodations and compliance.

If a student on co-op experiences any problem with obtaining a reasonable accommodation from their employer, in addition to notifying the employer, the student should immediately notify the co-op office and/or the associate dean for belonging so that adjustments, if possible, can be negotiated. Without this notification, the law school may not be able to intervene with the student or the employer to assist with compliance.

If a co-op employer is reasonably believed by the law school to have discriminated against a co-op student on the basis of a disability, among other options, the law school may assist the student in obtaining an alternate placement or making another adjustment. The law school has the right to suspend or remove an employer from the co-op program if the school reasonably believes that the employer has violated Northeastern's antidiscrimination policy or is unwilling or unable to comply with our policies in the future.

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Students are strongly encouraged to explore these disability-related issues in advance of a co-op with the assistant dean for the Center for Co-op and Professional Advancement and/or the associate dean for belonging.