

Abilene Christian University
Alpha Scholars Program

Student Handbook

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INTRODUCTION

Abilene Christian University is committed to assisting student access to the University's academic, cultural, and recreational activities. Alpha Scholars incorporates the university's Disability Services Program and a federally funded Student Support Services Program into one program with the purpose of helping qualified students to reduce barriers that might otherwise impede their success in higher education. This guidebook is designed to acquaint you with the two functions of Alpha Scholars and the benefits and requirements of each program.

Each student has a unique need for services. The Alpha staff takes great care to evaluate your needs and recommend services designed to address those needs. Services that are typically offered include tutoring in academic skills and specific subject areas, academic advising, counseling for academic success, assistance in applying for financial aid, and career counseling. Students with documented disabilities may also receive assistance in securing appropriate classroom accommodations to help minimize the effect of their disabilities on their academic performance.

In short, empowering students to choose success is what Alpha Scholars is all about. It is our goal to provide the type of assistance that affords you, regardless of your background or disability, an equal opportunity to succeed in college-level studies. This mission fully embraces the overarching mission of Abilene Christian University, educating students for Christian service and leadership throughout the world. Participation in Alpha does not guarantee academic success; individual choices and abilities are still the primary elements in any individual's success. What we hope participation in Alpha will do is provide tools and/or incentives that will help equip you with what you need to realistically assess your strengths and make choices that will utilize those strengths in accomplishing your goals.

INFORMATION

Student Support Services (SSS)

Student Support Services (SSS) is a federally funded program designed to provide academic assistance to students who might be considered to be “disadvantaged” in a higher-education setting.

Just as the Pell Grant program is designed to help qualified students afford a college education, Student Support Services aims to provide a way for students who have the ability to complete a college education to compensate for elements that may be missing or inadequate in their academic, social, or financial preparation for college. These missing elements are generally related to individual circumstances and do not reflect negligence or lack of commitment on the part of the student.

The services offered through SSS include study skills and content area tutoring, counseling for academic success, assessment of learning styles and strategies, and assistance in finding financial aid or advising in financial literacy. One primary function of SSS is to give students who might feel less-than-comfortable in a higher education setting a support group of people who are ready to listen to concerns and help with finding resources to alleviate those concerns. Concerns might be academic (“I’m not doing as well as I’d like in math”), goal-related (“I don’t know what a college degree is good for” or “I really don’t know what I want to do with my life”), or social (“I’m not getting along very well with my roommate”).

The stated goals of SSS are to increase student retention in college, to help students improve their grade point averages (GPAs), and to improve graduation rates among qualified students.

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Since SSS is funded by a U.S. Department of Education Grant, certain documentation is required of all participants, and the number of students who may be served through this program each year is limited to 200.

Participating in Student Support Services will benefit you in the following ways:

- You will learn more about yourself as a learner-whether you prefer visual, auditory, or hands-on learning, what type of environment will give you an optimum learning experience, how your motivation to learn compares with that of other college students and what you can do to improve your motivation and persistence.
- You will be able to receive study skills and content area tutoring free of charge. Your tutors will understand and work with you in accordance with your individual learning styles and strategies.
- You will be eligible to receive coaching for academic success free of charge. (This will focus on how you know when you completely understand something and how you can “program” your brain to understand and remember what you study.)
- You will meet other students from backgrounds similar to yours and have an opportunity to learn what has helped them succeed and to share your best strategies for success.
- You will come to know professional ACU staff members who will help you feel more comfortable as a member of the “college scene.”
- You will have an opportunity to receive specialized advising on financial aid opportunities and financial literacy.
- You can receive help with deciding what major to select and how to complete all of the requirements for your baccalaureate degree in the most time-efficient manner.
- All services will be available to you without charge for as long as you have a need for them until you have graduated from the university.
- You will know that you have at least one ACU staff member praying for you every day.
- Alpha Scholars staff members focus their work on finding ways to empower you to choose learning strategies and attitudes that will enable you to achieve success in your college work.

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How do I qualify for Student Support Services?

You qualify for Student Support Services if you meet at least one of the following criteria:

- Neither of your parents (or guardians) had obtained a baccalaureate degree prior to or during the time you were growing up in their home.
- Your family's taxable income does not exceed levels determined annually by the U.S. Department of Education. Generally speaking, students who qualify for the Pell grant will usually also qualify for Student Support Services. However, since eligibility for SSS is based on taxable income, not adjusted gross income, some students who do not qualify for the Pell grant may qualify for participation in SSS.
- You are a student with a disability. Your disability must be documented with ACU's Disabled Student Services and must impact your academic performance in some way.

You must demonstrate a need for services. Your need could be related to the grades you are receiving in your classes, your ACT or SAT score, a referral from a professor or parent or even yourself. Your need for services could also be prompted by your concerns about how you will pay for your education or how your education will influence your career choice.

What is expected of me as an SSS participant?

In order to maintain good standing as an SSS participant and be eligible to receive any or all of the benefits of this program, you should be able to commit to the following actions.

- Complete all parts of the application form and submit all documentation required for participation in the program. (This would include income verification and disability documentation, if applicable).
- Complete all recommended assessments within two weeks of the beginning of the semester in which you enroll in the program.
- Meet with your assigned Alpha advisor to discuss your individual needs and to design an action plan for each semester you are an active participant (1/2 hour to 1 hour appointment at the beginning of the semester).
- Meet with your Alpha advisor according to the following schedule:

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- Once a week if you are a new participant or you are on academic probation (15-minute appointment; may be via phone, email, or personal contact)
- Once a month if you are a returning participant (15-minute appointment; may be via phone, email, or personal contact).

Students who do not meet all of the above requirements will not be considered active program participants.

Disabled Student Services (DSS)

What is Disabled Student Services?

Disabled Student Services (DSS) is the office at Abilene Christian University that is committed to assist students with disabilities in acquiring appropriate academic accommodations.

The types of accommodations facilitated by this office may include but are not limited to the following:

- Extended time on examinations (not unlimited time)
- A distraction-reduced environment for taking tests
- Note takers
- Use of tape recorder in class
- Preferential seating in the classroom
- Textbooks on tape or in Braille
- Readers or Scribes (technology-based whenever possible)
- Sign language interpreter in class
- Large print material
- Use of assistive technology devices
- Classroom handouts in alternate form
- Ability to move about during class in a manner that does not disturb other class members

The purpose of accommodations is to give students with disabilities an equal opportunity to demonstrate their mastery of the college curriculum. Each student with a disability must provide documentation that indicates clearly what accommodations are appropriate in his or her individual circumstance. It is the student's responsibility to request specific accommodations and to follow the

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policies and procedures for acquiring those accommodations as specified in this handbook.

How do I get into Disabled Student Services?

In order to receive academic accommodations at Abilene Christian University, you must complete the following steps.

- Provide current documentation (no more than three years old) that specifies the following things:
 - The specific diagnosis of your disability according to DSM-IV or other recognized medical or psychological criteria.
 - The manner in which your disability was determined.
 - The specific accommodations you need in order to have an equal opportunity to demonstrate your mastery of curriculum material.
- Complete an Application for Disability Accommodations.
- Meet individually with the Director of Disabled Student Services to review program policies and procedures.
- Meet with the DSS Coordinator to coordinate services and accommodations (exams, notetaking, etc).
- Send accommodation sheets to the professors from whom you wish to receive accommodations.
- Follow all other procedures related to the specific accommodations you have requested. (Those procedures are explained later in this handbook.)

What accommodations can I get through Disabled Student Services?

What follows is a listing and a description of several specific accommodations available at ACU for students with disabilities. This list is neither comprehensive nor complete. Specific accommodations provided depend on individual need and documentation. Accommodation requests that are not supported by the individual's documentation or those that are deemed to create an undue burden on the university will be denied.

Adaptive Equipment and Software

- Abilene Christian University provides adaptive equipment and software on a limited basis to students whose documentation indicates a need for such equipment. For example, a computer equipped with dictation software and a large screen is located in the Alpha Disabilities Office. These

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technologies are constantly evolving, so new options may be available each semester.

- In addition, the Library houses several types of adaptive equipment.
- Training is required in order to use most of the adaptive equipment and software. Be sure to schedule training sessions with appropriate personnel early in the semester so that you will be able to use the equipment for projects as they come due during the semester.
- Individual students are responsible for acquiring any unusual equipment or software that is related to a specific disability. State Departments of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services may be willing to provide this type of equipment. Undergraduate students with disabilities often qualify for services, including scholarships, through programs offered by these departments.
- If you have a specific need for adaptive equipment or software, check with the Director of Disabled Student Services. Every attempt will be made to accommodate reasonable requests.

Sign Language Interpreters

Hearing impaired students may request interpreters for classes and other school activities. ACU interpreters are trained in the use of American Sign Language.

Note Takers

Students whose documentation indicates a need for assistance with taking notes in class will receive this accommodation from volunteer students enrolled in the same class as the student. Professors assist in identifying and referring volunteer note takers to DSS. Students using this accommodation MUST a) be present in class, and b) take their own notes - the extra copy is a supplement. Alpha cannot guarantee the "quality" of peer notes, but can assist in improving the quality. A copy of these instructions is included in the Appendix E of this handbook.

Readers/Scribes

Visually impaired students or students with some types of reading or writing disabilities may request readers or scribes. Technology is used wherever possible to provide these types of accommodations. Computers that can read text aloud and respond to voice input are located in several places across campus. Students who need these accommodations on an ongoing basis are referred to the State Vocational Rehabilitation office for assistance in purchasing hardware and software to address their specific needs.

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Library Assistance

ACU librarians are available to help all students with specific questions and needs in using library resources. If library staff is unable to provide appropriate services, Alpha personnel will assist students whose documentation indicates a need for assistance with library resources.

Exam Accommodations

The most common form of accommodation is extended time for exams. This does not typically apply to quizzes or other “in-class” work, but rather refers to timed exams that are designed to take an entire class-period. These exams may be accommodated by the professor, if she/he prefers to do so. Most faculty prefer to allow Alpha to proctor the exams. Specific instructions for accommodated exams can be found in Appendix D of this handbook.

Confidentiality and Release of Information

- Disability-related information for students at ACU is housed in the Alpha Scholars Office.
- Disability-related information is kept in individual files and housed in secure filing cabinets.
- Access to disability-related files is restricted to Alpha Scholars professional staff and university officials with a “need to know” restriction.
- The “need to know” restriction does not permit university faculty access to disability-related files. According to guidelines established by the Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD), faculty “need to know” is restricted to verification through the Disabled Student Services Office of a student’s claim to need classroom-related disability accommodations. Students with disabilities, however, are encouraged to share information with their professors in order to clarify their specific needs and find creative ways to address those needs.
- Disability-related information is released only with the student’s written permission or in accordance with FERPA.
- A student may request to review the contents of his/her own file. This must be done with the program counselor or other qualified staff member present. All information in student files is the property of the Disabled Student Services Office.

Steps in Receiving Disability Accommodations

Submit an Application for Disability Accommodations. Following are general guidelines for notifying the university of a disability requiring accommodations. More specific documentation guidelines can be found in Appendix A, B and C.

1. If you are requesting tutoring or counseling, you must submit a separate application for admission to Student Support Services. Students may receive services from either Disabled Student Services or Student Support Services, depending on qualifying factors and need.
2. Provide the Disabled Student Services Office with documentation of your disability.
 - a. ACU follows the guidelines for documentation developed by the Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD). These guidelines require documentation of a disability to:
 - i. demonstrate an impact on a major life activity,
 - ii. support the request for specific accommodations, and
 - iii. be the result of an in-depth assessment by a qualified professional.
 - b. In general, testing must be current (within three years), comprehensive, and include a specific diagnosis. Each accommodation recommended by the evaluator should include a rationale.
3. Schedule an appointment with the Director of Alpha Scholars to discuss your specific needs.

How to Request Specific Accommodations each Semester

1. Meet with the Disability Services Coordinator to coordinate any necessary accommodations for the new semester.
2. You are expected to discuss your specific needs with each professor. Email your accommodation sheets (sent each semester) to your faculty, and discuss any specifics with them throughout the entire semester.

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Services Available from Other Providers

Testing for Learning Disabilities

Students who need current assessment for a learning disability are referred to the Testing Clinic of the Psychology Department. There is a fee for this assessment. Students are responsible for payment of this fee.

Tutoring

Students with disabilities who need tutoring may receive this service from the Student Support Services program at ACU or from some departments on campus. Student Support Services personnel include both professional and peer tutors who are specifically trained to meet the needs of students with various types of disabilities. SSS tutoring focuses on helping students develop study skills that will lead to independence in accomplishing learning tasks. Departmental tutors focus on helping students with specific content area information.

Coaching for Personal and Academic Development

Different types of coaching are available to students with disabilities from a variety of campus resource areas. Students who need help with choosing a major or selecting a career direction may be referred to the Center for Career and Academic Development. Student Support Services offers advice in selecting classes each semester as well as academic and personal coaching. The ACU Counseling Center as well as the Marriage and Family Therapy Program provide other counseling services that could be helpful to students with disabilities. Fees may be associated with some of these services; however, all services through Alpha Scholars have no charges attached.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES – SSS

Student Support Services (SSS) Policies

Application Guidelines

SSS is a federally funded grant, and as such requires specific information related to eligibility. Students who wish to receive SSS services must fill out the application completely so that the program can accurately determine eligibility.

Enrolled ACU students who meet the following criteria and demonstrate a need for academic assistance qualify for participation in Alpha Scholars Program:

1. First-generation college student. This means that neither parent (guardian) held a baccalaureate degree up until the time that the student applied for Alpha. This is documented by a question on the application form.
2. Student from an economically disadvantaged background. This is a student whose family income does not exceed 150% of the poverty level as established annually by the U. S. Census Bureau. This is documented by the student's submission of a signed document that includes the number of dependents in the family and the family taxable income for the most recent year. A copy of the student's most recent income tax form is requested to support the signed statement, but not required. Additional supporting documents may include a copy of the FAFSA, financial aid data from the Financial Aid Office at ACU, or other data, but are not required.
3. Student with a disability. Students with documented physical, psychological, or learning disabilities qualify for participation in Alpha Scholars Program. Documentation from a qualified professional should describe in clear detail the functional limitations of major life activities that represent the student's disability. Self-report is sometimes accepted as sufficient documentation for accommodations, but is not accepted as sufficient documentation for SSS eligibility.

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Applicants must sign a waiver allowing ACU to submit information on the student's progress to the Department of Education. These data include retention data, academic standing data, and graduation data.

Students with disabilities who do not have sufficient documentation may be required to get additional testing, even though they are receiving accommodations from the university. If a student will not qualify for SSS as first-generation or low-income, disability documentation must be complete before the student may receive services funded through SSS.

Students who apply for DSS, but do not apply for SSS, will only need to complete documentation and application for DSS. These files will be kept in an alternate database, and not entered into the SSS database.

Admission In SSS

The SSS Program has specific limits imposed by the federal laws authorizing funding. The Program cannot serve more than 200 students at a time, and also requires the university to assure that the Program meets certain percentages within that 200: a certain percentage must be first generation AND low income, a certain percentage of disabled must be low income, etc. Additionally, the Program is required to prioritize admission into SSS based on academic need. *As a result, not all eligible students who apply can be admitted into SSS.*

Students who apply for SSS will be evaluated for academic need, eligibility, and space within the program. Incoming freshmen will be notified by September 15th of their status with the Program. There are three possibilities...

1. Admission to the program, pending an intake with the Associate Director
2. Deferred admission to the program, pending room for the eligible student
3. Ineligible for the Program, and referral to other campus/community resources.

Students with disabilities may be eligible for DSS services, but not for SSS services. Once a student is admitted, they will remain a participant in the Program unless they discontinue using the services provided.

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Intake

Students who are offered admission to the program should take full advantage of the services and advising available through the program. Once admitted, students must complete an "intake" with the Associate Director no later than October 15th. Failure to complete the intake may mean that the student's spot is offered to one on the "deferred admission" list.

Additionally, students who are past participants may continue to receive services as long as they a) remain enrolled in ACU and b) complete an annual intake with the Associate Director.

The intake is the Program's best opportunity to get a sense of what specific needs exist, and what interventions can best serve both the individual student and the Program's student body. The intake is relatively short, and can be completed by continuing students online (new students must do the intake face-to-face).

Services

Tutoring

Tutoring is provided through SSS by peer-tutors who are trained according to the College Reading and Learning Association standards for certification. Participants can receive peer tutoring free-of-charge. While some tutors specialize in a specific field, all tutors are trained and certified to provide assistance in any subject area. Participants should not expect that a tutor will teach material. It is also unreasonable to hold a tutor responsible for one's grade on an assignment. Tutoring works best when it is frequent, consistent, and involves good outside work.

A participant can "walk-in" for unscheduled tutoring between the hours of 12-3 on Monday through Friday. Specific tutors can be scheduled for hours between 8 am to 10 pm, pending the approval of the tutor coordinator. Peer tutors are students as well; participants should be respectful of the boundaries that good tutors need to protect.

SSS will not pay for tutoring outside of the peer-mentor model. The Writing Center provides excellent support for writing-specific assignments, and the

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departments provide tutoring as well. Costs associated with outside tutoring are the responsibility of the student.

Financial Aid/Financial Literacy

Participants can receive specialized support in finding and applying for additional scholarship and grant opportunities to minimize loan burden. These services include help in research for specific funding sources, help in application, and assistance in developing good essays/narratives for these funding options.

Participants can also receive advising in financial literacy, which includes a) good budget management for college students, b) understanding credit, and c) advice on how to make the most of one's money. These services are free to the participant.

Academic Advising

ACU places degree plan advising directly in the departments in the academic programs. Participants who wish to enroll in classes must meet with their academic advisor to do so.

SSS can, however, provide a great deal of support to students in advising, including help in choosing/changing majors, advice on scheduling and course selection, support in academic management, and support in study skills and organization for optimal performance.

Participants should meet with Alpha advisors before meeting with degree plan specialists to register.

Other SSS Services

SSS can also provide additional support to participants in areas such as ...

- Graduate School Admission and Preparation
- Counseling
- Special Academic Events
- Undergraduate Research

Participants should discuss these and other services with the Associate Director.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES – DSS

Disabled Student Services (DSS) Policies

Students who are registered with Disabled Student Services are responsible for knowing and understanding these policies.

Guidelines for Documentation

It is the responsibility of the student to provide information that verifies that the student's condition meets the definition of a disability as defined by applicable laws, which require that requests for services for students with disabilities be conserved on an individual case-by-case basis. Sources of information used for determining accommodations may include a student's self-report, direct observation and interaction with the student, and/or documentation from qualified evaluators or professionals.

Student Self-Report:

Students should complete the Accommodation Request Form that provides the student an opportunity to describe disabilities and accommodations they are hoping to receive. Students may supplement the Accommodation Request Form with an additional narrative including information about experiences related to specific disabilities, barriers faced, and/or previous accommodations.

Documentation:

Disability related documentation should provide information on the functional impact of the disability so that effective accommodations can be identified. Criteria for the source, scope, and content of documentation differ by disability type. Documentation may include assessments, reports, and/or letters from qualified evaluators, professionals, or institutions. Common sources of documentation are health care providers, psychologists, diagnosticians, and/or information from a previous school (ARD documents, testing, IEPs).

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Suggested Documented Elements:

1. Typed on letterhead, dated, and signed by a qualified professional
2. Diagnostic statement with any related diagnostic methodology (diagnostic criteria and/or procedures)
3. Functional limitations or symptoms
4. Severity and/or expected progression
5. Current medications and related side-effects
6. Current and/or past accommodations
7. Recommended accommodations AND rationale as to why each recommendation is related to the student's functional limitations

The ADA Compliance Officer at ACU will consider all relevant information provided in documentation. Documentation will be reviewed on an individual, case-by-case basis. If you have any questions about these documentation guidelines, please contact Alpha Scholars Program at 325-674-2667, or by mail at:

Alpha Scholars Program
ACU Box 29204
Abilene, TX 79699

Documentation of Attention Deficit Disorder

The Alpha Scholars Program is responsible for providing students with disabilities equal access to their education. To receive academic accommodations under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), students at Abilene Christian University must provide documentation from an appropriately trained evaluator demonstrating a disability as defined by the federal legislation noted above.

Federal law requires that students with disabilities be considered on a case-by-case basis. The form included in Appendix A is adapted from documents developed by professionals from various organizations who serve students with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). This form is required of students who wish to receive accommodations for ADD/ADHD in the interest of assuring that documentation of ADHD (1) demonstrates an impact on a major life activity, (2) is appropriate to verify eligibility, and (3) supports the request for academic accommodations. By providing the information outlined in Appendix A, the evaluator will assist us in being able to serve the student effectively. The ADA Compliance Officer at ACU will make final determination of whether

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appropriate and reasonable accommodations are warranted and can be provided to the individual student.

The documentation must reflect the following:

- A. **The healthcare professional(s) conducting the assessment and/or making the diagnosis must be qualified to do so.** The diagnosing professional cannot be related to the student.
- B. **All parts of the form must be completed as thoroughly as possible.** Inadequate information, incomplete answers, and/or illegible handwriting may delay the eligibility review process by necessitating follow-up contact for clarification
- C. **The healthcare professional should attach any reports providing additional related information (e.g., psychoeducational testing, neuropsychological test results).** If a comprehensive diagnostic report is available that provides the requested information, copies of that report can be submitted for documentation instead of this form. Please do not provide case notes or rating scales without a narrative that explains the results, recommendations, and functional limitations of the subject.
- D. **After completing this form, mail or fax it to the Alpha Scholars Program.** The information you provide will be kept in the student's confidential file in the Alpha Scholars Program. Our address is ACU Box 29204, Abilene, TX 79699. Our fax number is 325-674-6847.

Exam Accommodations

Disability Services facilitates test accommodations in cooperation with classroom instructors. In order to receive accommodations, you must have registered with the DSS Office and you must complete a specific request for each test you wish to take with accommodations.

At the beginning of each semester, you will receive (via email) an accommodations approval letter. You must forward this email to any of the faculty from whom you wish to receive accommodations. You should also discuss your need with each professor.

You have three options for each test:

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1. Choose not to utilize test accommodations for a particular test or class and take the test with the regular class.
2. Arrange with the instructor to take the test with accommodations under his or her supervision. The faculty have the right to require you to take the accommodated exam with them – though they usually prefer to use Alpha to proctor accommodated exams.
3. Take the test with DSS and follow the proper procedures for scheduling your test (See Appendix D).

Options 2 and 3 require that you coordinate accommodations with the Disabilities Coordinator each semester. If you do not notify the Coordinator that you have an exam (or do not give sufficient notice, described below), you are indicating that you wish to take the exam unaccommodated.

Students who wish to receive accommodations for exams must notify Alpha in advance for each exam. Students who fail to notify Alpha according to the requirements described below should plan to take their exam unaccommodated.

Signing Up For Exams

1. For exams during the semester, Alpha requires 3 business days advance notice. This rule applies to changes to schedules as well.
2. For final exams, Alpha requires 2 weeks advanced notice (14 days prior to “Dead Day”).
3. Students *must* take exams at the same time that the exam is proctored in the classroom. Exceptions to this may include...
 - a. Overlap of exams due to extended time and/or chapel
 - b. Classroom exams proctored after normal Alpha hours of operation.
4. All exams must be completed during Alpha hours of operation. M-F, 8am - 5pm. Final exams will be extended into evening hours.
5. Student may notify Alpha of upcoming exams in two ways...
 - a. Visit the Alpha’s Testing Center and fill out a “purple sheet”
 - b. Fill out an online “purple sheet” from the Alpha website (acu.edu/alpha)
6. Students must notify the coordinator directly (in person or via phone) of changes in exam time.
7. If student is *eligible* for a reader, computer or scribe, these must be requested at the time of sign-up.

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Conduct During Exams in Alpha

1. Students must be on time for their exams. If a student is more than 15 minutes late the exam will be returned to the instructor.
2. The only items allowed in the testing room are approved exam materials and water in a clear bottle. Students must put away all bags, hats, and electronic devices, and store them in the coordinator's office.
3. Students must supply their own exam materials, just as would be expected in class. (This includes scantrons, calculators, pencils, etc.)
4. All exams will be monitored by proctors and/or cameras.
5. Students found cheating will be required to surrender the exam and any other materials used during the exam and the instructor will be notified.
6. Students must complete their exams within their approved testing time.
7. Student will be seated according to the discretion of the disability coordinator.
8. Students who wish to use a calculator owned by Alpha (if approved by faculty) must leave an ID or cell phone with the coordinator.
9. Readers may not provide any form of feedback during an exam.
10. If a student's exam is not in Alpha's Testing Center at the scheduled time, Alpha will provide the student with a receipt showing they appeared on time for the appropriate exam. Alpha will work with the student and instructor to reschedule the exam.

Notetaking Accommodations

Notetaking assistance is a common accommodation used by students with a variety of disabilities, such as visual impairments, hearing impairments, writing impairments, or processing auditory information in an efficient manner. Depending on the content and format of a class, a variety of different accommodations (or combination of accommodations) can be applied to assist the student with a disability.

The student is responsible to learn independently (take their own set of notes), and to demonstrate mastery of material independently. A student with a disability may, however, require assistance in capturing outlines and lectures in written format. The following guidelines may be apropos...

1. Copies of Powerpoints/Overheads – May instructors post outlines or presentation slides on course websites. If these are detailed enough to

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- summarize the lecture content (and in an accessible format), a student may not need additional notetaking assistance.
2. Digital Photographs of Displayed Material – Instructors may prefer to allow students needing assistance to take digital photographs of screens, blackboards, or whiteboards.
 3. Copies of Teachers Notes – Instructors may, at their discretion, choose to share their personal lecture notes or lecture outline as a notetaking assistance tool. It is not reasonable for a student to demand these notes – it is, however, reasonable for a student to request them.
 4. Copies of Notes from Another Student – When presentation outlines are not available or much of the information discussed is verbal, a copy of another student’s notes may be needed as an accommodation.
 - a. The student may know another student in the course and arrange to get copies of those notes.
 - b. The student may request that the instructor request whether a student would be willing to share notes with a student that needs assistance.
 - c. If the instructor is not able to find a volunteer, she/he should contact Alpha to arrange for a tutor or volunteer to attend class to take notes
 5. Students who are absent or do not take notes independently should not expect to receive notes from a peer.

Recording Lectures Accommodations

Under Section 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act, institutions of higher education must provide auxiliary aids and services to students with documented disabilities and not deny equal access to the institution's programs, courses and activities. For a variety of reasons, some students are not able to take adequate notes during class. Audio recorders are a legitimate auxiliary aid to supplement or substitute note taking for some students with disabilities.

Students should seek the permission of their instructor before using any recording devices to record lectures, discussions, etc. If such permission is granted, neither the resulting recordings nor any form of copies of transcripts of the recordings may be used for any other purpose than as a replacement for notes taken in class.

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Lectures are considered the intellectual property of the instructor. Students who share recordings (or post recordings online) are in violation of the academic integrity provision of the Student Code of Conduct, and may face sanctions up to and including dismissal from the university.

Permission to make recordings will not be withheld if such recordings are reasonably necessary to accommodate a student's disability as defined by law.

A note about classes that involve self-disclosure from students:

In some cases, instructors may object to the use of an audio-recording device in classes (or portions of classes) that involve personal discussion and self-disclosure by students, fearing that audio recorders will inhibit the free exchange of information and potentially violate students' right to privacy. However, because the use of a recording device is necessary as a substitute for note-taking by the accommodated student, it would be unfair to require the accommodated student to stop recording while allowing other students to continue taking notes. Therefore:

- At the discretion of the instructor both note-taking and audio-recording may be prohibited during classes or portions of classes which involve personal discussion and self-disclosure.
- As an alternative in such cases, the accommodated student may need to be provided with copies of notes made by a designated note taker. Such notes should refer only to principles, theories, and techniques demonstrated within the context of those discussions, and not to specific content or personal details that may have been shared in such a forum.

Appeals Process for Disability-Related Requests

In situations where the student does not agree with a decision made in light of a disability, there are specific processes that apply. For appeals that are not directly related to disability (change of grade, exceptions to university policy, etc.), the student should refer to the Abilene Christian University Student Handbook.

Determination of Accommodations

The ADA and other regulations require the university to consider requests for accommodation related to disability on a case-by-case basis. If a student requests an accommodation that is not approved, and wishes to appeal that decision, the student (not the parent) may appeal *in the following order...*

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1. Ask the compliance officer to reconsider – any additional documentation supporting the request should be submitted, along with additional information related to performance, precedent, and conditions relating to the disability.
2. Ask for a review by committee – the disabilities compliance officer will convene an ad hoc committee to review all pertinent documentation and review the request for accommodations.
3. Ask for a review by the Provost's office – the disabilities compliance officer will forward all documentation related to the student's disability and the review committee findings to the provost's office, where the final decision will be made.

Appropriate Delivery of Accommodations

If a student believes that an accommodation is not being delivered in an effective manner, the student may wish to appeal the delivery of the accommodation. The student (not the parent) may appeal *in the following order...*

1. Discuss failure of delivery with faculty teaching the course – the most common way these conflicts are managed is with this first step.
2. Contact the Disabilities Coordinator in Alpha – the coordinator will work with the student to try to find more effective delivery of the requested accommodation.
3. Notify the Disabilities Compliance Officer - the compliance officer will determine whether there has been a failure to accommodate, and negotiate between the student and faculty to find an acceptable delivery method.
4. Ask for a review by the Provost's office – the disabilities compliance officer will forward all documentation related to the student's disability and findings to the provost's office, where the final decision will be made.

Academic Exceptions

Some students wish to appeal for changes in course requirements and/or degree plan requirements. If a student (not the parent) wishes to appeal the course requirements or the degree-plan requirements, she/he must follow the process described in the Abilene Christian University Student Handbook.

1. Request the exception with the faculty member (in the case of a course exception) or degree plan advisor (in the case of a degree plan exception).

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2. Appeal to the Dean of the college responsible for the course or the degree plan
3. Appeal to the Provost's office – a student may request that her/his disability documentation be reviewed at this level, in which case the disabilities compliance officer will forward all documentation related to the student's disability and findings to the provost's office, where the final decision will be made.

Process Guidelines

- It is not appropriate or effective to appeal to campus offices outside the processes described above. While other offices may try to help, this avenue can ultimately result in further delays in reaching a final decision.
- The Provost's Office serves as the final decision center for all academic issues on Abilene Christian University campus.

A student with questions about her/his rights through these appeals processes can consult with the compliance officer.

Other Information About Higher Education and Disabilities

The following information summarizes the current statutes that guide organizations in accommodating students with disabilities.

Federal Laws

Student Responsibilities

- The student must identify himself or herself as an individual with a disability as defined by law.
- The student must document the presence of the disability.
- The student must express a need for and/or ask for specific accommodations in order for academic adjustment(s) to be provided in a timely and appropriate manner.
- Accommodations and/or academic adjustments are only required if there is not an "undue burden" on the university to provide such.

University Responsibilities

- The university will verify the existence of a disability through direct observation of documentation from qualified sources.
- The university is expected to provide reasonable accommodations specific to the disability unless doing so places an "undue burden" on the

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institution or represents a “fundamental change” in the courses or degree plans.

Summary of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act

In 1973, Congress passed the Rehabilitation Act (Public Law 93-112). This act guarantees civil rights for Americans with disabilities. The law is grounded in the due process clause of the Fifth Amendment and the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. Section 504 is that section of the Rehabilitation Act that specifically refers to post-secondary and vocational educational services.

Section 504 states that colleges and universities are expected to make reasonable adjustments necessary to eliminate discrimination on the basis of disability. For example, it may be necessary to remove classroom prohibitions against animals for students with disabilities that may require the use of a trained assistance animal. The United States Department of Education Office of Civil Rights is the primary office of enforcement for Section 504.

Summary of The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

ADA broadens the definition of physical and program accessibility and by regulation defines appropriate accommodations.

The ADA charges students with the responsibility to make their need for accommodations known and to meet the instructor’s expectations in class participation, performance, and work standards. In the classroom, the ADA establishes an expectation that the instructor will adapt the course presentation to address the student's disabling condition. For example, an instructor who teaches through lecture only may allow hearing-impaired students to use note takers and/or interpreters. The ADA and 504 are not designed to ensure equal results but are designed to ensure equal opportunities for access to educational experiences.

ADA specifies remedies for persons who experience discrimination based on disability. If you believe you have experienced discrimination, contact Disabled Student Services or the University Provost’s Office for information regarding remedies. The United States Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division is the primary office of enforcement for ADA.

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University and Community Resources

Medical Clinic

Health care is made available to all students at ACU in the Health Services Office located in the east end of McKinzie Hall. A staff doctor and nurses are available to assist with medications and other areas of concern. For appointments or further information, call 325-674-2625.

Counseling Center

Counseling services are available to all ACU Students through the ACU Counseling Center as well as the Marriage and Family Institute. The Counseling Center is located in the north side of the Money Center with the Medical Clinic. The Marriage and Family Institute is located in the College of Biblical Studies. Fees may apply to some services. To contact the Counseling Center, call 325-674-2625. To contact the Marriage and Family Institute, call 325-674-3722.

Housing

Students with special housing needs should make those requests as they complete the admissions process. Specially equipped dormitory space is available on a limited basis. To contact the Housing Office, call 325-674-2067.

Transportation

The city of Abilene provides bus transportation to the campus during business hours. The City Link system provides a specially equipped van for people with disabilities. For information and schedules call 676-6287. The ACU Police Department can assist with parking information and other issues regarding use of motor vehicles on campus. To contact the ACU Police Office, call 325-674-2305.

Cultural and Recreational Opportunities

Cultural, recreational, and sports opportunities abound at ACU, and students with disabilities may participate in a wide range of extracurricular activities. Disabled Student Services personnel will assist in helping to secure arrangements to accommodate special needs on an individual basis.

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Admission

Students with disabilities are considered for admission to ACU on the same basis as all other applicants and must meet the same academic standards. The ACU Admissions Office takes into consideration a variety of factors in making decisions regarding admission. Students who believe that their academic records do not accurately reflect their ability to do college work should personally contact the Office of Admissions, ACU Box 29000, Abilene, TX 79699-9000, (915) 674-2650.

Orientation

When students make their needs known, Alpha Scholars representatives meet with them during the University's regular summer orientation sessions to answer questions. Staff members may also help students plan their course schedules, taking into consideration their individual needs.

All students who participate in Alpha Scholars must attend an orientation session with their Alpha advisor at the beginning of each semester. Students who do not attend one of these sessions will not be eligible for services.

You can be a Successful College Student!

Students with special challenges sometimes fear that they may not be able to meet the demands of college level work. By developing good study strategies and taking advantage of the assistance offered, most of these students are able to achieve success. Here are some general rules that can help you as you adjust to studying in college.

- Develop a regular study schedule and stick to it.
- Study in a distraction-reduced environment.
- If long-term concentration is difficult, study in short segments.
- Learn about your preferred learning style and use that information to help you study smarter.
- When having problems memorizing material, use a variety of memory strategies and techniques.
- Learn to overlearn!
- Before each test, read each chapter thoroughly!
- When reading a text, be an active reader!
- Skim the chapter briefly to learn what it is generally about.

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- Turn chapter headings into questions. This will give you a focus when you read the chapter.
- While reading, write down questions and answers about each section.
- In classrooms, sit in the front and middle section of the class.
- Develop a working relationship with your professors.
- If you have access to a lap top computer and you are a good typist, use it to take notes in class.
- Learn to quiz yourself prior to tests.
- Make a habit of planning your study time in advance. Allow 2 hours of study time for each hour you spend in class.
- Use your between-class hours for studying.
- When planning long-term projects, break tasks down into smaller steps.
- Watch out for procrastination!
- Organize your class materials.
- Don't skip classes.
- When writing papers, meet with your professor to clarify assignments or hand in rough drafts to be evaluated; also have someone else help you proofread your papers.
- Accept that you may have to study longer and harder than other students.
- Make time to relax.

Contacting the Alpha Office

You may contact the staff directly, or by email. You may also call the office at 325-674-2667 between 8:00 am and 5:00 pm to be directed to any of the available staff.

Members of the professional staff of Alpha Scholars are available from 8 a.m. until 5 p.m. on weekdays to help make your experience at Abilene Christian University accessible and successful. Peer tutors are available during regular hours of operation and weekday evenings until 10 p.m. by request.

Appendix A – Documentation of Attention Deficit Disorder

The Alpha Scholars Program is responsible for providing students with disabilities equal access to their education. To receive academic accommodations under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), students at Abilene Christian University must provide documentation from an appropriately trained evaluator demonstrating a disability as defined by the federal legislation noted above.

Federal law requires that students with disabilities be considered on a case-by-case basis. The form included in Appendix A is adapted from documents developed by professionals from various organizations who serve students with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). This form is required of students who wish to receive accommodations for ADD/ADHD in the interest of assuring that documentation of ADHD (1) demonstrates an impact on a major life activity, (2) is appropriate to verify eligibility, and (3) supports the request for academic accommodations. By providing the information outlined in Appendix A, the evaluator will assist us in being able to serve the student effectively. The ADA Compliance Officer at ACU will make final determination of whether appropriate and reasonable accommodations are warranted and can be provided to the individual student.

The documentation must reflect the following:

- A. **The healthcare professional(s) conducting the assessment and/or making the diagnosis must be qualified to do so.** The diagnosing professional cannot be related to the student.
- B. **All parts of the form must be completed as thoroughly as possible.** Inadequate information, incomplete answers, and/or illegible handwriting may delay the eligibility review process by necessitating follow-up contact for clarification
- C. **The healthcare professional should attach any reports providing additional related information (e.g., psychoeducational testing, neuropsychological test results).** If a comprehensive diagnostic report is available that provides the requested information, copies of that report can be submitted for documentation instead of this form. Please do not provide case notes or rating scales without a narrative that explains the results, recommendations, and functional limitations of the subject.

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- D. **After completing this form, mail or fax it to the Alpha Scholars Program.** The information you provide will be kept in the student's confidential file in the Alpha Scholars Program. Our address is ACU Box 29204, Abilene, TX 79699. Our fax number is 325-674-6847.

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Date: _____

Patient Name: _____ Birthdate: _____

1. Date of first contact with this individual: _____
2. Date of last contact with this individual: _____
3. DSM-IV Diagnosis:
 - 314.00 ADHD, Predominately Inattentive
 - 314.01 ADHD, Predominately Hyperactive-Impulsive
 - 314.01 ADHD, Combined Type
 - 314.90 ADHD, Not otherwise specified
4. Level of severity:
 - Mild
 - Moderate
 - Severe
5. How did you arrive at your diagnosis? Please check all the apply:
 - Behavioral observations
 - Developmental history
 - Educational history
 - Medical history
 - Structured or unstructured conical interview with individual
 - Interviews with other persons
 - Rating scales
 - Neuropsychological testing (dates of testing): _____
 - Other (please specify): _____
6. Functional limitations: Please check the level of limitation you believe your patient experiences in the college environment as a result of his or her disability:

0 = Not a problem 1 = Mild 2 = Moderate 3 = Severe

___ Caring for oneself	___ Talking	___ Hearing
___ Breathing	___ Seeing	___ Walking
___ Lifting/Carrying	___ Sitting	___ Performing manual tasks
___ Eating	___ Social interaction	___ Sleeping

Learning Skills:

___ Reading	___ Writing	___ Reasoning
___ Math Calculation	___ Processing Speed	___ Memorizing
___ Concentrating	___ Listening	___ Other: _____

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7. Please check all ADHD symptoms listed in the DSM-IV that the student currently exhibits:

Inattention:

- Often fails to give close attention to details or makes careless mistakes in schoolwork, work, or other activities
- Often has difficulty sustaining attention in tasks or play activities
- Often does not seem to listen when spoken to directly
- Often does not follow through on instructions and details to finish schoolwork, chores, or duties in the workplace (not due to oppositional behavior or failure to understand instructions)
- Often has difficulty organizing tasks and activities
- Often avoids, dislikes, or is reluctant to engage in tasks (such as homework, schoolwork)
- Often loses things necessary for tasks and activities (e.g. school assignments, pencils, books, tools, etc.)
- Often distracted by extraneous stimuli
- Often forgetful in daily activities

Hyperactivity:

- Often fidgets with hands or feet or squirms in seat
- Often leaves (or greatly feels the need to leave) seat in classroom or other situations where remaining seated is expected
- Often runs about or climbs excessively in situations in which it is inappropriate (in adolescents or adults, may be limited to subjective feelings of restlessness)
- Often has difficulty playing or engaging in leisure activities that are more sedate
- Often "on the go" or often acts as if "driven by a motor"
- Often talks excessively

Impulsivity:

- Often blurts out answers before questions have been completed
- Often has difficulty waiting in turn
- Often interrupts or intrudes on others (e.g. butts into conversations or games)

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Provider Name (Print): _____

Provider Signature: _____

License or Certification #: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

FAX: _____

Please return to:

Alpha Scholars Program
Abilene Christian University
ACU Box 29204
Abilene, TX 79699

or

FAX: 325-674-6847

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Appendix B – Self-Referral for Evaluation

The ACU psychology clinic can provide students with psychoeducational assessments to diagnose indications of ADD/AHDH, learning disabilities, dyslexia, and other learning or psychological disabilities. The clinic charges a nominal fee in comparison to other testing centers. If you would like to visit the clinic, please fill out this form and take it to the Psychology Clinic, McKenzie Hall, Lower level 3-D.

To: ACU Psychology Clinic

Subject: Referral for Evaluation

Student Name: _____ Banner ID: _____

Student Email: _____ Phone #: _____

The student reports the following difficulties in academic work:

Difficulty with reading/writing

Difficulty with math

Difficulty staying focused or on-task

Extreme test anxiety

History of learning difficulties

Permission to Release Evaluation Results

I hereby request that ACU Psychology Clinic release to the Alpha Scholars program the results and evaluation of the battery of tests I am taking.

Student Signature

Date

ACU Psychology Clinic
McKenzie Hall
1st Floor, 3-D
Office: 325-674-4826

Alpha Scholars Program
Administration Building
3rd Floor, 312
Office: 325-674-2667