

Americans with Disabilities Act Compliance

The New England College of Optometry (the College) has a long history of actively supporting and accommodating students with disabilities. The College complies with all applicable laws related to disabilities, including requests for reasonable accommodations.

Students with disabilities applying to the College must have the knowledge and skills to function in a broad variety of clinical situations and to render a wide spectrum of patient care. Prospective candidates and current students must be capable of meeting certain standards to practice optometry. The Technical Standards defined by the New England College of Optometry faculty can be found on the website and in the Student Portal.

All students are required to meet all academic and technical standards with or without reasonable accommodation.

Reasonable Accommodations

NECO seeks to assure access by providing reasonable accommodations to individuals with physical, mental or learning disabilities recognized under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA). Reasonable accommodation is the provision of aids or modification to testing, services or a program of study, which allows access by individuals with disabilities.

What is a Disability?

The ADA defines a disability as “any mental or physical condition that substantially limits an individual’s ability to perform one or more major life activities” as compared with the average person in the general population. Major life activities include, but are not limited to, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, performing manual tasks, caring for one’s self, working and learning.

The ADA requires an institution of higher education to provide reasonable accommodation to a qualified individual with a documented disability, provided that the accommodation does not create undue hardship. An undue hardship refers to any accommodation that would be unduly costly, substantially disruptive or that would fundamentally alter the nature of the program. Both matriculated and non-matriculated students may request reasonable accommodations from NECO.

Section 504 Provisions

Additionally, the College is required to abide by the provisions of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 which protect otherwise qualified individuals from discrimination based on their disability. In order to be considered otherwise qualified a student with a disability must be capable, either with or without accommodation, of fulfilling the essential requirements of the educational program.

Accommodations Guidelines and Process

Students with disabilities who plan to seek accommodations should contact the Center for Academic and Professional Achievement (CAPA) as soon as possible upon admission to NECO. This allows students to discuss their needs and to have ample time to submit the required documentation.

Students must contact CAPA to let them know they will be requesting accommodations and submit full documentation from a medical provider. Accommodations requests cannot be evaluated until the documentation from a medical provider has been received. These documentation will be reviewed and requests for accommodations will be considered. NECO's policy is that students should submit documentation at least 30 days in advance or as soon as possible when the accommodation is known. The student will then be informed of what accommodations have been approved and the appropriate instructor(s) of record will receive written notification from CAPA. It is then up to the student to speak with faculty members about implementing the accommodations. If a student is granted extra time for tests and quizzes and/or the ability to take exams in a different space, logistics will be coordinated by CAPA who will work in partnership with the Office of Academic Affairs.

Students who become disabled or who are diagnosed with learning difficulties while at the College should contact CAPA. They will then be required to follow the process outlined above. All students, regardless of the timing of the disability or of the identification of the disability, are required to present complete documentation of the disability if accommodations are requested.

The College works diligently to accommodate students with disabilities. Requests for accommodations are evaluated on an individual basis. Though the College will endeavor to work with the student with regards to reasonable accommodations sought, the reasonable accommodation may differ from what s/he has received from a previous institution and may not necessarily be exactly what the student requests. This is due to the knowledge and skills needed to successfully practice optometry. The Technical Standards document outlines these requirements. Reasonable accommodations will consider the needs of the student requesting an accommodation and College standards while fully complying with applicable laws.

Student medical records and requests for accommodations will be kept confidential except where disclosure is necessary to provide the reasonable accommodation.

Available Resources

The New England College of Optometry expects all of its students to become highly effective and competent Doctors of Optometry. Services including tutoring, individual advising appointments, digital resources, and other support services are available. Students with disabilities are encouraged to make use of these services to help them succeed.

Contact the Center for Academic and Professional Achievement to learn more about the services available.

National Optometric Board Examinations

Accommodations for the National Optometric Board Examinations are handled by the Board of Examiners (external to NECO). Students who anticipate seeking Board Exam accommodations should be sure to review the Board's documentation requirements and deadlines. Please note that accommodations provided at the College do not guarantee accommodations for Board Examinations. Students who plan on seeking accommodations from the Board are responsible for complying with all necessary procedures for requesting those accommodations.

Primary Contact

Center for Academic and Professional Achievement
capa@neco.edu

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