

Online Courses, Accommodations, and Accessibility FAQ

As UTRGV shifts to online learning environments, consideration of accessible instruction and course materials is necessary. During this time, SAS is available as a resource to students and faculty regarding online accommodations and accessible learning environments. Feel free to contact SAS with any questions.

Student FAQ

➤ Is Student Accessibility Services (SAS) open?

- Yes! SAS is still operating Monday – Friday, 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. **All appointments and services will be conducted virtually or via phone until further notice.**
- SAS will be unable to proctor in-person exams while all UTRGV classes are online.
- Feel free to call or email SAS should you have any accommodation or accessibility questions.

Brownsville: 956-882-7374 or Edinburg: 956-665-7005

ability@utrgv.edu

➤ What are synchronous and asynchronous online courses?

- **Synchronous learning** occurs on set schedules and time frames. Students and instructors are online at the same time since lectures, discussions, and presentations take place at specific hours. All students must be online at that exact time in order to participate in the class.
- **Asynchronous learning** allows students to **complete their work on their own schedule**. Students are given a set period of time – usually a one-week window – during which they need to connect to their class at least once or twice.
- For additional information, please see <https://www.elearners.com/education-resources/degrees-and-programs/synchronous-vs-asynchronous-classes/>

➤ What is the next step in the online process with our scheduled exams? How do I request extended time for an online exam?

- SAS will not be proctoring exams at the office while classes are meeting online.
- Individual academic instructors will be responsible for setting up appropriate approved timed exams in Blackboard.

➤ On campus I had a volunteer note-taker, how will I receive copies of my online notes?

- SAS students can retrieve class notes in mySAS once the volunteer note taker has uploaded notes. For additional information, please see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-To7M3qvf_o&feature=youtu.be
- For synchronous classes, if you have been receiving class notes through mySAS, SAS will email volunteer note-takers who have registered with SAS to continue this.

- If you have previously received notes from a classmate who has not registered as a volunteer in mySAS, continue communicating with this student to obtain notes. If you do not have contact information for this classmate, please contact SAS to discuss options.
 - In an asynchronous class, if there is a recording of your instructor's lecture, you will be able to view the recording as many times as necessary, which precludes the need for a note-taker to assist you.
 - If you require assistance with note-taking, please contact SAS.
- **How will online classes affect my attendance accommodation?**
- Approved accommodations will continue forward through the semester. However, if your online course is asynchronous, attendance should not be a concern (since there are no real-time class meetings). Please contact your SAS Counseling Specialist, as needed, to discuss accommodations.
 - If you have any concerns about attendance in your courses, please contact your instructors.
- **What if I have new accommodation requests because my in-person class moved online?**
- Please call SAS to discuss further. We will have an interactive discussion regarding your access concerns and related accommodation request(s).
 - If additional supporting documentation is needed to support your request, SAS staff will let you know.
- **Resources for online learners**
- <https://www.utrgv.edu/online/getting-support/student-support/index.htm>

Instructor FAQ

Student Accessibility Services (SAS) remains open and receptive to address concerns or questions related to online courses, accommodations, and accessibility. Please do not hesitate to call SAS in Edinburg 956-665-7005, Brownsville 956-882-7374 or email us at ability@utrgv.edu

- Since online course structure is likely to vary from the original in-person course design, instructors should keep this in mind as it relates to accommodations. In the event a student's current accommodations do not appear appropriate for an online course, please contact SAS to discuss this matter.
- When using an online system to deliver course material, considerations should include bandwidth, access for all students (not all students have computers at home or reliable internet connections), and accessible materials, to name a few.
- Some students may experience a heightened level of uncertainty regarding their disability-related barriers, especially for online instruction.

SAS appreciates instructors’ efforts during this transition and SAS staff want to continue collaborating to ensure equal access of all students.

For any student requesting accommodations due to **disability** or **pregnancy/parenting**, please refer the student to call Student Accessibility Services for additional information.

Recommendations for Faculty (Adapted from Guide from Southern Methodist University)

1. When teaching online:
 - a. Use of Zoom, Skype or other online media needs to be accessible or made accessible.
 - b. All video recordings require captioning.
 - c. If using Panopto, please turn on captioning as it cannot be added after the video is created but must be done while it is being created. Please note: The captioning created by Panopto is not 100% accurate, so faculty should review and edit the content as needed.
2. When posting materials to Blackboard, all materials must be accessible for the end user.
 - a. PowerPoint slides can be saved as Word documents.
 - b. PDFs need to be saved as text files or converted to a Microsoft Word document for students who use technology to access the information.

How do accommodations work with online instruction?

- Accommodation letters for Spring 2020 which were previously sent to instructors by SAS are still valid. However, some accommodations which were relevant in face-to-face courses may no longer apply. For example, preferential seating is not applicable to an online course.
- If an instructor decides to offer alternatives to testing (e.g. essay, non-timed exam, group project activity), then a student’s extended time on testing is no longer applicable.
- Please see the list of common accommodations below and considerations for each in an online environment.

Accommodations in an Online Learning Environment

For students with an accommodation for:	Does this accommodation apply in a <i>synchronous</i> online course?	Does this accommodation apply in an <i>asynchronous</i> online course?	Considerations
Volunteer Note Taker (VNT)	Yes	Maybe*	Instructor: Please inform VNT to upload class notes via mySAS , a secure online portal where SAS students can access class notes.

			*If there is a recording an instructor’s lecture, students will be able to view the recording as many times as necessary, which precludes the need for a volunteer note-taker.
Use of audio recorder for lecture	Yes	No	
Attendance	Yes	No	Please contact SAS with any questions.
Medical Leave	Yes	Yes	Please contact SAS with any questions.
Extended time for assignment deadlines	Yes	Yes	
TESTING			
Extended time on testing	Yes	Yes	SAS will not offer in-office proctoring for online exams. Instructors: You can edit the test options and add a user or group in the test availability exceptions area. If the settings exist for a test, you can create these exceptions: number of attempts, timer, availability, force completion and restrict location. For more information, check out the Test and Survey Options page . Alternatively, you may use Adaptive Release, with this tool you will be able to customize the release of content to meet the needs of individual students. For more information, check out the Rules for Releasing Content .
Reduced-distraction testing environment	No	No	Please inform students they are responsible for ensuring a reduced-distraction testing environment for online courses.
A reader or scribe for tests	Yes	Yes	SAS will not offer in-office proctoring for online exams. Please be aware that students may need to rely on a family member or friend to read or scribe for tests. In the event a student reports not having access to someone to assist, please contact SAS to discuss this matter.
Alternate format of tests			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Braille 	Yes	Yes	Instructors should upload an <i>accessible</i> exam document in Blackboard. The material will be converted in Blackboard Ally into Braille Ready Format. The student can use assistive technology (e.g. Apex machine or Braille display) to access the exam.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enlarged font 	Yes	Yes	Students will be able to enlarge digital format exams in the online environment using assistive technology
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audio format 	Yes	Yes	Instructors should upload an <i>accessible</i> exam document in Blackboard. The material will be converted in Blackboard Ally into audio format. The student can use assistive technology to access the exam.
Sign language interpreter	Yes	Maybe*	<p><i>SYNCHRONOUS COURSES:</i> Zoom will be required so that interpreters can facilitate communication during lecture.</p> <p>The Zoom meeting link would need to be shared with ASLservices@utrgv.edu 2 business days prior.</p> <p>If the class meeting is recorded via Zoom, the instructor must <i>pin</i> the interpreter feed to ensure the student will have access to interpreting at a later date.</p> <p><i>ASYNCHRONOUS COURSES:</i> *If a lecture is recorded, send the file to SAS so that a sign language interpreter video can be imbedded. If there are no videos of lecture, no interpreter is required for the course.</p> <p><i>Please call SAS with any questions.</i></p> <p>If you are using Lockdown Browser for tests, for students who use a screen reader, the Lockdown Browser will need to be disabled. <i>Please contact SAS for additional guidance.</i></p>
CART (Communication Access in Real Time)	Yes	No	<p>Please follow the same procedures used with face-to-face classes.</p> <p>Instructor: A link to the video conferencing platform being used should be sent to ASLservices@utrgv.edu 2 business days prior to the class meeting.</p>

Alternate format of <i>course materials:</i>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Braille 	Yes	Yes	Instructors should upload an <i>accessible document</i> in Blackboard. The material will be converted in Blackboard Ally into Braille Ready Format. The student can use assistive technology (e.g. Apex machine or Braille display) to access the material.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enlarged font 	Yes	Yes	Students will be able to enlarge digital format exams in the online environment using assistive technology.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audio format 	Yes	Yes	Instructors should upload an <i>accessible document</i> in Blackboard. The material will be converted in Blackboard Ally into audio format. The student can use assistive technology to access the material.

How do I go about setting extended time for online tests?

- For resources related to online accessibility, including time extensions on tests, please consult the **Center for Online Learning and Teaching Technology (COLTT)**
 - Website: <https://www.utrgv.edu/online/index.htm>
 - Edinburg 956-665-5327 or Brownsville 956-882-6792

Do I honor attendance accommodations which had already been approved for a face-to-face course?

- Approved accommodations will continue forward through the semester. However, if your online course is asynchronous, students' attendance should not be a concern (since there are no real-time class meetings).
- If you have any concerns about students' attendance in your synchronous courses, please contact SAS.

What do I do for students with an approved accommodation for audio format of course materials and exams?

- Instructors may upload an accessible document in Blackboard OR create an accessible test in Blackboard.
 - The exam (in audio format) is made available through Blackboard Ally, an accessibility tool in Blackboard, which has a built-in reader.
 - For additional information, please see: <https://www.utrgv.edu/online/teaching-online/accessibility/blackboard-ally/index.htm>

OR

- With advance notice, SAS staff can convert course material or tests to audio format and upload to SharePoint (with one folder per instructor to maintain integrity of exams).

What is an accessible document?

An **accessible document** includes plain text in any of the following formats: .doc, .rtf, or .txt. If any images are included, they must have alternative text (i.e. a description of the image). Any text content (or copy of text) in an image format (.jpg, .mpg, .bmp, or other image files) is not accessible. For additional information, please see <https://www.utrgv.edu/online/teaching-online/accessibility/creating-content/index.htm>

Accessibility Resources

For resources related to online accessibility, please consult the **Center for Online Learning and Teaching Technology (COLTT)** website at <https://www.utrgv.edu/online/index.htm>

- **Those new to digital accessibility** should select “Teaching Online > The Process > Getting Started” from the dropdown menu from the following webpage:
<https://www.utrgv.edu/online/teaching-online/index.htm>
- **Those looking for a short list of guidelines for making courses and websites accessible to individuals with disabilities** should select “Teaching Online > Online Accessibility” from the dropdown menu. Other resources located on the webpage include Creating Content, Videos, Universal Design for Learning, and Additional Resources.

Additional resources:

- [20 tips for teaching accessible online courses](#)
- [30 web accessibility tips](#)
- www.CAST.org