



Teaching Students with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

Students with Attention Deficit may evidence just inattentiveness or both inattentiveness and impulsivity. This is not a choice on the part of the student. It is a chronic disability that begins in infancy and persists through adulthood, having ramifications that are more or less severe, depending on the task and situation. ADD/ADHD affects the student at home, in the learning environment and in social settings. There are serious and persistent problems with attention span, impulse control, organization and distractibility. Some students without hyperactivity are not identified until later in life as they may have been “less obvious.” Up to 70% of students with ADD/ADHD may also have a concomitant learning disability (LD). If this is the case, see the information on learning disabilities, as those accommodations are often helpful for students with ADD/ADHD.

Some examples of possible accommodations that a student with ADD/ADHD may require include (but are not limited to):

- “Dear Professor Memos” verifying the need for accommodations
- Priority/early course registration
- Accommodated testing for in-class and online exams and quizzes
- Alternate format texts and handouts, including audio and electronic format
- Note-taking services and/or the use of an audio recorder for class lectures
- Allowance of laptops, tablets, or assistive technology in the classroom
- Regular advising meetings with an assigned D²A² advisor

The following are some considerations to keep in mind when working with students with ADD/ADHD in the classroom:

- Allow students to tape lectures and discussions, including those with labs or involving media or on-line, and/or have a note-taker. Attempting to focus on lecturing and taking notes can be problematic.
- Encourage the use of a study classmate to exchange information about class notes and reading.
- Allow students to sit in the front of the room to reduce distractions.
- If necessary, allow students to answer essay questions orally or on a tape recorder. Often these students will lose focus when trying to put thoughts and ideas on paper.
- Avoid all distracting stimuli. Discourage students with ADD/ADHD from sitting near windows, air conditioners, heaters, high traffic areas, etc.
- Assist the student with organizing, setting up plans, chunking assignments, etc.
- Some students with attentional disabilities, but no reading disability, may benefit from a recording of text as well as reading, as this may help to focus attention.

- Understand that a student with ADD/ADHD who appears “fidgety,” or who taps their foot constantly, or who may be “doodling” is a) often unaware of this, and b) usually, not intentionally disruptive. Do quietly point out the behavior IF it is affecting the classroom, but do not assume ill intent.
- A student with ADD/ADHD may find it difficult to stay on task if a class is longer than a traditional 50-75 minute session; if possible, consider offering a break part way through the class session.
- Keep your instructions as brief and uncomplicated as possible.

Additional Resources:

Faculty Tip Sheet for Working with Students with ADHD (Mohawk Valley Community College)	https://www.mvcc.edu/accessibility-resources/information-students-with-adhd
Attention Deficits (DO-IT, University of Washington)	https://www.washington.edu/doi/attention-deficits
Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD): Signs, Symptoms, Strategies, and How to Teach (UMass Dartmouth)	https://www.umassd.edu/dss/resources/facultystaff/howtoteachandaccommodate/howtoteachadhd/
Instructional Strategies – ADD/ADHD (Ferris State University)	https://ferris.edu/HTMLS/colleges/university/disability/faculty-staff/classroom-issues/ADHD-ADD/ADHD-strategy.htm
Learning & Psychological Disabilities Classroom Strategies: A Faculty Guide (Pine Technical College)	http://www.pine.edu/student-services/counseling-services/classroom-strategies-for-teaching-students-with-psychological-and-learning-disabilities.pdf