



Indiana University of Pennsylvania

DEPARTMENT FOR DISABILITY ACCESS AND ADVISING (D²A²)

Teaching Students with Psychological Disabilities

Students with psychological disabilities face the combination of having a hidden disability and of having a disability around which there may be some social stigma. This may lead to a fear of disclosure. In fact, colleges and universities across the U.S. serve many successful students with psychological disabilities. Common psychological disabilities seen among college students include depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, panic disorders, bipolar disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, schizophrenia, and anxiety disorder. A welcoming environment best serves the student with a psychological disability.

Some examples of possible accommodations that a student with a psychological disability 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
- 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 psychological disabilities in the classroom:

- Some students with psychological disability are helped by structure, but may need extra support when changes occur.
- Extended time and a quiet testing location during exams often help the student who needs time to relax and think freely, due to anxiety, foggy thinking caused by some medications, etc.
- Students registered with D²A² will be encouraged to use accommodations that support their continuation to graduation.
- If possible, if the student is experiencing an exacerbation of the disability or medication management issues, it may be useful to help the student by restructuring due dates or helping to plan assignments.
- The student will sometimes be helped by working weekly with a D²A² adviser to help structure, plan and “talk things out,” as a means of additional support.
- If the student behaves oddly and it is not affecting the class, call D²A² to discuss the behavior. Students do have the right to “be unusual” as long as they are not harming others. If the student is acting in a manner that is affecting the class, meet with the student. Describe both the specific negative behavior and delineate the limits of acceptable behavior.

The Department for Disability Access and Advising at Indiana University of Pennsylvania (D²A²):

“Our students have Determination and Desire to learn; we assist by providing Access and Advising for higher education.”

Additional Resources:

<p>Academic Accommodations for Students with Psychiatric Disabilities (DO-IT, University of Washington)</p>	<p>https://www.washington.edu/doi/academic-accommodations-students-psychiatric-disabilities</p>
<p>Teaching Students with Mental Health Disabilities (Accessible Campus, Council of Ontario Universities)</p>	<p>http://www.accessiblecampus.ca/tools-resources/educators-tool-kit/teaching-tips/teaching-students-with-mental-health-disabilities/</p>
<p>Mental Health Issues in Students (Focus: The Chronicle of Higher Education)</p>	<p>https://www.chronicle.com/items/biz/pdf/ChronFocus_MentalHealthv5_i.pdf</p>
<p>The Challenges and Legal Rights of Students with Mental Disabilities in College (Disability Rights California and Mental Health Advocacy Services, Inc.)</p>	<p>https://www.ucop.edu/student-mental-health-resources/files/pdf/program-sessions-bpc/the-challenges-and-legal-rights-nancy.pdf</p>
<p>Learning & Psychological Disabilities Classroom Strategies: A Faculty Guide (Pine Technical College)</p>	<p>http://www.pine.edu/student-services/counseling-services/classroom-strategies-for-teaching-students-with-psychological-and-learning-disabilities.pdf</p>
<p>Psychological Disorders (Brown University)</p>	<p>https://www.brown.edu/campus-life/support/accessibility-services/resources-teaching-students-disabilities/teaching-students-disabilities/psychological-disorders</p>
<p>Experiences of College Students with Psychological Disabilities: The Impact of Perceptions of Faculty Characteristics on Academic Achievement (Kathleen F. Stein, Towson University)</p>	<p>https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1043011.pdf</p>