

Alternative Assignments for Oral Presentation/Participation Guidance

Students who are registered with the Office of Disability Resources (ODR) and approved for the accommodation of Alternative Assignments for Oral Presentation/Participation may require the option of verbally participating during class and flexibility should be provided for class participation and presentation requirements involving oral communication when it does not fundamentally alter the learning outcomes of the course. An alternative assignment/requirement may be needed for a student with this accommodation. This guidance is provided as a way to assist faculty with the implementation of this accommodation in their courses. As with all accommodations, confidentiality of the student's disability related information (including ODR accommodations) should be upheld and respected, and the identity of the student with accommodations should not be disclosed, unless consent is provided.

For Students:

Students using the Alternative Assignments for Oral Presentation/Participation accommodation are expected to be actively engaged in their course and to meet all established learning outcomes as any other student. As with all accommodations, students utilizing this accommodation are expected to assume an active role by working with their faculty member and establishing and following through with a clear plan of how this accommodation will be implemented for each course in which the student wishes to receive the accommodation. This means, students must share their accommodation letter and discuss this accommodation with your faculty. ODR recommends that students share their accommodation letters with all of their faculty in a meeting early in the semester, or as soon as possible. Please connect with ODR if you have any questions or concerns regarding discussing your accommodation needs with your faculty. It is the student's responsibility to inform ODR if experiencing any problems with planning or receiving any of their accommodations. We will do our best to assist you with any issues related to accommodations.

For Faculty:

If a student provides an accommodation letter to you that indicates they have an accommodation of Alternative Assignments for Oral Presentation/Participation, the instructor should work with the student to make a plan. Not every student with this accommodation will require the use of this accommodation for each public speaking requirement, and for students who choose to participate orally, faculty and class members should be patient, offering encouragement and an opportunity to develop self-confidence in a challenging situation.

ODR recognizes that Speaking Intensive courses or various public speaking related assignments may not easily lend themselves to implementing this accommodation. ODR is also working on developing additional ways to support faculty with providing accommodations to students with disabilities, including partnering with the Center for Teaching, developing workshops/training opportunities, Brown Bag lunches, and are

open to any other way that we can provide support. We recognize that faculty are often in a position to teach each other in many meaningful ways that ODR and would like to work to continue to facilitate opportunities for faculty to learn from each other. Although ODR is available for scheduled trainings on various topics by request, ODR also understands that faculty time is limited. Please connect with ODR by emailing odr@umw.edu or calling (540) 654-1266 as early as possible if you have any questions or concerns regarding the implementation of this accommodation, or any accommodation, for any of your students who are registered with ODR.

It is worthy to note that there is no one-size-fits-all approach with accommodations, and what may have worked for one student with this accommodation may not always fit other students' needs or class requirements. Students are approved for this accommodation for a variety of different, disability-related reasons. Avoid making assumptions about the reasons for why a student is approved for the accommodation, and instead, allow for the student to share the information that they wish to disclose. ODR is also available for consultation and may also be able to provide helpful information regarding a student's needs and make helpful recommendations.

The following options are provided as suggestions for consideration to assist faculty with determining which may be an appropriate alternative to meeting oral presentation/participation requirements for students who are approved by ODR for this accommodation:

General Recommendations

- Spend more time with the student prior to the presentation to assist the student with preparing for the assignment, including prior to the presentation to assist the student with practicing their presentation and to allow for the student to ask questions in private.
- Refer students to the Speaking Center and offer opportunities to work individually with them to prepare.
- Provide extended time for verbal participation/presentations (for example, allowing for more time to respond during class discussions, FAQs at the end of presentations, etc.).
- Allow for use of assistive technology (such as text-to-speech, Braille display, voice synthesizers, speaking machines, etc.).
- At times following the student's comment, summarize what the student said can help check for accuracy of understanding. Listen carefully to the student. Repeat what you think you understand and then ask the student to clarify or repeat the portion that you did not understand.
- Allow for breaks as needed.
- When in doubt, don't hesitate to ask your students about their needs or what may be helpful to them. They are the experts!

Class Participation

- Written assignments or responses to specific questions that can be shared with the class by someone else reading them aloud.
- Give students the opportunity, but do not compel them, to speak in class. Permit students the time they require to express themselves without unsolicited aid in filling in gaps in their speech. Give enough time to students who speak slowly in class to express their thoughts. Do not interrupt or complete a sentence for a student. If you don't understand, don't pretend that you do. Ask them to repeat what they have said if necessary, and tell them what you have understood so far
- If class discussion is required, consider allowing the student to complete Q&A or respond to comments in an alternative way (such as utilizing technology, answering emails, responding to discussion board posts, etc.).

Group Work/Presentations

- One-on-one or single-student presentations, rather than group presentations.
- Alternatively, it may be helpful to consider the option of having group presentations where multiple people present together, rather than having a student be required to stand up in front of a group alone. Consider discussing the specific responsibilities of each group member and help with facilitating what would be considered an appropriate amount of flexibility with allowing for splitting up of time in a group presentation, while exercising as much flexibility as possible with requiring public speaking for the student with the accommodation.
- Allow for the student to choose their own group to present in front of to provide a more supportive environment

Individual Presentations

- Create a video in advance and presenting this to the class/group/instructor.
- Do not require the student to stand, make eye contact, or perform other non-essential behaviors or tasks, unless it is a fundamental alteration to a learning requirement.
- Consider if there is a lower risk environment for the student where they can still demonstrate the skills that are expected, such as allowing for the student to present from their seat or other comfortable area, rather than the front of the room.
- Consider the possibility of allowing for shorter presentations (5 minutes over 4 separate time periods, vs requiring 20 minutes altogether at one time), and/or consider whether there is the possibility of meeting the learning outcome by shortening the required time for public speaking and supplementing with an alternative assignment.
- Consider the timing of when the student should present (first, last, middle). Sometimes, knowing in advance and being able to plan for when there is an expectation and having some control can be helpful with managing anxiety.
- Allow the student to use tools (notecards, visuals, technology, etc.) for assistance with cueing/prompting, even if such tools are not typically permitted.