



Face Mask Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

The CDC recommends that everyone wear face masks in populated areas, regardless of vaccination status. Wearing a face mask increases protection from COVID-19 and its variants and reduces the chance of spreading. All NOCCCD colleges require students to wear face masks in buildings, classrooms, laboratories, offices, libraries, etc.

Wearing a face mask may be difficult for some people with disabilities/health conditions. For example, students with respiratory disabilities may not be able to wear face masks because of difficult or impaired breathing. Other students with disabilities, such as autism, may be extremely sensitive to touch and texture inhibiting the ability to learn with their nose and mouth covered by fabric. Cypress College, Fullerton College, and NOCE must consider reasonable modifications to the face mask policy. Therefore, students with verified disabilities may be authorized accommodations through Disability Support Services (DSS) in order to facilitate safe participation in college classrooms and other buildings.

To qualify for a mask modification

- DSS will engage in the interactive process to verify the disability and determine appropriate accommodations.
- The request for accommodation must be related to a disability or medical condition.
- The student must provide adequate documentation to start the process (e.g. medical documentation from a qualified professional with sufficient detail.) Alternatively, a DSS Counselor may use professional judgement based on the student's observable condition.
- DSS will address each student on a case-by-case basis and will consider the functional limitations.
- Classroom faculty will receive an accommodation/instructor letter noting the face mask modification.

Examples of face mask modifications/accommodations

- Scarf or bandana covering nose and mouth (loose face covering)
- Full face shield with drape
- Priority seating (6' from others) for students wearing face shield (with drape) or loose face covering
- Intermittent breaks from class to remove mask outdoors
- Selecting all remote/online courses with guidance from DSS counselor
- Assistance to transfer a student from an in-person class to an online or virtual class, if available
- Use of transparent mask for effective communication (for deaf and hard hearing students)

Note: Instructors with deaf and hard of hearing (DHH) students may be asked to accommodate their DHH students by wearing a clear mask to reduce communication challenges.

Recommended syllabus statement

"If a student is permitted to be in class with a face mask modification, please assume this has been authorized by executive leadership for an appropriate reason. Any student approved for this modification to the NOCCCD face mask policy must maintain social distancing protocols. If you have concerns, please discuss them with me outside of class. Please do not question or confront other students in the classroom who are approved for alternative/modified face coverings."

Approved accommodation notification

DSS will generate a note for students with authorized face mask modifications. When an approved student enters a building and is asked about a mask, they will simply show their DSS note.

While these guidelines represent a unified message from all NOCCCD DSS programs, each college retains its own and independent DSS processes and procedures for issuing and facilitating academic adjustments for students with disabilities. For specific campus DSS processes and procedures, please contact your college DSS office.

Students without face coverings and refuse to comply

Before class begins, instructors should check accommodation/instructor letters to see if a face mask accommodation has been approved. Instructors can access accommodation/instructor letters through their faculty DSS portal or may check their email inboxes for the portal link. If a student was issued a face mask accommodation, the instructor does not need to say anything to the student.

If a student arrives to class without a standard face mask (covering mouth and nose) and without an accommodation/instructor letter, please do the following.

- Announce that masks are required on campus per District policy.
- Share with the student that non-compliance of COVID-19 safety protocols is a violation of board policy, NOCCCD Student Code of Conduct (BP 5500), section 1.1: Disruptive behavior, willful disobedience, habitual profanity or vulgarity, the open and persistent defiance of the authority of, or persistent abuse of, District personnel, or violating the rights of other students.
- If the student refuses to wear a mask, direct the student to leave. Directing a student to leave is considered removal from class for one to two class sessions under the AP 5500, Standards of Student Conduct and Discipline.
- Immediately inform your program administrator on duty who will notify the Vice President of Student Services (or designee). The student will be notified if any further disciplinary action is necessary.
- For emergencies with a noncompliant student, call Campus Safety.
- In case of a serious disruption to the learning environment or due to imminent threat or harm to anyone in class, dismiss the class and notify your immediate management supervisor and Campus Safety immediately.