

Interpreter Handbook

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Acknowledgements

UTB/TSC Interpreting Services wishes to acknowledge the contributions of several other institutions in the creation of this handbook. These include especially UT San Antonio but also Northern Arizona University and the ASD Project at Utah State University. The RID Standard Practice Papers were used to help shape the section on the Code of Professional Conduct.

Welcome

The interpreter plays a critical role at Texas Southmost College in the success of students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing. Helen Keller was once asked, "Would you rather be blind or deaf?" Her response was she would rather be blind. The reason behind her response was that while blindness separated her from things deafness separated her from people because of a lack of communication.

In addition to providing the communication link for students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing to interact with teachers and hearing students in regular education classes, interpreters also make it possible for students to gain access to all other school activities and services.

The intent of this Interpreter Handbook is:

- to provide a basic understanding of the policies and procedures that are in place for interpreters;
- to provide clarification of expectations and responsibilities.

With the information presented in the Interpreter Handbook and good judgment, interpreters will have a reliable guide as to what will be expected of them. If you do not understand some of the material or if questions come up that are not covered in the Interpreter Handbook, it is your responsibility to contact the Interpreter Coordinator. From time to time it may be necessary to update sections of the Interpreter Handbook. Copies of updated sections will be provided to all interpreting staff.

We look forward to working with you at TSC and hope you enjoy the experience.

Procedures

Prior to the beginning of each semester, the Director of Disability Services contacts the instructors of students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing to make them aware that one or more student(s) in the class will be using interpreting services. This includes the distribution of an information sheet titled, *Working with Deaf or Hard of Hearing Students*. (Appendix A). On the first day of class, the interpreter should allow extra time to introduce

him/herself to the instructor and discuss any special arrangements such as seating, lecture style, lab/discussion groups, availability of syllabus, and/or notes. The interpreter should address any concerns that the faculty member might have regarding the role of the interpreter.

Interpreting schedules are made prior to the beginning of the semester. Interpreters are assigned to classes on the basis of skill level, requirements of the class, student preferences, and interpreter preferences. Since students may drop classes at any time throughout the semester, no guarantee of hours can be made except for those working on a full time or half time basis. Opportunities for other assignments may occur throughout the semester, including substituting for regular class assignments, meetings, public lectures and performances, etc. Interpreters are called for such assignments based on the type of assignment and interpreter availability. Interpreters should accept assignments only from the Interpreter Coordinator or the Director of Disability Services. If a student requests interpreting services directly from an interpreter, the interpreter should refer the student to the Interpreter Coordinator. The Office of Disability Services is responsible for paying for special requests for interpreting services only when approved by the Director of Disability Services or the Interpreter Coordinator.

Code of Professional Conduct

The Code of Professional Conduct was developed by the RID (Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf) and adopted by the BEI (Board of Evaluation of Interpreters for the Deaf) to serve as *behavioral guidelines* for interpreters. At TSC these guidelines are of extreme importance to the professional interpreter.

Since situations vary and the people involved in the situations are different, a trained professional interpreter must use discretion and good judgment, and be allowed flexibility within, but not willfully violate, the Code of Professional Conduct. Each tenet covers an area which the interpreter must consider and should then apply. Common sense is to be exercised in all situations.

Interpreting services are provided to give students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing the same opportunity to realize their academic potential as is provided to their hearing classmates.

Code of Professional Conduct

- Interpreters adhere to standards of confidential communication.
- Interpreters possess the professional skills and knowledge required for the specific interpreting situation.
- Interpreters conduct themselves in a manner appropriate to the specific interpreting situation.
- Interpreters demonstrate respect for consumers.
- Interpreters demonstrate respect for colleagues, interns, and students of the profession.
- Interpreters maintain ethical business practices.
- Interpreters engage in professional development.

1. Interpreters adhere to standards of confidential communication.

This principle addresses the concept of confidentiality in situations where the interpreter has become privy to information because of his/her presence as a professional. Keeping matters confidential is of extreme importance. Remember, if the student did not require facilitation of communication the interpreter would not be present. However, there are some circumstances when confidential matters may be divulged. If there is a problem that needs attention or if questions arise about the interpreting situation the interpreter may contact an appropriate member of the educational team. The Interpreter Coordinator is responsible for scheduling, skill assessment, and mediation between faculty, students, and interpreters; thus, is privy to confidential information for the purpose of assisting the interpreter and consumers involved when problems or ethical questions arise. Interpreters may also go to a more experienced colleague for advice or help with their skills. Both interpreters must understand that any information shared is confidential, and should not include names, dates, and places even if it is common knowledge.

Confidential Information: Often classmates or instructors turn to interpreters for information on how the student is progressing. Knowledge of the student's progress is an example of confidential information. Seemingly harmless questions may appear as "How is he/she doing with this assignment?" or "Is he/she passing this course?" Regardless of the questioner's intent, we serve as facilitators, not spokesmen; therefore it is best to provide an inelaborate response that redirects the question back to the student such as, "I can't answer that question, but I would be happy to interpret if you would like to ask the student directly." This response not only avoids a code violation but also educates the hearing party about the need to speak directly to the student.

Disclosure of Confidential Information: Interpreters sometimes need to share "confidential" information about students with the Director of Disability Services or Interpreter Coordinator. For example, it is important to notify the office of class cancellations, room and schedule changes, consecutive absences, or other matters that might affect interpreting services.

2. Interpreters possess the professional skills and knowledge required for the specific interpreting situation.

Interpreters should accept assignments using discretion. As interpreters we are required to render the message faithfully by conveying the content and spirit of what is being communicated, using language most readily understood by consumers. An interpreter should be aware of his/her limitations and should not accept assignments that he/she may not be able to handle.

Content: Before accepting an assignment an interpreter takes into consideration whether the subject matter is objectionable to them. If faced with an uncomfortable situation, the interpreter can either continue interpreting and try not to appear judgmental or ask to be replaced. Ethically, the interpreter cannot let his/her personal feelings become a deterrent to accurate interpretation.

Spirit of the Speaker: The affect of the educational interpreter varies from classroom to classroom. Teaching styles and personality quirks transform the message as interpreters take on assignments. The delivery can range

from bland to electrifying as we emulate the spirit of the speaker. Interpreters strive to render the message with dynamic equivalence.

Language Most Readily Understood: The mode of communication used by the interpreter at TSC should be based on two variables: (1) the individual needs and preferences of the student; (2) the nature of the assignment. Based on these variables the interpreter may determine which mode on the sign language continuum will be most effective. The continuum ranges from Signed English to ASL and includes all possible blends or variations in between.

Team Interpreting: An interpreting team may be needed to fully convey the message or to address exceptional communication challenges. All requests for team interpreting must be approved by the Interpreter Coordinator. The following guidelines should be observed when team interpreting:

- Both interpreters should stay for the duration of the assignment.
- Teams should take turns at mutually agreed upon intervals.
- Teams should meet before the assignment to discuss and agree upon how to provide back-up support and be ready to follow that system.
- Teams should also discuss the smoothest way to transition.
- Teams should be ready to provide back-up support at any time.
- Partners should give feedback only when requested. When giving feedback, do so in a constructive manner.

When one member of an interpreting team is absent, a replacement will be sent if one is available. On occasions when a substitute is not available, the interpreter should discuss the situation with the instructor and request that s/he provide an additional break, if possible.

3. Interpreters conduct themselves in a manner appropriate to the specific interpreting situation.

Interpreters are expected to present themselves appropriately in demeanor and appearance. They should also avoid situations that result in conflicts of interest.

Demeanor: An interpreter should strive to maintain a professional attitude toward their profession. This means that the interpreter should show pride in the profession by being on time (preferably early) for all assignments, and being dependable and reliable in all phases of their profession. The interpreter's attitude should enhance communication between Deaf and hearing consumers. The presence of a disruptive interpreter who dictates the situation with his/her attitude does not add to successful communication between the parties involved.

Appearance: Interpreters should dress in a manner appropriate to their status as professionals in a university environment. Attire should be clean, neat, and non-distracting. It is suggested that the interpreter wear clothes that are comfortable, in solid colors that contrast with skin color. Fingernails should be kept trimmed and any polish should be neutral in color. At times an interpreter may be called upon to interpret for faculty or administration meetings, public performances sponsored by the university, or other formal occasions. In these situations formal "business attire" should be worn.

Conflicts of Interest

Personal Relationships: As an interpreter for TSC, you will interact with students, faculty, staff and the community. Relationships with a variety of people will inevitably develop, and positive professional relationships and networking within the profession are strongly encouraged. However certain personal relationships with students are unacceptable within the context of a working relationship.

Interpreters will not be placed in assignments that could threaten to compromise their commitment to the Code of Professional Conduct. Examples of this include but are not limited to interpreting for family members or romantic interests. ("The relative may have attitudinal or emotional issues that could affect objectivity and impartiality and prevent accurate communication." --RID Standard Practice Papers) The deaf person's right to privacy and confidentiality could easily be compromised. Any questions about the ethics of a relational situation should be directed to the Director of Disability Services or Interpreter Coordinator.

Counseling/Advising: As the interpreter you should not counsel or advise the student during or after the assignment on matters pertaining to the assignment. For example, dropping a course is an important decision that may affect the students' status. At times students may reach a critical yet, indecisive point and look to the interpreter for guidance. Dropping a course is a decision the student should make after consulting with the course instructor and advisor.

Interjection of Personal Opinions: At times, while on assignment an interpreter may find him/herself interpreting information with which he/she disagrees. It may pertain to a personal value or conviction. The interpreter may be tempted to express his/her own opinion. However, to insert your own opinion is clearly a violation of the Code of Professional Conduct.

Interpreters may however, explain their role to faculty and students. In addition, sharing information with the student about how to access a note taker and/or tutor is permissible. Furthermore, as cultural differences need to be considered when attempting to render a message faithfully, the interpreter may interject cultural understanding. An example of an appropriate interjection of cultural understanding includes: contextual information needed to accurately interpret music and TV references, culturally laden jokes (hearing or Deaf), etc.

4. Interpreters demonstrate respect for consumer.

Interpreters are expected to honor consumer requests or needs regarding language preferences, and render the message accordingly (interpreted or transliterated). Interpreters also demonstrate respect for consumers by honoring students' requests in selection of interpreters and interpreting dynamics, while recognizing the realities of qualifications, availability, and situation.

Student Requests for a Different Interpreter: Students may request that an interpreter be replaced for the following reasons:

- skill.
- communication preference (mismatch),
- personal reasons.

The student must meet with the Interpreter Coordinator to request a replacement.

Evaluation Forms: Lastly, evaluation forms will be sent at the end of each semester. These will be sent to interpreters, students, and faculty. Examples of evaluation forms are contained in Appendices B and C.

5. Interpreters demonstrate respect for colleagues, interns and students of the profession.

Interpreters are expected to collaborate with colleagues to foster the delivery of effective interpreting services. Also, interpreters should always maintain civility when discussing breaches of ethical or professional conduct. When discussing these, approach colleagues privately to discuss and resolve the issue through standard conflict resolution methods. If the breaches are harmful or habitual, interpreters should report the problem to the Interpreter Coordinator and/or the Disability Services Director.

6. Interpreters maintain ethical business practices.

Interpreters are expected to conduct their business in a professional manner. Prior to an agreement to provide interpreting services, the interpreter should notify the Interpreter Coordinator of certification level and pay expected.

Punctuality: Not reporting to work on time or calling in to report the absence is a serious matter. The first instance of a no call/no show will result in a verbal warning with documentation. The second separate offense may result in a write up that will be forwarded to our immediate supervisors. **The third separate offense will lead to disciplinary steps as deemed appropriate by immediate supervisors.**

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Parking: Interpreters interested in parking on campus can obtain an application for a parking permit from Campus Police. The cost of parking permits depends on the semester. Interpreters who are also TSC students may choose between a staff or student parking permit. Interpreters are responsible for any tickets they may receive for parking improperly

Time Reports: Part time/half time Interpreters should submit completed timesheets to the Interpreter Coordinator by 5:00 p.m. on the 15th and 30/31st of each month. Also, for students who are supported by DARS, do not forget to submit a interpreter log that reflects the assignment and signatures from the instructors.

Interpreter/Student No Show: Interpreters should give the Interpreter Coordinator *advance notice as soon as possible* if they will be unable to perform an assignment. If a student is in a class in which the interpreter has not shown up, s/he should wait fifteen minutes, and then contact Interpreting Services. A substitute will be sent if one is available. All interpreter noshows will be documented and appropriate follow-up will be taken. On the other hand, if a student does not show up at the beginning of class, the interpreter should wait for 15 minutes per class hour and an additional fifteen minutes per hour thereafter.

Class is 1 hour	Wait at least 15 minutes after scheduled start time
Class is 1.5 hours	Wait at least 20 minutes after scheduled start time
Class is 2 hours	Wait at least 30 minutes after scheduled start time
Class is 2.5 hours	Wait at least 35 minutes after scheduled start time
Class is 3 hours	Wait at least 45 minutes after scheduled start time

Interpreters are encouraged to use their own judgment on the least disruptive place to wait for students (e.g. waiting outside the classroom until the student arrives).

In the event of a no-show, the interpreter **must** contact the Interpreter Coordinator immediately after the waiting period is over. The interpreter may be asked to assist in covering another assignment and/or assist with office duties. If the interpreter chooses not to accept his/her reassignment,

the interpreter will not be paid for the regular assignment on that day. Those working outside of Interpreting Services' regular hours of operation (Monday – Friday, 8am – 5pm) may bill for the entire block of scheduled time.

Social Media

Below are guidelines for social media use on (cell phone, laptops, computers, or any electrical device) Employees are limited to personal use of any social media outlet while in the office. Employees may not post financial, confidential, sensitive or proprietary information about the company, clients, employees or applicants. Employees may not post obscenities, slurs or personal attacks that can damage the reputation of the company, clients, employees or applicants. monitor content out on the Internet. Policy violations may result in discipline up to and including termination of employment.

Right to Monitor

All company-supplied technology and company-related work records belong to the company and not to the employee. TSC routinely monitors use of company-supplied technology. Inappropriate or illegal use or communications may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

7. Interpreters engage in professional development.

Interpreters are expected to foster and maintain interpreting competence through ongoing development of knowledge and skills.

This would include activities such as:

- pursuing higher education,
- attending workshops and conferences,
- seeking mentoring and supervision opportunities,
- participating in community events and,
- engaging in independent studies

to help the interpreter remain up-to-date on current terminology changes, new developments, and research being conducted in the field. Membership and participation in professional organizations can be valuable resources. They are important in all professions.

Preparation Time: For classes that involve unusually complex concepts or technical terminology a request for preparation time and/or textbooks can be made by contacting the Director of Disability Services and/or Interpreter Coordinator. Paid time in between classes as well as office hours are excellent opportunities for preparation. The interpreter is responsible for returning all textbooks to the Office of Disability Services upon completion of the assignment.

Interpreting Services Library: Interpreting staff and mentees may also access the Interpreting Services Library. A computer is provided equipped with a webcam and recording software.

Interpreting Services Staff Office Guidelines

- 1. Honor your work hours. Give the Interpreter Coordinator advance notice as soon as possible if you will be unable to attend an assignment.
- 2. Office computers are for office use. TSC policy is that state resources should be used for state purposes only. Therefore, computer use is appropriate only when it is in connection with your work at the university.
- 3. Respect each other's privacy. Do not repeat information that you hear in the office. All matters related to Disability/Interpreting Services (office, students, staff, faculty) should be considered sensitive and confidential. However, some information at TSC is considered public information. If this information is requested, please refer the individual to your supervisor or the appropriate source on campus (Library, Business Affairs, Human Resources, etc.).
- 4. If you feel uncomfortable with your schedule or working conditions, please talk to the Interpreter Coordinator. If the Coordinator is not responsive, you may then talk to the Director of Disability Services. Open and direct communication helps resolve most situations.
- 5. Always be professional and courteous to faculty, staff, students and telephone callers. Rude, abrasive or offensive language is **never** acceptable. If a student or employee uses abusive language with you or your staff, please report it to the Director or the Dean of Students.
- 6. According to Human Resources, TSC employees are expected to dress appropriately for their position. As a member of the Interpreting Services staff, you should dress appropriately at all times. Attire should be clean, neat, and non-distracting.
- 7. Be prepared for assignments. In order to be prepared, you may need to get handouts from the instructor, read the textbook, talk with the instructor and/or student before or after class, etc.
- 8. Interpret cultural information. Interpreting is not a matter of conveying words, but ideas. It is the responsibility of the interpreter to facilitate the exchange of ideas. Culture is an inseparable aspect of

- those ideas. Cultural information must be conveyed to be able to make an accurate interpretation.
- 9. Personal calls should be brief and should be made during breaks. Extended personal conversations on cell phones should be conducted during non-work hours.
- 10. Employees are limited to personal use of any social media outlet while in the office.
- 11. Answer the telephone using professional telephone etiquette. Always offer assistance to callers. The proper way to answer the telephone is: "Interpreting Services, this is 'your name', or "Interpreting Services, your name speaking." If you need to transfer a call, let the caller know you are transferring the call and the phone number you are transferring them to. If you need to put a person on hold, first ask "Are you able to hold while I get that information?" When the caller asks a question whose answer you do not know, never say "I don't know." Instead say, "That's an interesting question. Let me find out and call you back." Be sure that you do get the information and call the person back. Be a promise-keeper!
- 12.Adhere to the Code of Professional Conduct. You should consider each tenet carefully as the behavioral guidelines are of extreme importance.
- 13.Use the Interpreter Coordinator as a resource to help with problem-solving as needed.

I have read and hereby agree to follow the above Interpreting Services office policies and procedures.

Employee Signature	Date

Note:

HOOP Policy 8.2.14 states "If the employee violates any policy of TSC or fails to improve his/her level of performance – demotion, suspension, or dismissal will result."

Appendix A

Working with Students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

More than 11 percent of students registered with Disability Services at TSC are deaf or hard of hearing. Given the high incidence of hearing loss, it is important to understand how to work effectively with deaf or hard of hearing students at the college level.

What's the difference between "deaf" and "hard of hearing?"

Deaf: A condition in which perceivable sounds (including speech) have no meaning for ordinary life purposes.

Hard of Hearing: A condition in which the sense of hearing is defective but functional for ordinary life purposes. Most hard of hearing people can understand some speech sounds (usually with the help of a hearing aid).

Note: Terms such as "deaf and dumb" or "deaf mute" are considered offensive to deaf people.

How else do these students differ?

Students who are deaf or hard of hearing are like all other students in that some are very successful in college and some are not. Their intelligence and communication skills are comparable to the normal distribution of the hearing population. Factors such as personality, family environment, age of onset, degree of hearing loss, etc., play a key role in the kind of communication the student uses. Also, not every student with the same disability will receive the same accommodation. Accommodations must be tailored to the individual.

What is American Sign Language?

American Sign Language (ASL) is a vehicle that enables signers to communicate their thoughts, ideas, and feelings through a gestural/visual modality. In contrast, English, is a vehicle that permits speakers to communicate their thoughts, ideas, and feelings through the speech/auditory pathway. English and ASL are not different expressions of the same language. ASL contains phonology, morphology, semantics, syntax and pragmatics just like spoken languages. It's a visual language expressed with combinations of hand shapes, palm orientations, movements of the hands, arms and body, and facial expressions.

Note: ASL is not a universal sign language. Different sign languages are used in different countries or regions. For example, Mexican Sign Language (MSL) differs notably from American Sign Language.

What do I need to know about ASL interpreters?

An ASL interpreter is a person who interprets between ASL and English. The source language and target language depend on who is "speaking." For example, interpreters may interpret from English to ASL—usually from you to the deaf student—or ASL to English—from the deaf student to you and the class. An interpreter is accessible to all parties in a classroom setting.

Note: Be aware of "process time," which is the time required to process information into another language. Recognize that there is a processing time of 5-10 seconds between what you say and the time that an interpreter signs the material to students. This has significant implications, particularly in an interactive classroom. If you ask for class participation (to answer questions, state opinions, give examples, etc.) allow the necessary time for your statement to be interpreted before calling on a student. This will provide an equal opportunity for participation.

What about accommodations?

Students who are deaf or hard of hearing, like other students with disabilities, must provide instructors with an Accommodation Request Form if they are requesting any accommodations beyond the use of a sign language interpreter. If a deaf student approaches you about accommodations, refer him or her to Disability Services. Accommodations are never "automatic" and are always provided on a case by case basis. For example, because it is very difficult to watch an interpreter and take notes at the same time, a deaf or hard of hearing student may need an individual to take notes for him/her. Upon presentation by the student of an Accommodation Request Form, a professor may ask the class for a volunteer note taker.

Top Ten 'Best Practices' When Working with Students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

When addressing a deaf or hard of hearing student, speak directly to him/her. Avoid saying "Tell him..." or "Ask her..." This is particularly important if you encourage class discussion and student participation because it establishes a feeling of direct communication.

Direct all questions regarding the student's progress or grade to the student. Speak naturally and clearly. There is no need to exaggerate lip movements or volume. Of course, the interpreter will be more than happy to interpret for you if you feel the need to speak with the student, and all information will be confidential.

Speaking with your back to the student while writing on the chalkboard is especially problematic. An overhead is often a good alternative. Since vision is a deaf person's primary channel for receiving information, visual aids are a tremendous help.

During group discussions encourage and remind students not to talk over each other, and to allow a slight pause before the next speaker begins. Check to see if the interpreter has completed each individual's message before proceeding to the next comment.

In situations where a video will be shown, contact Media Services for assistance with closed captioning. Keep in mind, light levels need to be bright enough in the classroom so the deaf or hard of hearing student can see what the interpreter is signing.

Treat students equally. When students register for your class they are all there to learn. You are not required or expected to lower your academic standards for students with disabilities. It is best to maintain high expectations. However, in some cases the instructor and student may need to work together to find alternate methods of accomplishing required tasks.

Have Power Point and lecture notes available to the student(s) before class. Providing these materials before class makes it easier for deaf and hard of hearing students to prepare for class and as importantly provides a context for class discussions. Make sure the interpreter has access to these materials too – either through a hard copy or web distribution.

While using Power Point slides, overheads, or other similar material, give students time to read them before moving on. This pause allows students to absorb information before you begin to explain the content and will help minimize later confusion. Allow ample time for deaf and hard of hearing students to read presented media before you begin to speak.

Don't use words like "this" and "that" as referents in the class or lab. Instead use proper names including technical terminology when referencing items in this fashion, for example: "Move the small beaker to the table by the window." Allow time for the student(s) and interpreter to reference the item or location so that the proper association is made. When you are more specific it helps all students, hearing or deaf, to understand.

If you sense that the interpreter is struggling with classroom content, talk with him/her after class; this communication will foster better access for the students. Allow the interpreter freedom to ask questions or bring up concerns.

PA

Appendix B TSC Instructor's Evaluation of Sign Language Interpreter

Please help us improve our services by providing feedback on the sign language interpreter working in your class.

Semester/Year: _____Course: ____

Interpreter:(Name)	_Date:			
The above interpreter	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
is punctual				
acts in a professional manner				
is compliant with my classroom requests				
is willing to facilitate communication between me and the student				
is effective at facilitating a good working relationship between me and the student				
is audible and clear when voicing for the student				
arranges his/her seating and space prior to class				
sits/stands so that the speaker and visual aids can be seen				

Comments? Questions? (Use other side if necessary)
Instructor Name (optional)

PLEASE RETURN TO TSC Disability Services, Lightner Ctr,

Appendix C

Texas Southmost College Office of Disability Services

Student Evaluation of Interpreters

TSC is constantly striving to improve the services offered by our staff and hourly interpreters. As a student who is deaf, you can help. Please complete one evaluation form for each of your current classroom interpreters.

Interpreter Name Class:		s:				_	
iemester: Date:							_
Circle the nu	ımber that	best describe	s your opinion.				
1-Strongly Agree	trongly Agree 2–Agree 3–Disagree 4–Strongly Disagree						
The above interpreter:							
1. Wears solid colored cla	othes that o	contrast with :	skin tone	1	2	3	4
2. Wears clothing that is	neat and a	ppropriate for	the situation	1	2	3	4
3. Signs clearly				1	2	3	4
4. Uses my preferred mode of communication				1	2	3	4
5. Spells correctly				1	2	3	4
6. Finger spells clearly				1	2	3	4
7. Has good sign vocabuld	ıry			1	2	3	4
8. Voices for student wit	hout interr	uption		1	2	3	4
9. Has an open attitude o	and is willing	g to accept fe	edback	1	2	3	4
10. Keeps good eye conto	ıct			1	2	3	4
11. Is on time to class				1	2	3	4
Comments? _							
Please return this form to the Disabil	ity Services Off	ice. Thank you for yo	our help.				