



## **Accessibility/Disability and Accommodations Policy**

### **Statement**

Meadville Lombard Theological School is committed to providing a quality theological education to a diverse group of students. This includes a strong commitment, rooted in the School's mission, to providing individuals with disabilities with equal access to programs, services, and activities, consistent with applicable law.

For purposes of this Policy, an individual with a disability is defined as a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. Individuals meeting this definition are protected against discrimination and also are entitled to reasonable accommodation at their request and pursuant to the criteria set forth in this Policy below. The law and Meadville policy also protect from discrimination individuals who have a history or record of impairment or people who are perceived by others as having such an impairment.

Consistent with this policy against discrimination, Meadville Lombard provides reasonable accommodations where they are necessary to allow students with disabilities to fully access and participate in the School's educational programs and activities. Depending upon a disabled student's individual circumstances and needs, reasonable accommodations may include academic adjustments, examination modifications, or auxiliary aids allowing students to access classroom discussions or online information. Reasonable accommodations do not include modifications that would fundamentally alter the School's academic offerings or that would constitute an undue hardship or burden to the School and its community. Students with disabilities are expected to meet the academic and technical standards of our program, just as employees with disabilities are expected to fulfill the essential functions of their positions. The purpose of reasonable accommodation is to make reasonable adjustment that permit a student or employee to meet these expectations and fulfill these functions.

Below, the School sets forth its policies and practices for addressing requests, confidentiality of information provided, and any grievances or concerns about administration of this Policy. Meadville Lombard's Section 504 Coordinator is the official charged with overseeing the School's compliance with disability issues. Dr. Pamela Lightsey ([plightsey@meadville.edu](mailto:plightsey@meadville.edu)) serves as our Section 504 coordinator. They can provide consultation with any questions, concerns, requests for accommodation, or grievances. Meadville Lombard's ADA grievance process is set forth in the Student Handbook.

## **Disclosure and Process of Requesting Reasonable Accommodation:**

Individuals with disabilities are not required to disclose their disability status or to request accommodation. If, however, a student believes they may need reasonable accommodation, self-identification is encouraged at any time and as soon as possible after the student becomes aware that accommodation may be needed. Accommodations necessarily cannot be retroactive – so, the sooner a student self-identifies and Meadville Lombard can explore with the student, possible reasonable accommodations, the sooner reasonable accommodations may be implemented.

Requests for accommodation should be submitted pursuant to the procedures and using the Request for Accommodation form described below and attached to this Policy. These procedures and the applicable form are subject to change going forward. If the School changes its procedures or forms, these changes will be noted on this webpage.

## **Policy/Process of Applying and Documenting:**

Meadville Lombard Theological School follows these guidelines and procedures for evaluating requests for accommodation and medical treaters' documentation of disabilities:

1. A student who wishes to request accommodation based upon a medical or mental condition that may constitute a disability should make a request using the "Accommodation Request Form" attached to this Policy. Any questions about this form or what is needed may be addressed to Ashley Senesac at [asenesac@meadville.edu](mailto:asenesac@meadville.edu) or Dr. Pamela Lightsey at [plightsey@meadville.edu](mailto:plightsey@meadville.edu).
2. The clinician/treater selected by the student must be qualified to make a diagnosis and provide accommodation recommendations in the particular area of practice (and cannot be a member of the student's family).
3. The evaluation should be written on professional letterhead, be current (usually within 6 months but no more than one year), and set forth the date of the clinician's last appointment with the student. The clinician should clearly state the medical and/or mental condition(s) for which accommodation is requested and provide relevant medical or other history. If relevant, the evaluation should also discuss current treatments and assistive devices that the student has employed in past educational settings.
4. The evaluation should include a statement from the clinician indicating a timeframe within which the student should be re-evaluated for the medical and/or mental conditions for which accommodation is sought (or indicate why no reevaluation is needed if that is the case). The evaluation should also indicate the length of time for which the reasonable accommodation or accommodations will be needed in the opinion of the clinician, and the evaluation should explain this recommended duration.
5. The evaluation should provide a description of the functional limitations that the student experiences as a result of the medical and/or mental condition(s) for which accommodation is sought, specifically focusing upon a post-secondary educational setting.

6. The evaluation should identify the accommodation(s) being requested and discuss why this relates to and will address the functional limitations described by the medical professional.
7. Should the School need to ask follow-up questions of the medical professional, the student will be asked to give a medical release consent to both the School and the student's medical professional. If documentation as originally obtained is unclear or fails to include the information described above, this may delay the School's ability to evaluate the request and grant reasonable accommodations.

### **Follow-up and Interactive Process:**

Once the Director of Enrollment Management receives the Request for Accommodations form (with the above-stated documentation), the Director reviews it (and may consult on a confidential basis with a disabilities consultant if deemed necessary), and, with the student's written consent, may also consult with the student's clinician (if follow-up or clarification is needed). The Director of Enrollment Management will engage in an interactive process with the student to determine what accommodations will be reasonable and/or appropriate. When several reasonable accommodations have been identified, the School will consider the student's preference in deciding among reasonable options, but ultimately the School reserves the discretion to decide which accommodation to grant as among several reasonable options for accommodation.

### **Grant of Accommodation; Confidentiality; Process for Implementing:**

Student requests under this Policy for reasonable accommodations at Meadville Lombard involve the following process: (1) submission of such a request, with documentation, to the Director of Enrollment Management as soon as practicable once a student decides to make such a request; (2) evaluation of the request and related clinical documentation, which may include follow-up with the clinician; (3) an interactive process between the School and student; and (4) a determination as to whether (and which) reasonable accommodation(s) will be granted, which decision is made by the School and communicated to the student and to faculty or staff members who need to know. The evaluation of the request for accommodations may be shared within Meadville Lombard as deemed appropriate to make a determination, but information about the student's medical or mental condition and related documentation will only be shared on a strict "need to know" basis, and medical information and documentation will be maintained as confidential consistent with Meadville Lombard policy and applicable law.

When reasonable accommodations are granted, the student will work with the Director of Enrollment Management and the Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs to inform individual faculty members and to implement reasonable accommodations.

If a student is dissatisfied with the resolution of an accommodation request or believes they have experienced discrimination on the basis of disability, a grievance may be filed with the Section 504 Coordinator.



## Reasonable Accommodation(s) Request Form

Student requests under this Policy for reasonable accommodations at Meadville Lombard involve the following process:

- (1) submission of such a request, with documentation, to the Director of Enrollment Management as soon as practicable once a student decides to make such a request;
- (2) evaluation of the request and related clinical documentation, which may include follow-up with the clinician;
- (3) an interactive process between the School and student; and
- (4) a determination as to whether (and which) reasonable accommodation(s) will be granted, which decision is made by the School and communicated to the student and to faculty or staff members who need to know.

The evaluation of the request for accommodations may be shared within Meadville Lombard as deemed appropriate to make a determination, but information about the student's medical or mental condition and related documentation will only be shared on a strict "need to know" basis, and medical information and documentation will be maintained as confidential consistent with Meadville Lombard policy and applicable law.

When reasonable accommodations are granted, the student will work with the Director of Enrollment Management and the Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs to inform individual faculty members and to implement reasonable accommodations.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Student ID: \_\_\_\_\_

Preferred Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Nature of medical and/or mental conditions for which reasonable accommodation is sought:

Reasonable accommodation(s) that you believe you will require at Meadville Lombard Theological School:

Attach recent clinical documentation (no older than one year) and setting forth the information identified in the Meadville Lombard Accessibility/Disability and Accommodations Policy (attached).

Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please submit this completed form to Ashley Senesac, Financial Aid & Student Services Administrator, at [asenesac@meadville.edu](mailto:asenesac@meadville.edu).