



Centenary University

Dietary Accommodations Policy (ADA & Section 504 Compliance)

Policy Statement

Centenary University is committed to providing equal access to its programs and services in accordance with the **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)** and **Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973**. Dietary accommodations are considered reasonable modifications or auxiliary aids for students with documented disabilities when disability-related dietary needs substantially limit a student's ability to equally access campus dining services.

Dietary accommodations are coordinated through **Accessibility Services**, in collaboration with **Dining Services**, using an individualized approach.

Definition of Dietary Accommodations

Dietary accommodations are reasonable modifications or necessary forms of assistance provided to students who have self-identified with Accessibility Services as having a documented disability. These accommodations apply when a student's health condition, mobility limitation, allergy, or other disability-related dietary need significantly impacts their ability to access proper nutrition through standard campus dining services or programs.

Meal Plan Requirement & Exceptions

Students residing in traditional residence halls are required to participate in a residential meal plan. However, Centenary University recognizes that, in certain circumstances, a student's disability may necessitate reasonable dietary accommodations to mitigate the impact of the disability and ensure equal access to nutrition.

Accessibility Services works collaboratively with the Director of Dining Services to evaluate dietary accommodation requests on an individualized, case-by-case basis. In many instances, existing dining options may sufficiently meet a student's needs, and a formal accommodation may not be required.



Reasonableness & Fundamental Alteration

Not all accommodation requests can be approved. The University is not required to fundamentally alter the nature of its dining programs or services. When a requested accommodation is not reasonable, the University may offer an alternative accommodation that provides effective access without constituting a fundamental alteration or undue administrative burden.

Interactive Process

Students with documented allergies, medical conditions, or other disability-related dietary needs that limit their ability to participate in the standard meal plan may request accommodations through Accessibility Services. Approved accommodations result from an collaborative process involving:

- The student
- Accessibility Services
- Dining Services

This process ensures individualized consideration and compliance with ADA and Section 504 requirements.

Documentation Requirements

All dietary accommodation requests must follow the procedures outlined below and include supporting documentation when required.

Documentation:

- Must be relevant, current, and from a licensed professional when requested
- May vary depending on the nature of the disability and the requested accommodation



- May include documentation of prior accommodations (e.g., medically prescribed or therapeutic diets)

Centenary University reserves the right to request additional documentation as necessary, even when some documentation has already been submitted.

Medical documentation is considered as part of the decision-making process but **does not automatically guarantee approval** of a specific accommodation. Recommendations that exceed what is necessary to provide equal access may result in alternative accommodations or referrals to other campus resources.

Procedural Overview: Student Request Process

Students whose disability-related dietary needs cannot be sufficiently met through existing dining options should follow the process below:

Step 1: Submit a Request

Students must complete the **Dining Accommodation Form** which can be found on the ASO webpage or by directly contacting ASO at: accessibilityservices@centenaryuniversity.edu

This process allows students to self-report how their disability impacts dietary access. Upon submission, students will receive an email from Accessibility Services, which may include follow-up questions and requests for additional documentation.

Step 2: Dining Services Consultation (If Applicable)

If needed, relevant information will be shared with Dining Services, and the student may be asked to meet with the Director of Dining Services and/or the provider's dietician to review available options and discuss dietary needs.

Step 3: Determination of Accommodation

Accessibility Services, in consultation with Dining Services, will determine whether an accommodation is appropriate. One of the following determinations will be made:

- **Denied**
The student's dietary needs can be met through existing dining options and/or the request for accommodations is not due to a documented disability, but a dietary preference.



- **Approved with Modification**

The student's needs can be met through reasonable adjustments (e.g., reduced meal plan, specially prepared meals, pre-ordered meals).

- **Meal Plan Exemption**

The student's dietary needs cannot be reasonably accommodated, and the student is exempt from the meal plan requirement.

Step 4: Notification

If approved, Accessibility Services will issue a formal **Dietary Accommodation Letter** within 7-10 business days. The letter will outline the approved accommodations and be shared with relevant campus departments on a need-to-know basis.

Duration & Renewal

Dietary accommodations are approved indefinitely or temporarily depending on the nature of the disability. Students may be asked to consult with Dining Services at the end of each academic year to determine whether new or expanded dining options can meet their needs.

Students may request modifications or additions to approved accommodations at any time. Additional documentation may be required.

Student Responsibilities

Students are responsible for:

- Communicating with Accessibility Services regarding accommodation needs
 - Engaging in the collaborative process
 - Notifying Accessibility Services and Dining Services if approved accommodations are not being effectively implemented
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Dietary Accommodations – Quick FAQ

Who is eligible to request dietary accommodations?

Students with a documented disability that substantially impacts their ability to access campus dining services.

Do food preferences qualify as a disability accommodation?

No. Personal preferences, lifestyle choices, or elective diets are not considered disabilities under ADA or Section 504.

Is medical documentation always required?

Not always. Documentation requirements vary based on the nature of the request. Accessibility Services will notify students if documentation is needed.

Does a doctor's recommendation guarantee approval?

No. Medical recommendations are considered but do not automatically result in approval. Accommodations must be reasonable and necessary for equal access.

Can I be exempt from the meal plan?

Meal plan exemptions are considered only when a student's disability-related dietary needs cannot be reasonably accommodated through Dining Services.

How long does the process take?

Once all required information is received, determinations are typically made within 7- 10 business days.

How long do accommodations last?

Accommodations can be permanent or temporary depending on the nature of the student's disability.

What if my accommodations are not working?

Students should contact Accessibility Services and Dining Services immediately to address concerns and explore adjustments.