

Information for Faculty about Personal Care Assistants

Best Practices for Interacting with a PCA in the Classroom:

- Address the student directly when interacting in the learning environment; look at the student when speaking, not the PCA.
- If the student's disability affects communication, the PCA may verbalize the student's comments. The student and the PCA will have already established a non-disruptive mode of communication between themselves prior to the class. For example, the student may use a communication board and the PCA will read aloud the student's comment or question.
- If you have been notified by the DRC that a student will be bringing a PCA to your class, there is a possibility that this student may also utilize a classroom assistant. A classroom assistant provides academic support in the classroom, such as scribing for in-class assignments, using a calculator, or other manual tasks. This may mean that there are up to two extra people in the class other than the enrolled student (the DRC is able to provide additional chairs if needed).
- A PCA is not an academic participant, i.e. taking or auditing the class, therefore the PCA should not be asking questions, making comments, taking notes or recording activities. A PCA should be available (in the classroom or close by) to the student as needed.

FAQs:

Q: What is the difference between a PCA and a classroom/lab assistant?

A: A PCA provides personal care to the student in the classroom, such as repositioning of the student, removing materials from a backpack, assisting the student with communication, or attending to the student's personal needs. A classroom/lab assistant performs only tasks that are associated with making academic activities accessible to the student, such as scribing, measuring, utilization of a calculator, etc.

Q: How do I know if it is the student or the PCA who is answering a question in my class?

A: If the student's disability affects communication, the student will choose an effective way to communicate. This may include technology such as a voice box, communication board, or typing on a computer. This could also include the PCA verbalizing the student's comments, as long as it is clear it is not the PCA responding themselves. Prior to attending class the PCA and the student will have established a non-disruptive mode of communication between themselves.

Q: Who employs the PCA?

A: A PCA is employed by the student. A classroom/lab assistant is employed by the DRC.

Q: If I have any questions or concerns regarding the behavior of a PCA in my classroom, who should I talk to?

A: PCAs are held to the same standard of conduct as every Northeastern University student. If you have concerns regarding a PCA's behavior, a discussion with the student should be your first course of action. If your concerns are not resolved after this discussion, please contact the DRC. For violations to the Student Code of Conduct, please contact the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution.