



Office of Disability Services

Accommodations in College

In high school, a student with documented learning disabilities most likely has an Individualized Educational Program (IEP) or a 504 Plan which outlines the student's modifications and other support that the student will need to complete high school successfully. The IEP is developed by a team comprised of the school psychologist, school counselor, teacher, parents, student, and others who are involved in the student's educational needs. The team reviews the documentation and the student's performance to develop a plan of action for the student.

After a student graduates from high school, IEPs and 504 plans are no longer an option, even if the student had such a plan while in high school. At the college level, these are not acceptable as documentation; a psychological evaluation or the medical doctor's report, depending on the disability, is needed. Accommodations at the college level are focused on access to learning. In order to receive accommodations in college, the student must request accommodations. The Disability Services office, which is required by law to be on every college campus that receives federal funding, evaluates the requests and determines if the requests are supported by the documentation.

At the post-secondary level, accommodations do not change or alter the curriculum or the requirements of a course. At the high school level, a modification might be that a student is allowed to do only half the number of math problems as everyone else or write a 5-page paper rather than the 10 pages everyone else is doing, or use a word list on an exam while others are not. None of these modifications is likely to be granted at the college level; in college, students must be able to perform at the college level with no adjustments to assignments or the curriculum. Accommodations that provide equal access to learning, such as, assistive technology to help with reading and comprehension will be granted at the college level if documentation supports the need because the assistive technology provides access to the reading material that other students are reading and understanding.

Just because a modification is received in high school and recommended in the psychological evaluation, does not mean it will be approved at the college level.

Typical accommodations at the college level include:

- Extended time on exams
- Testing in a quiet environment without distractions

- Note taker
- Recording lectures in class
- Assistive Technology
- The use of a computer to take notes or answer essay questions
- Early registration
- A scribe to read the test to the student
- Substitution for a foreign language

After evaluating the appropriate documentation, the Office of Disability Services determines the eligibility of the student to receive accommodations and works closely with the student to develop a personalized list of appropriate accommodations that will benefit the student for academic success. Other accommodations are available depending on the student's needs, the supporting documentation, and the type of disability services being utilized. However, students should understand that the curriculum and course requirements will not be altered, and accommodations are put in place to provide equal access to learning and do not guarantee success.

Prior to graduation from high school, it is important that students know and understand what their disabilities are and what accommodations have benefited them in the past. Students that understand their specific learning disability are more able to advocate for themselves and request the appropriate accommodations when they enter college. Students should be familiar with their documentation and what it means. A psychological evaluation should include the student's challenges as a learner, but also describe the areas in which the student is a strong learner. The student can use those areas of strength to help with compensating for the areas that are more challenging.

After a student is accepted into a college, it is wise to contact the Office of Disability Services at that college and apply for accommodations. The Office of Disability Services on the college campus guides students through the process of requesting and notifying the instructors of the student's accommodations. Remember, at the college level the appropriate documentation will most likely include a current (within the past 3 years) psychological evaluation or a medical doctor's report.

To learn more about student's rights and responsibilities for accessing accommodations in college, look at the U.S. Department of Education's website.
<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/transition.html#reproduction>