

# Accommodations in college

**Reasonable accommodations are available to postsecondary students who disclose a disability. An accommodation is a support that gives students an equal opportunity to participate and benefit from college, which has been authorized by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).**

## Locate the disability services office at your campus

Accommodations are developed and approved through the college disability services (DS) office, but keep in mind that the names of the offices and the staffing models may be different from one campus to the next, depending on the size and type of institution. Most of the information you will need to find about the DS office should be available on the college website.

If you choose to meet with a DS professional in order to receive accommodations, you will usually be required to provide documentation. This documentation gives the DS personnel information to support the accommodations you are requesting and gives a history of accommodations you have used successfully in the past. Any specific questions should be directed to the DS office at your campus.

## Meet with disability services personnel

In order to receive accommodations, it is your responsibility to make an appointment to meet with the DS professional. At this meeting, which is sometimes called an intake or interview, be prepared to talk about yourself, your educational goals and your disability. You should also be ready to answer questions about your ability to access programs, activities and services of the college.

## Examples of accommodations

### Granted on a case-by-case basis.

#### 1 Changes to a classroom environment or task that can include the following examples:

- Extended time or a quiet place to take an exam.
- Assistance with lecture notes, such as a note-taker, web notes, permission to audio record lectures or use of a smartpen.
- Materials and/or books in alternative formats such as audio, large print or digital format.
- Use of a dictionary or spell checker.

#### 2 Removal of architectural barriers, such as adapting a classroom or lab to meet the needs of a student who uses a wheelchair.

#### 3 Exceptions to policies, practices or procedures with examples that include these accommodations:

- Priority registration.
- Accessing assignments early.
- Early access to the course syllabus.

#### 4 Provision of auxiliary aids and services that include the following examples:

- Providing a sign language interpreter.
- Close circuit television (CCTV).
- Screen-reading software.
- Voice-activated software.

### Reasonable accommodation process

Your meeting with the DS professional is an interactive one with the objective of ensuring equal access, the removal of architectural barriers, and the provision of reasonable and appropriate auxiliary aids and services. What will be considered in the process?

- **Disability**—Do you have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity?
- **Qualified**—Do you meet the college course or program requirements?
- **Known**—Is there adequate documentation that is current and supports the requested accommodations? Was the documentation provided by a qualified assessor?
- **Further considerations**—Does the requested accommodation fundamentally alter a program or the academic standards of a course or program? Does the accommodation impose an undue financial or administrative burden on the institution? Are you a threat to yourself or others?
- **Result**—The result of the process is the availability of reasonable accommodations.

### Questions for the disability services professional

When you meet for an intake interview, you should also have questions ready for the DS professional so that you can gain a better understanding of the particular program. Questions could include the following:

- How many students are registered to receive disability services on campus?
- Once an accommodation plan is implemented, how are the services provided?
- How are instructors notified of recommended accommodations?
- When do I need to meet with disability services? Do I need to request accommodations for each term I am registered?
- What technology is available for use by students with disabilities? Is the technology available for use in the classroom?
- What support is available for learning to use adaptive technology?
- What additional services are available on campus for student success, such as tutoring or help with time management?



### Difficulties with accommodations

If you are having difficulties with the implementation of any of your accommodations, you should notify the DS staff as soon as possible. Communicate your needs and be flexible, as things do not always happen as expected or are not implemented in the same way as they were in high school. Successful accommodations come from open and timely collaboration between the college staff, faculty and you the student.

### Accommodations vs. modifications

Students with disabilities transitioning directly from high school to college might be used to services that will not translate well to the college environment. Course modifications that alter the fundamental requirements of a course will not be allowed. For example, for many courses regular attendance is required and may be a part of the course grade. Assignment due dates also will not be automatically extended as an accommodation, but will be handled on a case-by-case basis.

Students with an intellectual disability arrange with their professors and the inclusive higher education staff for course learning outcomes and related modifications, if any. The universal design for learning and differentiation of instruction increase the accessibility of the course and the student’s successful participation.

While extra time on tests is a common accommodation in college, modification of tests will usually not be an option. For example, rephrasing questions or reducing the number of choices on a multiple choice test will not be allowed. If you are accustomed to these types of course modifications in high school, one approach can be to start slowly and take fewer credits, at least initially.

### Reasonable accommodation process:



### Accommodations not provided by disability services

In accordance with the law, there are some modifications and services that colleges do not provide as a reasonable accommodation that may include the following:

- **Individually prescribed devices** such as wheelchairs, hearing aids or glasses.
- **Personal services**, such as private tutoring, transportation or personal-care attendants (Note: Tutoring services may be available elsewhere on campus for all students.)
- **Modifications that lower or change course standards** or program standards and would change the essence of a program, such as allowing a student in an auto mechanics program to take a written test on repairing an engine instead of actually repairing an engine, or allowing a student in a public speaking class to substitute a written paper for an oral presentation, and/or services which are unduly burdensome, administratively or financially.

### Otherwise qualified: meeting academic requirements and standards

Disability accommodations depend on whether you are considered “otherwise qualified.” A student with a disability is otherwise qualified when he or she can meet the same academic requirements and standards as non-disabled students. All students are required to meet an instructor’s expectation regarding class participation, work standards, attendance and ability to demonstrate knowledge. Students also need to adhere to general college policies, including the college code of conduct and satisfactory academic progress. When course accommodations are being developed, consideration is given to the necessary requirements and standards of the course.

Students with an intellectual disability may not meet the same academic requirements and standards as their

non-disabled peers. This is considered during the admission process and can impact academic support. It also depends on whether the student takes the class for credit or audit.

### Postsecondary technical standards

The term “technical standard” refers to nonacademic criteria that are essential to participation in a college course or program. Examples of technical standards may include the ability to manipulate materials in a laboratory, the ability to recognize colors or patterns, or even behavioral requirements. If technical standards are necessary for demonstration of mastery, and if reasonable accommodations are provided as appropriate, programs may establish standards of eligibility criteria even if physical tasks and/or levels of achievement will likely be impossible for some persons with a disability.

### Postsecondary educational options

Students with disabilities concurrently enrolled in high school and college under Postsecondary Enrollment Options (PSEO) must meet the requirements of the college. Reasonable accommodations are determined by the college, but the school district may provide auxiliary services, such as additional tutoring outside of the classroom. For more information on PSEO or concurrent enrollment, students should meet with a PSEO admissions representative or with disability services prior to enrollment.

Students with disabilities who do not meet the PSEO requirements may still be able to concurrently enroll in high school and college. The students should meet with their IEP case manager and the college representative to make the necessary arrangements prior to enrollment.

### Wise student advice: Partner with disability services staff



“Working with disability services is one of the most important things that I have found to be very helpful to me in my college experience. I would like to share some advice for those who are wondering how disability services can help them in their college experience.

The first suggestion is to see what services are offered at the college of your choice. There are more options that are offered at college than there are at high school. For example, I have an accommodation for note taking and to help me with this I use a smartpen that records audio and notes I write on a special type of notebook. When I am done with class, I can upload the information to my computer at home and all my lectures and notes are available for me to listen to as many times as I need. When taking tests, I use a private room and have access to a program that reads the tests to me at my preferred speed level. This is very helpful for someone who may be an auditory learner. What I like about the private rooms is that they are quieter than when I was in high school and I am able to concentrate better.

My final suggestion is to get to know the staff. It is important to know the staff because they will get to know you and your learning style. As you get to know the staff, you will know who to approach and feel comfortable bringing up any concerns.

I had an experience with a concern where a new teacher was starting and I explained to this teacher that I had accommodations and that with test-taking I would prefer to take the test in the private room in the Academic Support Center. This teacher did not understand and did not follow my accommodations. I brought this concern up to one of the staff members at the Academic Support Center and this staff member e-mailed this instructor to explain more about what their services were and what my accommodations were. When talking with this instructor again, everything was clearer for both of us and my accommodations were followed. This is a great example of how staff members are always willing to help with anything.”

— Nursing major