

How Accommodations Differ Between High School and College for Students with Disabilities

Applicable Laws

High School	College
IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act)	ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act, 1990) as Amended (ADA Amendments Act, 2008)
Rehabilitation Act, 1973, Section 504	Rehabilitation Act, 1973, Section 504
IDEA is for Academic Success	ADAAA is for Equal Academic Access

Required Medical Documentation

High School	College
IEP (Individualized Education Plan) or 504 Plan	IEPs may not be sufficient documentation for colleges - Students typically need specific, current psychological or medical evaluation reports from trained medical providers describing each category of disability in such a way to support the necessity of requested accommodations
School may provide evaluation at no cost to student	Student must get evaluation via personal medical insurance or at own expense
Documentation focuses on determining whether student qualifies for accommodations based on disability categories in IDEA	Current Documentation should provide diagnosis meeting the ADAA definition of disability, functional limitations, and demonstrated need for specific accommodations

Self-Advocacy

High School	College
Student is identified by teacher/school and is supported by parents and teachers	Students must self-identify to Accessibility Services
School is responsible for arranging accommodations	Student is responsible for self-advocacy and seeking/requesting accommodations when needed
Teachers may approach you if they believe you need assistance	Instructors may be helpful, but it is not their responsibility to initiate contact if you are struggling

Parent's Role

High School	College
Parents have access to student's IDEA records	Parents do not have access to student's records without student's signed consent
Parents can advocate for student	Parents cannot advocate for student

Instruction

High School	College
School may modify materials and/or alter pace of assignments	Instructors are not required , and are unlikely to modify curriculum or alter assignment deadlines
Students may encounter short reading assignments that are reviewed in class	Students are required to read substantial amounts of material and write papers that may not be directly discussed in class
Students may not need to read materials, and may only need to listen in class for adequate learning	Students may need to rely on notes taken during lectures and frequently review course materials to demonstrate learning outcomes

Grades and Tests

High School	College
Grades may be modified to reflect some competency on less work or modified exams	Modified grades and exams are not available - Exam accommodations (extended time, private testing) may be appropriate for some types of disability when requested prior to the exam
Exams may be more frequent and involve less material	Fewer and infrequent exams covering more material that may not have been directly discussed in the lectures
Retaking a failed exam or making up an exam is often available	Makeup exams are rarely an option and will require permission from the instructor - Retaking a failed exam is highly unlikely
Teachers will often remind the student about assignments and exam dates	Student is expected to read, understand and frequently consult the course syllabus to know when to turn in assignments and take exams

Study

High School	College
Study time and support may be included in the IEP/504 plan	Studying and tutoring arrangements are not accommodations - All students may seek out the free campus tutoring services on their own time based on availability - Private tutoring is at the student's expense
Student's time and assignments are usually structured by teachers and assistants	Students need to manage their own study time and complete assignments before the due dates
Students may only spend one to two hours per week studying or preparing for exams	Students in traditional campus courses should expect to study at least two to three hours outside of each hour of in-class time. Students in condensed/accelerated courses should expect to study four to five hours outside of each hour of in-class time.

Source: Adapted from Jeanne Kincaid 2010 AHEAD Presentation with approval (2019).