

High School vs College Accommodations: What's the Difference?



The most important thing to know is that the University is committed to providing an equal opportunity for student participation in the University's programs, activities, and services.

However, there are some key differences in policy, procedure, and the laws governing accommodations in college versus high school. This document highlights some of these differences to help you make the transition to college feeling supported and confident.



General Accessibility Requirements for Colleges

Colleges ARE required to:

- Comply with the ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Civil Rights Restoration Act.
- Make all programs and services physically accessible to all students.
- Provide auxiliary aids, notetakers, and appropriate equipment to ensure the participation of students with disabilities in college classes and activities.
- Accommodate the academic participation of qualified students with disabilities in college classes and activities.

Colleges ARE NOT required to:

- Comply with the IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act).
- Provide specific auxiliary aids as long as the college provides a method of assistance that allows equal opportunity.
- Provide academic modifications if they would fundamentally alter the nature of the course or program or place undue burden on the institution.
- Lower admission criteria for applicants with disabilities.
- Diagnose a disability or conduct disability testing and assessment.
- Provide personal attendants or personal tutors.
- Prepare "Individualized Education Programs" (IEP's).

Other Differences to Be Aware Of

Policies and Procedures

In High School:

- The school is responsible for identifying students with disabilities
- The school must provide the assessment of disability, classify disability, and involve parents
- School staff will discuss academic progress with parents or legal guardians
- The school must develop an Individualized Educational Program
- The school must provide a free and appropriate education including modified program and appropriate related services

In College:

- The student must self identify or disclose their disability
- The student must provide documentation of their disability to the designated office
- The student is considered an adult with privacy protections. Staff cannot talk with parents/legal guardians about the student's academic progress
- The student must request specific accommodations backed up by supporting evidence or documentation from a qualified medical provider
- The college must provide reasonable accommodations for students who qualify

Assignments & Courses

In High School:

- Teachers typically reach out to offer help to students who are having academic difficulties
- Teachers typically remind students of assignment due dates, tests, etc.
- Teachers will provide students with missed information when they are absent
- Make up tests and extra credit are usually available
- Textbooks are frequently used as a foundation, with the teacher offering extra information to make the text more understandable

In College:

- Students are responsible for asking instructors for help when they need it
- Students are responsible for keeping track of projects, assignments, and tests dates for themselves
- Students must ask instructors for information they missed when absent
- Make up tests and extra credit are not guaranteed
- Textbooks may or may not be used in classes, but instructors often use lectures, readings, and class discussions

Available Accommodations

In High School:

- Services include individually designed instruction, course modifications, and accommodations based on the student's IEP
- Modifications that change course outcomes may be offered based on the student's IEP
- Appropriate accommodations are determined by the student's IEP

In College:

- Reasonable accommodations are made to provide equal access and participation in college classes and activities
- Substantial modifications to courses or essential course requirements are not offered.
- Appropriate accommodations are determined based on the student's documentation and individual needs

Parent/Guardian Roles

In High School:

- Periodic progress reports are given to parents
- Teachers are free to approach parents without consent from student to discuss student's progress
- The parent is the student's legal guardian
- The parent is expected to advocate for the student

In College:

- No progress reports will be given to parents
- Staff cannot discuss student progress without a signed release from the student
- The student is considered to be their own legal guardian unless legally declared otherwise
- The student is expected to advocate for themselves