

Testing Accommodations

One frequently requested accommodation from students with disabilities is for alternative testing options. Many students, including students without disabilities, commonly experience stress-related symptoms such as nervousness, irritability, loss of recall, rapid heartbeat, dry mouth, headaches, and anxiety. As a result, some may ask for testing formats and conditions to be altered. However, in the case of a student with a specific diagnosed disability, testing is often a problem area, and providing accommodation(s) can enable the student to more accurately communicate his or her knowledge and mastery of the subject matter.

Disability law does not specify how students are to be accommodated in any situation, including testing. Each disability must be evaluated for the individual student. In fact, every course, every semester, is evaluated for the possible need for testing accommodations. For example, a student with a disorder of written expression may need extended time on a history essay exam but may not need accommodations for testing in CIS 110.

Here are a few less-familiar facts about testing accommodations:

- Time and a half accommodation is often requested, but there is no specific rule concerning time and a half as the standard in granting a request for extended-time for test taking.
- In rare cases, such as with certain traumatic brain injuries, unlimited time may be granted.
- Online courses come under the same guidelines as seated classes as far as testing accommodations go. The area of online accommodation is so new that many of the specifics for accommodations have not yet been clarified by court cases or by Office of Civil Rights recommendations.
- Double time is sometimes granted when a student has more than one disability, and the two disabilities interact with each other.
- One option that exists in test accommodation is the option of breaking a long test into two pieces, administered on two different days. The logistics for this accommodation call for good communication among all parties involved in order to fine-tune the details to everyone's satisfaction.
- Separate testing with distraction-reduced environment is often helpful for students with disabilities of various types. Testing Centers and Testing Coordinators are very valuable in providing this accommodation and implementing the specific guidelines of the instructor and the allotted accommodation.
- On multiple choice exams, the number of choices can be reduced for students with certain disabilities. For example, a biology exam with choices A, B, C, and D may be modified to choices A, B, or C.
- In some cases, students may take a test in a modified format, but the modification must not alter the integrity of the coursework or compromise the course requirements.
- Testing accommodations are not applied retroactively. Additionally, once proper documentation has been received, retesting the student is not required.
- Students who qualify to receive accommodations on scheduled tests are also entitled to the same modification(s) on pop quizzes or scheduled quizzes.
- Providing test modifications in ways that do not embarrass, single out, or publicly identify a student with a disability is important in order to maintain the right to privacy of each student.
- Students are obligated to arrange for testing accommodations in a timely manner and cannot expect instructors to execute detailed accommodations without reasonable time to make the arrangements.
- If a student requests testing accommodations, and an instructor has not received notification from Disability Services, granting the accommodation can cause ongoing difficulties for everyone. Please refer this type of request to Disability Services.