

How We Decide If Students Are Entitled To Receive Academic Adjustments (Accommodations) At Glen Oaks Community College

The provision of academic adjustments (accommodations) to students with disabilities is a subject about which there tends to be much confusion. Very often students and parents form their expectations about their rights and responsibilities based on their high school experiences. Although this is understandable, it is unfortunate, because students tend to think they have exactly the same rights and responsibilities in college that they had in high school. This is not the case. Although Section 504 and Title II carry over from high school, IDEA (the **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act**), which applies in high school, *does not apply in postsecondary institutions such as Glen Oaks*.

With this in mind, we can consider how we decide if students are entitled to receive accommodations at Glen Oaks Community College. Simply stated, there are five requirements which must be met to receive accommodations at Glen Oaks.

1. To receive accommodations, the student requesting the accommodation must have documentation.

We consider many factors when evaluating a student's request for accommodations. Their past history, their IEP, their personal perspective on what they need to be successful in college, the kinds of accommodations they received in high school, and our professional judgment, are all a part of our final decision. However, with rare exceptions (an obvious physical disability, for example) we *can not* grant *any* accommodations without receiving proper documentation.

2. To receive accommodations, the provided documentation must be up-to-date.

With rare exceptions ("stable" disabling conditions), all documentation must be up-to-date. We prefer that documentation be no more than three years old, although we *may* consider documentation that is up to five years old.

3. To receive accommodations, the provided documentation must include a diagnosis of a disability that is protected under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, or Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

A formal diagnosis is necessary to determine that the student has a disabling condition as defined by law.

4. To receive accommodations the diagnosis must be made by a qualified professional.

A qualified professional is an individual who is recognized as being professionally qualified to make a diagnosis of the disabling condition. Generally speaking a report from a Psychiatrist or Psychologist is necessary to document things like ADD, ADHD, and learning disabilities. A report from a physician is necessary to document physical disabilities. Specialists can document disabilities within their area of specialization.

Hearing impairments may be documented by Audiologists, traumatic brain injuries by a Neurophysiologist, and visual impairments by an Ophthalmologist.

There is a great deal of variation in the documentation required by various colleges. You should **not** assume that the documentation accepted in high school will be accepted in college, or that the documentation accepted by one college will necessarily be accepted by another college.

5. To receive accommodations the qualified professional must show how the requested accommodation is necessary to prevent *discrimination* against the student based on his or her disability. In other words, there must be a demonstrated connection between the requested accommodation, and the specific disability.

This is **very** important. It is not enough to have up-to-date documentation in which a qualified professional makes a diagnosis of disability. That professional must also specify the necessary accommodations, and **link** the requirement for the accommodations with the specific disability.

Accommodations, at the postsecondary level are not designed to give students with disabilities advantages over non-disabled students. Any academic adjustment that gives a disabled student an academic advantage over a non-disabled student is, by definition, **not** required. Fundamental alteration of course content is **not** required. Accommodations should “level the playing field” so disabled students are not discriminated against based upon their disability and are able to compete equally with non-disabled students.