

Accommodations for College Students with Disabilities: What is Reasonable?

Americans with Disabilities
Amendments Act (2008)

&

Section 504 of the 1973
Rehabilitation Act

define "reasonable" as

A reasonable accommodation is considered to be a **modification** or **adjustment** to a course, program, service, or facility, which ensures that a qualified student with a **disability** is not excluded, segregated, or otherwise treated differently.

Common **modifications** and **adjustments**:

- ✓ Auxiliary aids (digital recorders/ computers/sign language interpreters)
- ✓ Extended time testing
- ✓ Alternative instructional materials (Braille/digital books)

When defining "reasonable" in the context of higher education, it is easier to define what is "**not reasonable**."

A modification or adjustment is "**not reasonable**" if it:

1. fundamentally alters the essential nature of the course, curriculum or program;
2. constitutes services of a personal nature (such as private tutoring);
3. results in an undue administrative or financial burden for the institution; and
4. results in posing a direct threat to the health or safety of self or others.

1.

For example, an institution may logically determine that mastery of a foreign language is essential for students seeking a degree in international business.

3.

For example, a student with a non-verbal learning disability requesting that the institution provide a private tutor with professional experience teaching students with disabilities may well find his/her request deemed unreasonable.

2.

For example, an institution may determine that it is not reasonable to prohibit the classmates and dorm mates of a student with a chemical sensitivity disorder the use of perfumes, deodorants, or hair products while in the student's presence. Administratively, it may be simply impossible to enforce.

4.

For example, consider the student with a visual impairment who uses a guide dog to navigate campus. The student is enrolled in a class in which another student has severe allergic reactions to dog hair.

A person with a disability is defined as a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more **major life activity and/or bodily functions**.

Major life activities include, but are not limited to, caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, seeing, hearing, eating, sleeping, walking, standing, lifting, bending, speaking, breathing, **learning**, reading, concentrating, thinking, communicating, and working.

Major bodily functions include, but are not limited to, functions of the immune system, normal cell growth, digestive, bowel, bladder, neurological, brain, respiratory, circulatory, endocrine, and reproductive functions.