

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: What You Need to Know

Pacific College of Health and Science (PCHS) is committed to providing students with reasonable accommodation(s) as required by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

All students attending Pacific College, whether or not they have a disability, face a variety of challenges in demonstrating the skills and competencies necessary. Accommodations are intended to provide equal access to the education program and students with disabilities should be able to function as independently as possible. Pacific College will work with students to provide the assistance they need to be successful.

Q: Am I required to disclose my disability?

Not necessarily. If you do not require accommodations, you can choose to keep the information private. If you do need an accommodation, you must disclose your disability to the Disability Services Office; it is your responsibility to make a disability known and to formally request accommodations. Once they are granted, however, you will be provided with a letter that only indicates what accommodations have been provided, not the specific disability. Faculty members and other members of the academic community need not know your specific disability.

Q: What is considered an eligible disability:

The ADA defines a disability that may be eligible for accommodations as “any mental or physical condition that *substantially* limits an individual’s ability to perform one or more major life activities” as compared with the average person in the general population. Major life activities include, but are not limited to, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, performing manual tasks, concentrating, caring for oneself, working, learning, and the operation of a major bodily function such as those of the immune system, respiratory system, etc.

Q: What are reasonable accommodations?

It may be simpler to describe what does not constitute a reasonable accommodation. An unreasonable accommodation is one that creates undue hardship on the institution, which refers to any accommodation that would be unduly costly, substantially disruptive, or that would fundamentally alter the nature of the program. Accommodations should not change the fundamental nature of the educational program or adversely affect the safety of patients, staff, or fellow students.

The College makes every attempt to provide accommodations, which may include, but are not limited to, auxiliary aids and services for our students with hearing or visual impairments; note takers; extended time on examinations; adjustments in course load when appropriate; and taping of lectures. While presumably the use of accommodations in the identified activity will enable

our students to better demonstrate knowledge or other skills, accommodations are not a guarantee of improved performance, or of successfully meeting required performance standards.

Q: I've never had accommodations before, why might I need them now?

Some students may be unaware that they have a disability or would benefit from accommodations, especially those who have an “invisible” disability. An invisible disability is one in which it may not be evident to those around you that you have a disability. This may be because there are no physical “supports” such as canes, wheelchairs or hearing aids, or because the disability is being managed by medication or behavior. This can include, but is not limited to, ADD/ADHD, PTSD, certain pain syndromes, psychiatric disabilities, learning disabilities, and HIV/AIDS.

However, new environments and academic situations can bring to light previously undiagnosed limitations. Do not assume that just because you've never been diagnosed before, that you may not want to consider obtaining an assessment now if you are experiencing difficulty in your studies.

Q: How can I find out if I have a disability that is eligible for accommodations?

The best way for you to know if you have an eligible disability is by obtaining a formal evaluation by a qualified professional. Such professionals may be clinical or educational psychologists, psychiatrists, school psychologists, neuropsychologists or learning disabilities specialists. It is essential that the professional have training and direct experience working with and evaluating the specific disability and you must obtain the appropriate documentation at your own expense.

Q: What if I fail an exam or class and subsequently find out I have a qualifying disability?

Accommodations are not retroactive. Any academic outcomes that may be imposed will not be adjusted in the event of subsequent documentation and/or accommodations. However, obtaining accommodations for subsequent courses or academic situations will help to support your future success.

Q: What type of documentation might be necessary?

PCHS complies with all applicable state regulations. In cases of physical impairments where it is obvious that you have a particular limitation (i.e. being wheelchair-bound) the school may not require documentation or may only require minimal documentation.

If you may have an invisible disability you will need to provide recent, external documentation from a professional that includes:

- A diagnosis of the disability

- Identification of the condition causing the disability
- A description of the functional limitation it causes and any current or recent treatments
- A description of the specific tests used to diagnose the disability
- A list of recommended accommodations (including the rationale connecting them to the disability) is welcome but not required
- In addition, you may be asked to provide the credentials of the professional conducting the assessment

Q: How do I obtain the necessary documentation?

You may already have documentation that you have provided to previous institutions. If you do not have documentation, you should reach out independently to an appropriate professional or seek a referral from the College, in order to have an assessment conducted. Accommodations may not be granted in the absence of documentation, so you should discuss the documentation requirements with PCHS staff as early as possible.

Q: Do faculty members have to accommodate me if I tell them I have a disability?

No. In the absence of official accommodations provided by the College, individual faculty members are not required to provide accommodations. This helps to ensure that accommodations that may be provided to you are reasonable, consistent, and relate to the specific disability in question. Any accommodations that a faculty member may make in the absence of approved accommodations are not binding and do not represent official accommodations as provided under the ADA.

Q: Can I appeal a decision about my accommodations?

Yes. Pacific College makes available an internal grievance procedure that provides you with a prompt and equitable resolution of complaints alleging any action prohibited by the ADA. Details about this process are outlined in the College Catalog.

Q: Where do I start?

Email the Student Services Coordinator at StudentServices@pacificcollege.edu who can provide additional details about the process and answer questions. You will also submit an Accommodations Request Form and relevant documentation. You should discuss any requests as early as possible before issues arise that may adversely impact your success.