

COMPARING HIGHER ED WITH K-12

Before talking about the specifics of how to engage with SAS, it is important to discuss how accommodations are different than services you might have received in high school. Below are several common differences between high school and postsecondary ed. This is not an exclusive list as some universities, colleges, and professors may have different procedures.

Adapted from: [University of Washington - Differences between K-12 and Postsecondary Education](#) and Academic Learning Enhancement Center, Southern Methodist University/BC.

LEGAL DIFFERENCES

Key Difference	High School	College
Federal Laws	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Section 504 (Particularly subpart E) of (IDEA)	Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; Title II Act of 1973 ("Section 504"); the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) as amended (2008)
Purpose of Legislation	To ensure that all eligible students with disabilities have available a free appropriate public education (FAPE), including special education and related services (IDEA). To ensure that no otherwise qualified person with a disability be denied access to, or benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination by any program or activity provided by any public institution or entity (504/ADA)	To ensure that no otherwise qualified person with a disability be denied access to, or the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination by any program or activity provided by any public institution or entity (504/ADA)
Eligibility	<i>For special education services</i> All infants, children, and youth (0 through 21 years) with disabilities (as defined by the state Administrative Rules for Special Education, and/or the ADA)	<i>For disability services</i> Anyone who meets the entry level-age criteria of the college and who can document the existence of a disability as defined by Section 504 and ADA
Documentation	School districts are responsible for providing trained personnel to assess eligibility and plan educational services	Students are responsible for obtaining disability documentation from a professional who is qualified to assess their particular disability
Receiving Services	School districts are responsible for identifying students with disabilities, designing special instruction, and/or providing accommodations	Students are responsible for telling Disability Services staff that they have a disability, and for requesting accommodations for each class. Accommodations (not special education) are provided so students with disabilities

		can access the educational programs or courses used by other students
Self-Advocacy	Students with disabilities learn about their disability, the importance of self-advocacy, the accommodations they need, and how to be a competent self-advocate	Students must be able to describe their disability, identify strengths and weaknesses, and identify any accommodations needed and how to be a competent self-advocate

ACCOMMODATIONS

Key Difference	High School	College
Parent access to records vs. student access to records	Parents have <i>access</i> to student records.	Parents do not have access to student records without the student's <i>written consent</i> .
IEP or 504 plan vs. accommodation letter	An IEP Team creates an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or a 504 plan.	Students work with SAS to create an accommodation letter that the student shares with professors.
Modifications vs. accommodations	Fundamental <i>modifications</i> to programs and curricula are <i>required</i> .	There is no fundamental alteration of essential elements. Appropriate <i>accommodations</i> are provided. Students must be otherwise qualified. Universities have no obligation to waive academic requirements or essential standards.

EDUCATION/ADVOCACY

Key Difference	High School	College
Right vs. opportunity	Education is a <i>right</i> and must be provided to all individuals free of charge.	Education is <i>an opportunity</i> --students must meet certain criteria for eligibility and pay tuition.
School district identifying vs. self-identification	The <i>school district</i> is responsible for identifying a student's disability and developing an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) to define educational services.	Students must <i>self-identify</i> to the appropriate Disability Office, request services, and provide documentation--a previous IEP may be sufficient documentation. Diagnostic/evaluation information is often necessary. Accommodations are

Key Difference	High School	College
		individually determined based on a documented disability.
Parent advocacy vs. student advocacy	Parents advocate for the student.	Students are expected to self-advocate for their needs.
Structured vs. unstructured	High school is a <i>structured</i> environment where most of the student's time is defined. Limits are set by <i>adults/others</i> .	Students have a great amount of "free time" which is <i>unstructured</i> . This can be a problem if spent skipping class, sleeping, partying, hanging-out with friends.

CLASSES

Key Difference	High School	College
School year vs. semesters	The school year is <i>36 weeks</i> long; some classes extend over both semesters and some don't.	The academic year is divided into two separate <i>15-week semesters</i> , plus a week after each semester for exams.
Small classes vs. larger classes	Classes generally have no more than <i>35</i> students.	Classes may number <i>100</i> students or more depending on the class and University.
Daily classes vs. weekly classes	Classes meet <i>daily</i> and are typically held in the same building.	Classes may meet <i>1,2,3, or 4 times a week</i> and are often held in different buildings.
Minimal time outside of class vs. many hours outside of class	You may study outside class as little as <i>0 to 2 hours a week</i> , and this may be mostly last-minute test preparation.	You need to study at least <i>2 to 3 hours</i> outside of class for <i>each hour</i> in class.
Free materials vs. purchasing materials	Textbooks are typically provided <i>free</i> of cost.	Textbooks are <i>purchased</i> or rented by the student; they often cost about \$500 per semester.
Small amount of reading and writing vs. emphasis on independent reading and writing	You are expected to read <i>short assignments</i> that are then discussed, and often re-taught, in class.	You are assigned <i>substantial amounts</i> of reading and writing which may not be directly addressed in class.
School scheduling vs. student scheduling	Your school tends to make and organize your schedule.	You are responsible for making your schedule. In particular, how you choose to schedule non-instructional time.

PROFESSORS

Key Difference	High School	College
Teachers monitoring progress vs. student monitoring progress	Teachers <i>remind</i> you of your incomplete work.	You are <i>responsible</i> for making sure work is done and on time.
Teachers approach you vs. you approach professors	Teachers <i>approach</i> you if they believe you need assistance.	Professors are usually open and helpful, but most expect you to <i>initiate contact</i> if you need assistance.
Always available vs. office hours	Teachers are often <i>available</i> for conversation before, during, or after class.	Professors expect and want you to attend their scheduled <i>office hours</i> .
Teacher reminders vs. independent access	Teachers often take the time to <i>remind</i> you of assignments and due dates.	Professors expect you to read, save, and consult the course <i>syllabus</i> (outline); the syllabus spells out exactly what is expected of you, when it is due, and how you will be graded.
Teacher outreach vs. student advocacy	<i>Teachers</i> approach students to see if they need assistance.	Every semester, students must <i>initiate contact</i> with Professors to discuss the implementation of their accommodations in each course.