



Accommodation Resources for Law Students

Policy	2
Accommodations	2
Requesting Accommodations	3
Required Documentation	4
Timing of Requests	5
Requesting Accommodations for the Bar Exam	5
MPRE	5
New York Uniform Bar Exam and New York Law Exam	5
Service and Assistance Animals	6
Accessibility	6
Confidentiality	6
Non-Discriminational and Harassment Policy	7



Policy

Students diagnosed with physical and/or mental impairments¹ qualify as persons with disabilities² when their conditions substantially limit them in one or more major life activities³. Columbia University provides reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities. Reasonable accommodations are adjustments to policies, practices, or procedures that facilitate equal access and opportunity for students with disabilities to the University's programs, activities, and services.

Generally, an accommodation is not considered reasonable if it lowers or substantially modifies essential requirements; fundamentally alters the nature of a service, program, or activity; or results in an undue financial or administrative burden.

This handbook provides a brief overview of available resources for students who need accommodations. Students are responsible for reviewing detailed guidance and requirements from the [Office of Disability Services \(ODS\)](#); and for initiating disability-related requests for accommodations with that office.

We strongly encourage students to seek support when they need it to ensure that they are receiving equal access to the educational experience at CLS.

If you have additional questions, please contact ODS (at 212-854-2388 or by email at disability@columbia.edu) and the Office of Students Services (accommodations@law.columbia.edu).

Accommodations

The Law School works with ODS to provide on-campus accommodations for in-person classes and housing and through Zoom and other University-sponsored platforms for virtual events and

¹ A physical or mental impairment can be any physiological disorder or condition, cosmetic disfigurement, or anatomical loss affecting one or more body systems, such as neurological, musculoskeletal, special sense organs, respiratory (including speech organs), cardiovascular, reproductive, digestive, genitourinary, immune, circulatory, hemic, lymphatic, skin and endocrine. They also include any mental or psychological disorder, such as intellectual disability, organic brain syndrome, emotional or mental illness, and specific learning disabilities. [29 C.F.R.1630.2\(h\)](#).

² The term "disability" means, with respect to an individual: (A) a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities of such individual; (B) a record of such an impairment; or (C) being regarded as having such an impairment. [42 U.S. Code § 12102\(1\)](#).

³ 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. A major life activity also includes the operation of a major bodily function, including but not limited to, functions of the immune system, normal cell growth, digestive, bowel, bladder, neurological, brain, respiratory, circulatory, endocrine, and reproductive functions. [42 U.S. Code § 12102\(2\)](#).



classes. ODS is the central University office responsible for facilitating equal access for students with disabilities by coordinating accommodations and support services.

Accommodations can include, among other things, in-class accommodations (e.g., seating preferences, permission to record classes, laptop use, and note-takers), additional AV support (e.g., captioning services), Assistive Technology and Alternate Format Materials, and exam accommodations. For a full list of ODS services, please visit <https://health.columbia.edu/content/disability-services>.

ODS recommends reasonable accommodations and academic adjustments based on thoughtful analysis of each student's disability related needs, the University's programs and curricula, and the University's legal obligations under the amended Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

Requesting Accommodations

Students seeking reasonable academic and/or housing accommodations or support services must register with ODS. *Students cannot receive formal accommodations unless they are registered with ODS.*

Registration includes the following steps for all students:

1. **Registration Form:** Submit a completed [registration form](#) via fax to (212) 854-3448, email to disability@columbia.edu or in-person at Wien Hall Suite 108A.
2. **Supporting Documentation:** Submit documentation verifying your disability status and the need for accommodations (see [Required Documentation](#)).
3. **ODS Review:** ODS reviews each request and determines eligibility for accommodations and services.
4. **Meeting with ODS:** A coordinator will contact students to schedule an orientation meeting. During this required meeting, an ODS coordinator will review the policies and procedures regarding the provision of reasonable accommodations. This meeting will help to familiarize students with ODS and facilitate the accommodations process.
5. **Meeting with Student Services:** After meeting with the assigned ODS coordinator, students should contact Student Services' ODS liaison (accommodations@law.columbia.edu).

ODS will also send a letter to the Office of Registration Services outlining a student's recommended accommodations. Registration Services will work with the Office of Student Services to implement these recommended accommodations.

For detailed information about this process, please review this page: <https://health.columbia.edu/services/register-disability-services>.

Required Documentation

All students who register with ODS must submit documentation to verify their disability status and the need for reasonable accommodations. ODS will not begin the review process until it receives a student's completed registration form **and** disability documentation.

This documentation must:

1. Be recent enough in order to assess the current impact on learning or a major life activity. Students requesting accommodations due to a chronic medical condition must submit documentation dated within 6 months as well as annually updated documentation.
2. Be sufficiently comprehensive to establish clear evidence of a substantial impact on one or more major life activities.
3. Be sufficient to establish a direct link between the underlying impairment and the requested accommodations.
4. Include a description of what mitigating measures the student has used and whether with such use the student may still require accommodation in order to access University programs, activities, and services.
5. Be issued by a medical or other qualified, licensed professional, unrelated by birth or marriage to the student, printed on letterhead, dated, signed, and including the professional's licensing information. No information may be redacted.
6. Include the student's history of receiving reasonable accommodations and academic adjustments, if such history exists.
7. Include specific recommendations for accommodations as well as an explanation as to why each is recommended as necessary.

([General Guidelines For Disability Documentation](#))

There are certain additional disability-specific documentation guidelines, including:

- Guidelines for Documentation of Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity (AD/HD) Disorder.
- Sensory Disability Documentation Guidelines.
- Guidelines for Documentation of Learning Disabilities.
- Guidelines For Documentation Of Psychiatric Disabilities.

You can find these disability-specific guidelines here:

<https://health.columbia.edu/content/forms-and-guidelines#/filter/topics/Disability%20Services>.



Timing of Requests

New students joining the University should contact ODS immediately to initiate the registration process, but no later than 3 weeks before the start of classes. However, ODS accepts registrations throughout the year from all students.

ODS does not begin the review process until it receives a student's completed registration form and disability documentation. ODS reviews accommodation requests for the entire University, so the review process is not immediate. **The review process takes approximately three weeks; please plan accordingly and submit your form and documents as early as possible.**

Requesting Accommodations for the Bar Exam

Students who receive academic accommodations in law school should also consider requesting accommodations for the bar exams after graduation. Students should carefully review the accommodation procedures for their specific jurisdiction. Students can find a directory of state bar admission agencies here: <https://reports.ncbex.org/comp-guide/directory/>.

To allow for sufficient time to process your accommodation requests, we recommend that you submit your request to the relevant state's Board of Bar Examiners and/or the National Conference of Bar Examiners (for the MPRE) at least four weeks before the submission deadline.

MPRE

The National Conference of Bar Examiners provides reasonable accommodations to MPRE candidates with documented disabilities.

Candidates for the MPRE must apply for accommodations and receive their determination *before* registering and scheduling a test appointment. Accommodations cannot be added to an existing test appointment. The NCBE recommends that candidates submit applications well in advance of the desired MPRE test administration, and no later than the Recommended Submission Date for that administration.

Students should carefully review the following page for more information about the process and deadlines for requesting accommodations for the MPRE:

<https://www.ncbex.org/exams/mpre/ada-accommodations/>.

New York Uniform Bar Exam and New York Law Exam

The New York State Board of Law Examiners (NY BOLE) provides non-standard testing accommodations to applicants with disabilities for the Uniform Bar Exam (UBE) and the New York Law Exam (NYLE). NY BOLE provides accommodations to the extent such



accommodations are timely requested, reasonable, not unduly burdensome, consistent with the nature and purpose of the examination, and necessitated by the applicant's disability.

Students should carefully review the following page for more information about the process and deadlines for requesting accommodations for the UBE and NYLE:

<https://www.nybarexam.org/ada/ada.htm>. This page also includes the NY BOLE Test Accommodations Handbook.

Service and Assistance Animals

Service and assistance animals provide individuals with disabilities enhanced autonomy and independence. Student who want to bring their service or assistance animal to live in University housing must do the following:

- Submit a [Service and Assistance Animal Registration](#) Form and disability documentation to ODS.
- Follow the procedures outlined in [Service and Assistance Animal Guidelines and Procedures](#).

A service animal is a dog, or in some circumstances a miniature horse, that has been individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability. An assistance animal is a dog, cat, or other domestic animal that provides emotional support to alleviate one or more identified symptoms or effects of a person's disability.

Approved service animals are generally permitted throughout campus, including in classrooms. Assistance animals are only permitted in privately assigned living space in University housing. Please review the above guidelines for more details.

Accessibility

The University is committed to fostering a campus that is accessible to people with disabilities. It conducts an on-going program to remove physical barriers and each year, it makes significant accessibility improvements. For questions or concerns regarding access, please send an email to access@columbia.edu. You can find campus access maps here: <https://eoaa.columbia.edu/content/accessibility>.

If you discover that one of the Law School's accessibility features is broken or otherwise unusable, please email [Building Services and Operation](#) at "fix-it@law.columbia.edu".

Confidentiality

Accommodation information is confidential and shared within the University on a need-to-know basis. The Family Educational Rights Privacy Act (FERPA) regulates disclosure of disability



documentation and records maintained by ODS. Under this federal act, prior written consent by the student is generally required before ODS may release disability documentation or records.

You can read more about the Disability Policy on Confidentiality here:

<https://health.columbia.edu/content/disability-policy-confidentiality>.

Non-Discriminational and Harassment Policy

The University is committed to providing a working, learning, and living environment free from discrimination and harassment and to fostering a nurturing and vibrant community founded upon the fundamental dignity and worth of all of its members. Please review the [Non-Discrimination Statement and Policies](#) for more details and for the process for reporting violations.