

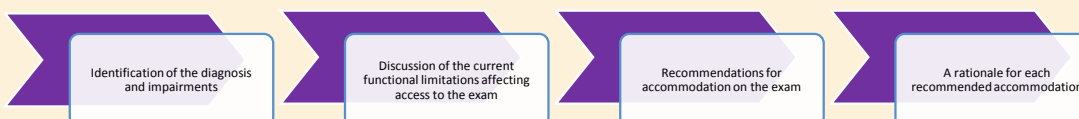
MCAT Exam Accommodations: What Evaluators Need to Know

The Association of American Medical Colleges is committed to providing appropriate accommodations to persons with disabilities in accordance with relevant law. At the same time, the Association must protect the validity of the MCAT exam by offering accommodations only when they are supported by appropriate evidence.

Requests for accommodations on the MCAT exam must be supported by documentation from a qualified professional. In many cases, a current comprehensive assessment of the individual's impairment is required. While most evaluators are familiar with providing diagnostic reports, they may be less familiar with the evaluation documentation necessary to support requests for accommodations, particularly in the context of standardized testing. Additional information regarding our review process as well as evaluation tips and guidelines are provided below.

About the Review Process

It is not uncommon for application materials to suggest that having a particular diagnosis necessitates the provision of a certain accommodation in all situations. While many diagnoses result in the provision of specific accommodations (e.g., access to medical supplies for an individual with diabetes), diagnosis alone, although required, is often not sufficient for determining the appropriateness of a particular accommodation. Rather, it is the current functional limitation resulting from the impairment that indicates the need for an accommodation. Additionally, once a current functional limitation is identified, consideration should also be given to the demands of the task and the setting in question. Documentation provided by you as the evaluator should include a description of the individual's current functional limitations and a rationale for each recommended accommodation that specifically explains how the accommodation addresses the limitation(s). See the flow chart below for information regarding the relationships between these concepts.



WHAT DOES THAT TERM MEAN?

Diagnosis: The identification (e.g., name, term, description) given to an illness or group of symptoms. (e.g., traumatic brain injury)

Impairment: Any loss or abnormality of physiological, psychological, or anatomical structure or function. (e.g., memory impairment)

Functional Limitation: Restriction in the performance of activities; failure to perform in an efficient, typically expected, or competent manner. (e.g., slow to respond to questions)

Disability (ADA): A physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities.

Evaluation Tips

As you craft your evaluation documentation and consider whether or not the individual requires accommodations, please be mindful of the following:

- All requests should **identify current normative impairments** (i.e., impairment when compared to the general population). Relative impairments or weaknesses, while clinically meaningful, do not necessarily require accommodation.
- All recommendations from qualified professionals **should consider the task demands associated with the standard test conditions of the MCAT exam, in addition to the individual's current functional limitations and history of prior accommodation.** For example, recommendations for a computerized format or additional time for written responses are not warranted given that the standard MCAT exam is a computer-based multiple choice test. Previously granted accommodations may not necessarily be supported for the MCAT exam given the demands of the current task.
- A relevant history in regard to the impact of the impairment on the individual's education (including performance on previous standardized tests like the SAT) and prior interventions (e.g., tutoring or specialized private school placements) or accommodations (i.e., education plans, Section 504 plans, etc.) should be addressed.
- Additional information regarding our evaluation requirements can be found on the MCAT Accommodations web page.

Assessment Tips

Use objective normed measures whenever possible.

Use age norms instead of grade norms whenever possible. **Remember:** Comparing results using age norms with those using grade norms does not yield sound conclusions.

If you are not able to provide normed data, please give a detailed qualitative description of the functional limitation and why you believe the individual differs from the general population.

Do not use screening instruments as the basis for your conclusions – use a comprehensive measure.

Are You Recommending The Accommodation of Extra Time?

Extra time may be granted as an accommodation to address a number of different functional limitations and may be administered differently across settings. For example, extra time may be granted to allow time for breaks to take medication or to address a medical issue. Extra time could also be granted to allow time for the individual to rest, re-focus, or re-read during an exam. On the MCAT exam extra testing time is granted when more time is needed to access and/or process the actual test content. On the other hand, if more time is needed to manage a condition or employ a strategy unrelated to managing the test content, additional time is granted in the form of stop-the-clock breaks (i.e., additional breaks during content sections of the exam, managed by the examinee) and/or extended section breaks (i.e., additional time for the regularly scheduled breaks between test sections). If you are recommending the accommodation of extra time, consider the functional limitation that needs to be addressed and how extra time will be utilized by the test-taker during the exam. Please note that requests for extra testing time should generally include the following data:

- Timed and un-timed measures of academic achievement indicating normative impairment that specifically occurs under timed conditions.
- A history of the need for extended time in the case of neurodevelopmental disorders.

Have more questions?

Contact a member of our review staff by emailing us at accommodations@aamc.org