

An Overview for Applicants:

What Does My Evaluator Need to Do?

Documenting Sensory (hearing & vision) Impairments

A critical part of your request for accommodations is the professional evaluation and report. To assist you and your evaluator in understanding the information that is required to support your request, we have outlined the necessary components of the evaluation in this document. If you find you have any questions or would like additional information, you can contact us at accommodations@aamc.org.

Why a Professional Evaluation is Required

The Association of American Medical Colleges is committed to providing appropriate accommodations to individuals with disabilities as defined by the American with Disabilities Act. 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.

I. What are the General Requirements of the Evaluator?

In brief, the evaluator must:

1. Be a qualified practitioner with training and expertise in the area of the identified impairment (e.g., ophthalmologist/optometrist for a visual impairment) who has personally examined and evaluated your condition and its impact on your ability to perform on the MCAT under standard conditions.
2. Include his or her name, title, and professional credentials in the documentation, along with a statement regarding formal training and expertise related to the specific impairment/condition for which you are seeking accommodations. (This may be in the form of his or her Curriculum Vitae)

II. How Current Must the Evaluation Be?

To document your sensory impairment your evaluation should have been conducted no more than **six months** prior to your application submission date. Documentation that is older than six months may be sufficient if it is accompanied by a letter (from an assessment conducted within the past six months) from your qualified professional that provides an update on the diagnosis, current level of functioning, changes since the previous evaluation, current treatment, and continued rationale for the requested accommodations. If your impairment is lifelong or permanent, your documentation may not need to meet the same currency requirement. Documentation that identifies your diagnosis, documents your functional limitations due to the sensory impairment, and provides recommendations for accommodations will be accepted.

If your evaluation requires an update and you have limited funds to obtain that assessment, please review the information regarding eligibility for [Financial Assistance](#) from the AAMC.

III. What Must the Evaluation Report Include?

Although the specifics of the report will vary according to the nature of your impairment, in general, the following components should be included:

1. Identifying Information

The first page of the report should be printed on the evaluator's letterhead, and should include your name, date of birth, date of the evaluation, age at the time of the evaluation, and grade and school (if applicable).

2. A Comprehensive Evaluation and Clinical Impressions

The report should include a detailed description of a comprehensive evaluation, including:

- a. Relevant background information, including your academic history and any educational impact from your sensory impairment.
- b. Discussion of the history of your condition.
- c. Discussion of the current treatments for your condition.
- d. Discussion of the prognosis for your condition.
- e. Actual scores and findings from all tests and procedures administered and all measurements and scales used that collectively demonstrate the level of impairment must be provided (include test names, results, and age-referenced normal ranges, if available).
 - i. With particular regard to visual impairments, such data/findings should generally include: visual acuities (best corrected for near and distance vision), eye health (external and internal evaluations), visual field printouts (formally tested, not confrontation), binocular evaluation (eye deviation, diplopia, suppression, stereopsis), accommodative skills (at reading distances, with and without lenses, provide measurements), oculomotor skills (saccades, pursuits, tracking).
- f. A summary that integrates previous test results, relevant history, current test results, and clinical impressions and includes a diagnostic statement (see below).
- g. Discussion of the functional impact of your condition on a major life activity.
- h. Discussion of how your diagnosis and symptoms may impact your ability to take the MCAT exam. If your sensory impairment is identified as affecting your reading ability, a detailed description explaining the nature of that impact should be provided. When recommending extra testing time on that basis, it may be appropriate/necessary to include standardized measures of reading skills, including reading speed and fluency.
- i. Specific recommendations for MCAT accommodations (see below), based on clinical findings.

3. Diagnosis.

The diagnosis must:

- a. Be based on relevant history, test results, level of current functioning, and clinical judgment, and
- b. Use standard diagnostic codes.

If you are thought to have two or more disorders, the diagnostic report should clearly describe the **unique impact of each**, and the evaluation guidelines for each disorder should be met.

IV. What Requirements Must the Evaluator Meet in Making Recommendations?

The evaluator must provide recommendations that:

1. Are individualized to you,
2. Recommend *specific* accommodations and/or assistive devices and,
3. Describe the rationale for each accommodation and/or device (i.e., explain how the accommodation(s) will reduce the impact of the identified functional limitations on test taking).

If additional time is requested, the evaluator should specify a specific amount of additional time along with a rationale for the specified amount of time. Requests for an untimed exam or “extra time” are not sufficient.

V. Is There Anything Else of Which I should be Aware?

Finally, it will be helpful if you understand two concepts associated with the provision of accommodations. We describe these briefly for you below:

1. **Benchmark.** To be covered under the Americans with Disabilities Act, the “benchmark” is how well you are able to perform compared to *most people* in the general population.
2. **Purpose of Accommodations.** Pursuant to 28. C.F.R. § 36.309(b)(1)(i), the purpose of testing accommodations is to ensure, in a reasonable manner, that the “examination results accurately reflect the individual’s aptitude or achievement level or whatever other factor the examination purports to measure, rather than reflecting the individual’s impaired sensory, manual, or speaking skills (except where those skills are the factors the examination purports to measure).”