Handout: Differences between High School and College

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| High School | Postsecondary Education |
| Classes | |
| 6 hours each day, 30 hours a week are spent in class. | Approximately 12-16 hours each week are spent in class. |
| Average class is 35-45 minutes. | Class times vary from 50 minutes to 4 hours. |
| Class is usually a semester or 90 days. | Colleges have a semester or quarter system. Quarter systems meet approximately 11 weeks or 53-55 days. Semester systems meet approximately 16 weeks or 90 days. |
| Classes are arranged. | Each student decides his or her own schedule in consultation with an academic advisor.  Schedules tend to look lighter than they really are. |
| Classes are structured and scheduled one after the other. | There are often hours between classes; class times vary throughout the day and evening. |
| Classes generally have no more than 35 students. | Class sizes vary from small to large. They may include 100 or more students. |
| Classes generally held in one building. | Classes are held at many different sites on campus. |
| Classes meet daily. | Classes may meet 1 to 5 times a week. |
| Missing classes for various reasons is permissible and you may still complete the course. | Missing classes may result in lowered grades or failing the class depending on course requirements. |
| Rigid schedule with constant supervision. | Students have more freedom and responsibility to create a flexible schedule. |
| Students may take same the subject all year. | Students will have new classes every quarter/semester and new textbooks. |
| General education classes dictated by state and district requirements. | Graduation requirements are complex and vary for different fields of study. |
| Textbooks are typically provided at little to no expense. | Textbooks can be expensive. The average cost per year is over $1,100 according to the College Board. Financial aid may cover costs. |
| Guidance is provided for students so they will be aware of graduation requirements. | With the help of academic advisors, students know and ensure they complete graduation requirements, which are complicated and may change. |
| Modifications that change course outcomes may be offered based on the IEP or 504 plan. | Modifications that change course outcomes will not be offered. |
| High School | **Postsecondary Education** |
| Instructors | |
| Daily contact with teachers and support staff. | Classes meet less frequently, impacting access to instructors and assistance. Instructors are not always available to assist the student. Students can go to office hours for help. |
| Review sessions are often held prior to tests. Test questions are usually directed at the ability to recall what has been learned. Make-up tests are frequently available. | Students must work independently to prepare for tests. Review sessions by professors are rare. Students often must be able to apply information in new contexts. Make-up tests are unusual. |
| Students are usually corrected if their behavior is inappropriate. | Many moral and ethical decisions will arise. Students must take responsibility for their actions and decisions as well as the consequences they produce. |
| Students generally receive assignments in both written and oral form and may hand those assignments in during class time. | Students are often required to use email and the Internet for communication, class projects, submitting assignments, etc. |
| Teachers approach you if they believe assistance is needed. | Professors expect the student to initiate contact if assistance is needed. |
| Teachers are often available for conversation before, during or after class. | Professors typically have scheduled office hours for students to attend. |
| Teachers closely monitor a students' progress. | Professors may not monitor a student's progress but will grade based upon the student’s work or may not make any effort to discuss a student's performance in spite of failing scores. |
| Teachers provide information missed if you are absent. | Professors expect students to obtain notes from their classmates if they miss class. |
| Teachers remind students of assignments, due dates, test dates, and incomplete work. | Professors may not remind students of incomplete work. They expect students to read, save and consult the course syllabus (outline); the syllabus spells out exactly what is expected, when it is due and how it will be graded. |
| Teachers often write information on the board or overhead for notes. | May lecture nonstop. If they write on the board, it may be to support the lecture, not summarize it. |
| Teach knowledge and facts, leading students through the thinking process. | Expect students to think independently and connect seemingly unrelated information. |
| High School | **Postsecondary Education** |
| Studying | |
| Students are expected to read short assignments that are then discussed, and often re-taught, in class. | Students are assigned substantial amounts of reading and writing, which may not be directly addressed in class. |
| Instructors may review class notes and text material regularly for classes. | Students should review class notes and text material regularly. |
| Study time outside of class may vary (maybe as little as 1-3 hours a week). | Students generally need to study at least 2-3 hours outside of class for each hour of class. |
| Someone is available to help plan study time (teachers, Spec Ed, parents). | Students are responsible for setting and following through on all scheduling and study time. |
| High School | **Postsecondary Education** |
| Testing | |
| Frequent coverage of small amounts of material. | Usually infrequent. May be cumulative and cover large amounts of material. Some classes may require only papers and/or projects in lieu of exams. |
| Makeup tests are often available. | Makeup exams are seldom an option. May have to be requested. |
| Test dates can be arranged to avoid conflict with other events. | Usually, tests are scheduled without regard to other demands. |
| Frequently conducts review sessions emphasizing important concepts prior to tests. | Review sessions are rarely offered. May need to find tutor or study group. |
| High School | **Postsecondary Education** |
| Parent/Guardian Involvement | |
| Parents and teachers may provide support, guidance, and set priorities. Additionally, parent permission required (until 18 years of age). | Students are considered adults with decision-making authority. They set own priorities. Parent permission is not required. Due to FERPA, an institution cannot discuss with parents any student's information without permission from the student. |
| Parents and teachers often remind students of their responsibilities and guide them in setting priorities. | Decision-making is largely the student’s responsibility. The student must balance their responsibilities and set priorities. |
| Parents typically manage finances for school-related activities. | Students are responsible for money management and basic needs. |
| High School | **Postsecondary Education** |
| Grades | |
| Good homework grades may assist in raising the overall grade when test grades are lower. | Tests and major papers provide the majority of a student’s grade. |
| Extra credit options are often available. | Generally not offered. |
| Initial test grades, especially when low, may not have adverse effect on grade. | First tests are often “wake up calls” to let students know what is expected. |
| High School | **Postsecondary Education** |
| Laws & Responsibilities for Students with Disabilities | |
| \*IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) focuses on Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE), 504 (Section 504, Rehab Act, 1973), ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act, 1990). | \*504 (Section 504, Rehab Act, 1973), ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act, 1990) focus on accessibility and reasonable accommodations. |
| Covers ages 3-21 or until regular high school diploma requirements are met. | Covers students with disabilities regardless of age; schools may not discriminate in recruitment, admission, or after admission solely based on a disability. |
| School attendance is mandatory. | Students decide to attend. Most likely pay tuition. |
| Districts are required to identify students with disabilities through free assessment and the IEP process. | Students are responsible for revealing and providing current documentation of a disability. They must self-advocate. |
| Students receive special education and related services based on an identified disability. | Formal special education services are not available. |
| Services include individually designed instruction modification and accommodations based on the IEP. | Reasonable accommodations and modifications may be made to provide equal access and participation. |
| Individual student’s needs based on the IEP may be addressed by program support for school personnel. | No formal program support for school personnel is provided. |
| Progress toward IEP goals is monitored and communicated to the parents/guardians and the student. | Students are required to monitor their own progress and communicate their needs to instructor. |
| Schools assist in connecting the student with community support agencies if so identified as a transition need according to the IEP. | Students are responsible for making their own connections with community support agencies. |
| High School | **Postsecondary Education** |
| Other Factors to Consider | |
| Through vehicles such as the IEP, students, parents, teachers, counselors and support staff work together to ensure that student needs and accommodations are provided. | Students, not teachers, counselors or parents, must be able to identify their disability, provide documentation, and request accommodations and supports. |
| Transition planning and timelines exist to clarify students' vision, identify programming choices and coordinate appropriate coursework options. | Students make course selections with some assistance from advisors or instructors. |
| Personal services for medical or physical disability are required. | No personal services are required.\*\* |

\* Although responsibility lies with the student, Disability Support Services works closely to develop Accommodation Requests and will advocate for student if difficulty arises.

\*\*Disability Support Services may assist students in efforts to advocate for such services.

Sources: [University of Washington Disability Resources for Students](http://depts.washington.edu/uwdrs/parents-and-family/differences-between-k-12-and-postsecondary-education/), [Bellingham Technical College Accessibility Resources Office](http://www.btc.ctc.edu/CurrentStudents/DSS/indexSupport.aspx), and Chicago GEAR UP.