

Glossary of Terms

Accommodations – an alteration of environment, curriculum format, or equipment that allows an individual with a disability to gain access to content and/or complete assigned tasks. They allow students with disabilities to pursue a regular course of study.

Achievement test – directly assess students' skill development in academic areas such as reading, math, and written language. They measure the extent to which a student has profited from schooling and/or life experiences compared to others of the same age or grade.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) – a civil rights law that prohibits discrimination based on disability

Appeal – a mechanism through which a reconsideration can be requested.

Assistive technology – a term for assistive, adaptive, and rehabilitative devices/technology for people with disabilities.

Average person standard – a definition of disability by the Americans with Disabilities Act regulations that defines disability as “a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities as compared to most people in the general population.” This standard is used by the NBME to determine disability.

Bell curve – a visual depiction of the distribution of IQ and achievement scores among the general population where the average score is 100 and the statistical variation is +/- 15 points.

Certification of Prior Accommodation form – a form that must be completed by the medical school official responsible for overseeing disability services that attests to the use of prior accommodation in medical school and the justification for approval.

Disability services – the university office dedicated to helping students with disabilities obtain equal access to academic and programmatic services.

Discrepancy model – compares scores from intelligence tests with standardized scores and percentiles on achievement measures. Psychologists often look at the vast disparity between these two as an indicator of disability.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion office – the university office committed to equal opportunities for all persons regardless of race, color, national origin, age, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, disability, religion, height, weight, or veteran status.

DRPs – an abbreviation for disability resource professionals. They serve as subject-matter experts on their campuses concerning disability access and accommodations, which advances the work of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Eligibility window– the three month period a student chooses during their registration process wherein they intend to sit for their Step exam.

Flagging – an annotation with a student’s score indicating that their exam was administered under “nonstandard conditions.” This practice no longer exists.

Learning specialists – medical school staff members who help students develop strategies to increase their academic skills, as well as learning and study strategies.

Letter of support – a statement by a DRP or institutional officer that combines all the available evidence of impairment and justification for need into one letter to the NBME.

MCAT – the Medical College Admission Test is a standardized, multiple-choice examination designed to assess problem-solving, critical thinking, and knowledge of natural, behavioral, and social science concepts and principles prerequisite to the study of medicine.

Personal statement –The personal statement is a letter from the student explaining their history of disability and accommodation use, and outlining why accommodations are necessary on the Step examinations.

USMLE prep courses – formal programs available outside of the support provided institutionally aimed at preparing students for Step exams. Examples include Varsity Tutors USMLE Prep Course, WOLFPACC, PASS Program USMLE course, Kaplan USMLE Prep Course, and Institute of Medical Boards