



## **Frequently Asked Questions About The College Board's Decision To Drop Flagging From Standardized Tests**

**1. When will the nonstandard designation (flag) be removed?**

Flags will be removed from all score reports issued by the College Board beginning October 1, 2003.

**2. Why is the College Board dropping the flag?**

This decision stems from a 1999 lawsuit against the Educational Testing Service (ETS), resulting in ETS's agreement to remove flags from score reports for tests it administers, other than College Board-owned tests. The College Board and the Disability Rights Advocates agreed to present the issue of whether or not to remove flags from score reports of standardized tests owned by the Board to a jointly appointed blue-ribbon panel of experts in the disabilities, psychometric, and admissions fields. That panel was officially formed on March 27, 2001. By a 4 to 2 vote, the panel later recommended that flags be removed from the score reports of College Board standardized tests. The College Board accepted the recommendation.

**3. Will the flag be removed from all College Board tests or just the SATs?**

Flags will be removed from all tests, including the SAT<sup>®</sup>, PSAT/NMSQT<sup>®</sup>, and the AP<sup>®</sup> Exams.

**4. How will students, schools, and colleges be notified about the change?**

The College Board will notify students, schools, and colleges through its normal communications channels, including correspondence, publications, and the College Board Web site.

**5. If a student was tested when there was a flag, and then tested again when the flag was no longer in use, will the student's earlier score still be flagged on the cumulative score reports?**

No. Cumulative score reports issued after October 1, 2003, will not be flagged.

**6. Will this affect a college's ability to rely on SAT scores as valid indicators of potential for success in college?**

Research has demonstrated that additional time on the SAT results in a small increase in scores for students with disabilities (approximately 32 points on the verbal and 26 points on the math), above that attained with standard time. Research does not indicate that students without disabilities who take the SAT with extended time show a similar increase in score.

**7. Why is the College Board waiting until the fall of 2003 to stop using the flag? Why can't the flag be removed now?**

This time is needed to ensure an orderly transition to the new policy and to communicate effectively about the changes and their implications to schools, colleges, parents, and students.

**8. Can scores from tests taken prior to the fall of 2003 be delayed in reporting until after the flag is removed?**

Score reports are only sent to colleges at a test-taker's request. A test-taker may choose to delay sending reports until after October 1, 2003, when no report will contain a "nonstandard" designation (flag).

**9. Will the eligibility requirements for accommodations change as a result of the removal of the flag?**

The three basic eligibility requirements outlined in the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) Information Brochure have been effective in maintaining our testing accommodations policy and we do not expect them to change. The student must:

- have a disability that necessitates testing accommodations;
- have documentation on file at the school that supports the need for accommodations and meets the Guidelines for Documentation;
- receive and utilize the requested accommodations, due to the disability, for school-based tests.

**10. What are the College Board's guidelines for documenting the need for test accommodations?**

The College Board's eligibility requirements, as well as the Documentation Guidelines that follow, are the result of extensive study and input from disability professionals representing colleges and high schools. These tools have proven useful to schools by providing clear standards against which requests for accommodations on College Board tests can be measured; they aid in separating reasonable from unreasonable requests. These standards, which all documentation must meet, are:

- state the specific disability, as diagnosed;
- be current (evaluation should be completed within three years of the request for accommodations);
- provide relevant educational, developmental, and medical history;
- describe the comprehensive testing and techniques used to arrive at the diagnosis;
- describe the functional limitations supported by the test results;
- describe the specific accommodations requested and state why the student's disability qualifies the student for such accommodations;
- establish the professional credentials of the evaluator.

**11. How were the Guidelines developed?**

These Documentation Guidelines were developed after the College Board's last documentation review in 1996. That review found that schools needed clearer communication of expectations. To provide the needed clarification, Documentation Guidelines were drafted and reviewed by professionals and were refined during the first two years of their use.

**12. Does the College Board feel removing the flag may increase the requests for accommodations and/or the number of students receiving accommodations?**

Because the College Board has taken the lead in removing flags from standardized college admissions tests, it is premature to predict the effect this decision will have on the number of students seeking accommodations. However, we will maintain a policy of closely monitoring any changes and will take appropriate actions to protect against abuse.

**13. What is the College Board doing to ensure that accommodations are being used fairly and equitably?**

The College Board recently implemented an enhanced Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) system that offers the benefit of electronic data retrieval enabling us to more effectively and closely monitor student and school-supplied information related to accommodations. We also require parents to sign a release granting us access to all noted documentation.

An Annual Review of Documentation and a Five-Year Review of Procedures and Policies are used to evaluate the policies and practices related to the granting of accommodations. The current Five-Year Review, which is being conducted with disability experts from around the country, will be completed this fall (2002). These evaluations will assist the College Board in effectively investigating and correcting potential problems.

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