

General Differences Between High School and College

CLASSES

	HIGH SCHOOL	POSTSECONDARY
1	Usually follow a school-directed schedule and proceed from one class to another.	Individual students must manage their own time and schedules.
2	General education classes dictated by state/district requirements.	Class based on field of study; requirements may vary.
3	Typically, a school year is 36 weeks long; some classes extend over both semesters. Summer classes may be offered but are not used to accelerate graduation.	Academic year is divided into two separate 15-week semesters plus a week for final exams. (Hint: Some institutions are on a trimester schedule.) Courses are offered fall, spring, and summer semesters, and summer classes may be used to accelerate graduation.
4	Class attendance is usually mandatory and monitored carefully.	Attendance policies may vary with each instructor. (Hint: Lack of attendance may impact performance.)
5	Classes generally have no more than 3035 students.	Classes may have 100 or more students.
6	Textbooks are typically provided at little or no expense.	Textbooks can be expensive. (Hint: An anticipated range for a full-time student is \$200-\$400 per semester.)
7	Guidance is provided for students so that they will be aware of graduation requirements.	Graduation requirements are complex and vary for different fields of study. (Note: You are responsible for monitoring your progress and seeking advice.)
8	Modifications that change course outcomes may be offered based on the student's IEP.	Modifications that change course outcomes will not be offered. (Hint: Modified high school courses may not be accepted in the admission process.)

INSTRUCTORS

	HIGH SCHOOL	POSTSECONDARY
1	Grade and check completed homework.	Assume homework is completed and students can perform on a test.
2	May remind students of incomplete assignments.	May not remind students of incomplete assignments. It's your responsibility to check with your instructor to see if requirements are being met.
3	May know students' needs and approach students when they need assistance.	Are usually open and helpful but expect students to initiate contact when assistance is needed.
4	May be available before, during, or after class.	May require students to attend scheduled office hours.
5	Have been trained in teaching methods.	Have content knowledge but not necessarily formal training in teaching methods.
6	Often provide students with information missed during absence.	Expect students to get information from classmates when they miss a class.
7	Present material to help students understand what is in the textbook.	May not follow the textbook. Lectures enhance the topic area. (Hint: You need to connect lectures and textbook.)
8	Often write information on the board or overhead to be copied for notes.	May lecture nonstop. If instructors write on the board, it may be to support the lecture, not summarize it. (Hint: Good notes are a must!)
9	Teach knowledge and facts, leading students through the thinking process.	Expect students to think independently and connect seemingly unrelated information.
10	Often take time to remind students of assignment and test dates.	Expect students to read, save, and refer to the course syllabus. (Hint: Syllabi are your way of knowing exactly what is expected of you--when assignments are due, and how you will be graded.)

STUDYING

	HIGH SCHOOL	POSTSECONDARY
1	Study time outside of class may vary (maybe as little as 1-3 hours per week per class).	Generally, need to study at least 2-3 hours outside of class for each hour in class.
2	Instructors may review class notes and text material regularly for classes.	Review class notes and text material regularly. (Hint: use the time between classes carefully.)
3	Expected to read short assignments that are discussed and retaught.	Substantial amounts of assigned reading and writing may not be directly addressed in class. (Hint: It's up to you to read and understand assigned material or access support.)

TESTING

	HIGH SCHOOL	POSTSECONDARY
1	Frequent, covering small amounts of material.	Usually infrequent (2-3 times a semester). Maybe cumulative and cover large amounts of material. (Hint: You need to organize material to prepare for tests.) Some classes may require only papers and/or projects instead of tests.
2	Make-up tests are often available.	Make-up tests are seldom an option and may have to be requested.
3	Test dates can be arranged to avoid conflicts with other events.	Usually, scheduled tests are without regard to other demands.
4	Frequently conducts review sessions emphasizing important concepts prior to tests.	Faculty rarely offer review sessions and if so, students are expected to be prepared and to be active participants.

GRADES

	HIGH SCHOOL	POSTSECONDARY
1	Given for most assigned work.	May not be provided for all assigned work.
2	Good homework grades may assist in raising over grade when test grades are lower.	Tests and major papers provide the majority of the grade.
3	Extra credit options are often available.	Generally speaking, extra-credit options are not used to raise a grade.
4	Initial test grades, especially when low, may not have adverse effect on grade.	First tests are often “wake up” calls to let you know what is expected. (Hint: Watch out! They may account for a substantial part of your final grade. Contact instructor, academic advisor, or student accessibility personnel if you do poorly.)
5	Graduation requirements may be met with a grade of D or higher.	Requirements may be met only if the student's average meets the departmental standards. (Hint: Generally, a 2.0 or higher.)

LAWS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

	HIGH SCHOOL	POSTSECONDARY
1	Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).	Section 504 and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
2	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 on the basis of a disability.
3	Free, appropriate public education is mandatory.	Students decide to attend and will probably pay tuition.
4	Districts are required to identify students with disabilities through free evaluation and the individualized education program (IEP) process.	Student is responsible for revealing and providing current documentation of a disability. They must self-advocate.
5	Students receive special education services to address needs based on an identified disability.	Formal special education services are not available.
6	Services may include specially designed instruction, modifications, and accommodations based on the IEP.	Reasonable accommodations and modifications may be made to provide equal access and participation.
7	Individual student needs based on the IEP may be addressed by program support for school personnel.	No formal program support for school personnel is provided.
8	Progress toward IEP goals is monitored and communicated to the parent(s) and the student.	Students are required to monitor their own progress and communicate their needs to instructors.
9	Schools assist in connecting the student with community support agencies if identified as a transition need according to the IEP.	Students are responsible for making their own connections with community support agencies.

OTHER FACTORS TO CONSIDER

	HIGH SCHOOL	POSTSECONDARY
1	State and/or district policies may determine eligibility for participation in extracurricular activities.	Postsecondary institution policies may determine eligibility for participation in extracurricular activities.
2	Parents typically manage finances for school-related activities.	Students are responsible for money management of basic needs and extra spending money. (Hint: Outside jobs may be necessary and one more “activity” to consider for time management.)
3	Parents and teachers may provide support and guidance in responsibilities and setting priorities.	Students are responsible for setting their own priorities.

Adapted from: SMU A-LEC Home pages and OKC Community College Accessibility Handbook