

NABNE Testing Accommodations Process and Instructions

For The August 2022 Administration
Of The NPLEX

Goal of this Presentation

To help the testing-accommodations applicant to provide NABNE with documentation that is:

- complete
- submitted correctly
- submitted by May 31, 2022 for the August 2022 exams

Three very important terms

Evaluator:

- A professional who is qualified by degree and training to evaluate your particular impairments and limitations.

Current Evaluation:

- For physical/sensory impairment:
 - “Current” will depend on how changeable the condition is over time.
- For cognitive/developmental/psychological impairment:
 - “Current” means within the past 5 years.

Objective information:

- For physical/sensory impairment:
 - Results of standardized testing (e.g., lab tests/imaging studies)
- For cognitive/developmental/psychological impairment:
 - Results of psycho-educational testing

Functional Impairment & Accommodations

The Four Types of Functional Impairment

1. physical (e.g., pain syndromes)
2. sensory (e.g., visual impairments)
3. psychological (e.g., anxiety, ADHD)
4. cognitive/developmental (e.g., learning disorders)

NABNE needs to clearly understand the limitations that result from your impairment so the accommodations we provide are tailored to ensure that you have equal access to the examination(s).

Two Types of Accommodations that NABNE grants

1. Accommodations that do NOT necessitate alteration of standardized testing conditions:
 - Called “Courtesy” Accommodations
2. Accommodations that DO necessitate alteration of usual testing conditions:
 - Non-standard Accommodations
 - If granted without merit, these accommodations could impact the validity and fairness of a high-stakes test such as the NPLEX.

Examples of Accommodation that Might be Granted (next two slides)

Examples in *italics* are considered to be Courtesy Accommodations, requiring completion of the Courtesy Accommodations form only.

Examples in **bold** necessitate testing under non-standard conditions, requiring completion of the appropriate forms:

- Physical/Sensory *or*
- Cognitive/Developmental/Psychological

Examples of Accommodations with an “*” require a separate testing area (non-standard testing conditions).

PHYSICAL

- *Being seated near the door for easy access to restrooms*
- *Being able to stand while taking the test*
- *Using a special chair/cushions*
- **Being granted off-the-testing-clock breaks***

SENSORY

- *Being allowed to use a noise-reducing headset*
- **Having a large-font exam booklet**
- **Having an exam booklet in Braille**
- **Having an audio version of the exam questions***

PSYCHOLOGICAL

- *Being allowed to take medications during the testing period*
- *Being allowed to use a noise-reducing headset*
- *Being seated in a limited-distraction environment:*
 - *least distracting part of the standard testing area*
 - **semi-private room (with other accommodated examinees and a proctor)***
 - **private room (with proctor only)***
- **Being granted off-the-testing-clock break time***

COGNITIVE/DEVELOPMENTAL

- **Being granted extended testing time (ETT)***
 - ETT is most often granted for a learning disorder
 - **This requires the most extensive evaluation and documentation.**

Types of Learning Disorders

In general, three types of learning disorder are recognized:

- disorders of reading
- disorders of written expression
- disorders of mathematical processing

Only disorders of reading will affect a person's ability to take the NPLEX (multiple-choice) examination.

Disorders of written expression or of mathematical processing will affect a student in the school setting but they will **not** affect a person's ability to take multiple-choice exams.

Applying For Testing Accommodations

Compliance with ADA-A and Canadian Human Rights Code

Every year NABNE consults with legal and disability experts in the US and Canada to ensure that NABNE forms and process are in compliance with current laws and best practices.

Forms are updated and refined every 6 months

Beginning the Application Process

Application packets are available 10 weeks prior to the application deadline of May 31, 2022

Requests for application packets should be made to:
testingaccommodations@nabne.org

- Application documents are *not* posted online because NABNE must determine which forms are needed: courtesy, physical/sensory, or cognitive/developmental/psychological.

You should review the documents (including all footnotes), and begin the application process as soon as possible to ensure that there is enough time to obtain necessary documentation for submission by the deadline.

Required Forms

Required

1. Applicant Request form
2. NABNE Evaluator Report form (NERf)
 - Must include a copy of a **current** evaluation report on which responses to the NERf are based.
 - The NERf is designed to prompt the evaluator to respond with any information that will provide evidence that you require the requested accommodations.
 - **The NERf must be completed by the evaluator who did your current evaluation.**

Optional

- 1-page Personal Statement
 - This statement is optional; its purpose is to give you an opportunity to provide relevant information that might not be provided by your evaluator.

Submitting Documentation

- All documentation must be submitted to NABNE by the end of the exam registration period, May 31, 2022 for the August 2022 examination.
- The NERf and evaluation report must be sent to NABNE **directly** by your evaluator.
- If any documents cannot be submitted via email, you should email testingaccommodations@nabne.org or call 503-452-2953 for an alternative solution.
- Check with your evaluator and NABNE prior to the deadline to confirm all documentation has been received.
- If all documentation is not submitted on time, or if it is not complete, NABNE will not process your application.

Review of Documentation

If your documentation is complete and it requires psycho-educational expert review, it will be sent to a NABNE Documentation Review Specialist (DRS) who has:

- a doctoral degree (Ed.D., Ph.D., or Psy.D.);
- specialty training in the assessment of individuals with cognitive/developmental/psychological disabilities;
- many years of experience reviewing evaluations such as the ones submitted by applicants for accommodations;
- published research regarding aspects of the disability assessment process; and
- extensive knowledge of applicable legal requirements, both in the US and in Canada.

NABNE Decision

After thorough review of your documentation, the DRS sends a report and recommendations to NABNE.

The NABNE Testing Accommodations Review Committee makes the final decisions regarding the granting or denial of the request.

- If your documentation does not provide adequate evidence of impairment that necessitates accommodation, NABNE is not required to defer to the conclusions or recommendations of your evaluator.

Decisions regarding which accommodations to grant are based on findings from educational research.

- See the *NABNE Review of Testing Accommodations Requests*.
 - (available upon request from testingaccommodations@nabne.org)

Notification of Request Status

- Four weeks before the exam administration, NABNE will send you notice of the decision.
- NABNE may grant all, some, or none of the accommodations you requested.
- If NABNE does not grant any or all of the requested accommodations, every attempt will be made to provide *courtesy* accommodations.
- If any requested accommodations are denied, NABNE will send a 3-5 page individualized explanation for the denial.
 - If you want to apply for accommodations for a **future** exam administration, this explanation will provide a clear indication of what must be included in the new documentation.

Reasons Requests May Be Denied

Frequently Seen Problems

1. The **evaluator** is not **qualified** to assess the particular impairment;
2. The **evaluation** is not **current**; and/or
3. **Objective evidence** of impairment is
 - missing,
 - insufficient, or
 - equivocal (inconclusive).

1. The evaluator is not qualified

- Different disabilities require different types of evaluator qualifications.
- In general, if you are requesting **extended testing time**, a psycho-educational evaluation must be done by an evaluator who is:
 - A doctoral level* (Ed.D, Ph.D., Psy.D) professional, with specialized training in the administration and interpretation of psycho-educational (cognitive) tests.
 - *Just as an MD/DO/ND degree is necessary to make a valid diagnosis of a physical condition, a doctoral degree Ed.D/Ph.D./Psy.D is generally required to make a valid diagnosis of a cognitive/developmental/psychological impairment.

2. The evaluation is not current

NABNE needs to know your *current* functional limitations.

- Some disabilities can change over time (e.g., ADHD)
- Students with learning disorders may develop compensatory strategies or, on the other hand, may find that the stresses of medical school exacerbate existing learning impairments.

In general, evaluation for cognitive/developmental/psychological impairment must be current within the past **5 years**.

- Some cognitive conditions might, however, require a more current evaluation.
 - e.g., when the impairment is due to a TBI

3. Objective evidence of impairment is missing

- Results of physiological testing are missing:
 - Diagnosis is based on clinical impressions only.
 - Lab testing and/or diagnostic imaging were done, but results were not reported to NABNE.
- Results of psycho-educational testing are missing:
 - Cognitive testing was not done.
 - Cognitive testing was done, but scores were not reported to NABNE.
 - A few scores that demonstrated some cognitive deficiencies were reported to NABNE, but these deficiencies were not relevant to the ability to take a multiple-choice examination.
 - e.g., below-average scores were in written expression.
 - Diagnosis was based on criteria that are irrelevant to taking a multiple-choice examination.

3. Objective historical evidence of cognitive impairment is missing

Learning disorders are considered to be developmental (i.e., present from birth).

- If an applicant has a learning disorder, there will likely be evidence from an early age:
 - Either a **disability was diagnosed in childhood** and the **applicant was accommodated** in school;
- OR**
- The **impairment was not evaluated until the applicant was an adult**, in which case the **applicant's prior (unaccommodated) school performance would likely show deficits in earlier academic performance.**

3. Objective historical evidence of cognitive impairment is missing

- A lack of historical information, in and of itself, will not lead to denial of requested accommodations.
- Historical information could provide evidence that will support your case.
 - You are not required to provide this information.
 - Providing the information could help support and give context to your accommodations request.

If you have not been accommodated prior to naturopathic medical school and yet have performed well enough to be admitted to naturopathic school, NABNE needs to know why you need accommodations now.

3. Objective evidence of cognitive impairment relevant to taking a multiple-choice examination is insufficient

Scores that are relevant to taking a multiple-choice examination were reported to NABNE, but do not demonstrate that the applicant has below-average ability.

- “Low-average” is still average and does not indicate disability under the ADA-A or the Canadian Human Rights Code.
- Cognitive test scores are inconsistent with each other.
 - e.g., word-decoding scores are extremely low but scores on timed reading-comprehension tests are average.

3. Objective evidence of cognitive impairment relevant to taking a multiple-choice examination is inconclusive

The applicant's scores are low, but only compared to the incorrect group.

- The correct comparison group is the applicant's **same-age peers in the general population**
- i.e., applicants must demonstrate that they are impaired in comparison with the general population, not when compared to other medical students.

No single documentation deficiency, in and of itself, will lead to a decision by NABNE to deny a request.

Decisions are based on the entire picture provided by you and by your evaluator.

Summary

- The evidence provided to document functional impairment must be:
 - Valid (assessed by a qualified evaluator)
 - Current
 - Objective
 - Relevant to the tasks involved in taking a multiple-choice examination
- Factors that frequently contribute to the denial of requests:
 - Documentation was not current.
 - Evaluator was not qualified to assess the type of impairment.
 - Objective evidence of impairment was missing, insufficient, inconsistent, or ambiguous.

- Not every functional impairment that is accommodated in a school setting is applicable to taking a multiple-choice examination.
- NABNE requires more evidence of impairment than the schools usually do, because the stakes are higher.
 - Testing under non-standardized conditions can impact exam validity.
- NABNE's intention is to be completely transparent in asking for only the specific information that is necessary to make a valid assessment of your need for accommodations.
- NABNE's requirements for objective evidence are based on research findings and industry standards.

Frequently Asked Questions

Why does NABNE require completion of the *NABNE Evaluator Report form (NERf)*?

- The *NERf* prompts the evaluator to provide all the information that will support your request.
 - Specifying the criteria ensures transparency.
- NABNE wants to eliminate submission of irrelevant (often contradictory) information.
 - e.g., when an evaluator can't point to objective evidence of impairment and provides a large quantity of subjective, rather than high-quality objective information.

If the evaluation was done correctly by a qualified evaluator, the form will be easy to complete.

If I have a diagnosis, provided by a qualified evaluator, why does NABNE need more information?

- A diagnosis is not required by NABNE, and a diagnosis does not necessarily provide sufficient information about current functional impairments.
- NABNE wants to appropriately accommodate examinees. Two applicants might have the same diagnosis but have different functional limitations and need different accommodations to create equal access.
- NABNE needs to know
 - *what your specific functional limitations are;*
 - *how these functional limitations limit your access to the specific activity of taking a multiple-choice examination; and*
 - *how the accommodations being requested specifically address your the functional limitations.*

If I was granted accommodations in school, why does NABNE require additional information to grant accommodations when taking the NPLEX?

- Schools grant accommodations for more types of functional impairments than those that would prevent equal access to the NPLEX.
- NABNE has a higher requirement for evidence because non-standardized testing conditions can have a consequential impact on exam validity in the context of a high-stakes examination.

Why not just grant extended testing time to any examinee who requests it?

- Research has shown that examinees given extra testing time outperform examinees who are not given equal extra time.
 - This would provide an unfair advantage to an examinee who requested the extra time.
- Research has shown that when an examinee has a functional limitation that warrants extra testing time, rarely is more than 1.25 time (i.e., 25% extra time) required.
 - Only in cases of extreme impairment is 1.50 time warranted.

See, for example, Lewandowski, L., Cohen, J., & Lovett, B. J., (2013). Effects of extended time allotments on reading comprehension performance of college students with and without learning disabilities. *Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment*, 31(3), 326-336.

Checklist to maximize your chances of receiving the accommodations you are requesting

- ❑ Request the appropriate testing accommodations packet from NABNE **testingaccommodations@nabne.org** when it becomes available March 22, 2022 for August 2022 examination.
- ❑ Read the NABNE TA policy and review all the documents in the packet (including all footnotes and the form you will send to your evaluator) so you know what you need to submit and you understand what your evaluator will be required to provide.
- ❑ If you are requesting extended testing time and need a current psycho-educational evaluation, make your appointment with the evaluator well before the NABNE deadline for submission of documentation. It sometimes takes weeks to secure these appointments.
- ❑ Complete your application, provide the optional personal statement, initial the checklist, and return the documents, in pdf format, to **testingaccommodations@nabne.org** by May 31, 2022 for the August 2022 examination.
- ❑ Ensure that your evaluator has completed the NERf and has submitted it, along with a copy of the evaluation on which the responses to the NERf are based, by May 31, 2022. Your evaluator may submit the documents in pdf format to **testingaccommodations@nabne.org**, or by fax to 503-452-3943.

Our goal is to provide appropriate accommodations

Your careful attention to NABNE policies and requirements will help us accomplish this goal.