

## **Disability Documentation Policies For Students with Disabilities**

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The University of Wisconsin – Parkside, pursuant to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973, is committed to making individuals with disabilities full participants in its programs, services and activities. They are protected from discrimination and assured services and accommodations that provide equal access to the activities and programs of the university. To establish that an individual is covered under the ADA documentation must indicate that the disability substantially limits a major life activity. If academic or classroom-based adjustments and accommodations are requested learning must be one of the major life activities affected. Documentation submitted must:

- Be appropriate to verify eligibility
- Demonstrate a current substantial impact of one or more major life activities, and
- Support the request for accommodations, academic adjustments and or auxiliary aids.

To qualify for disability services through the Office of Disability Services, students are required to provide diagnostic documentation from a licensed clinical professional familiar with the history and functional implications of the impairments. Disability documentation must adequately verify the nature and extent of the disability in accordance with current professional standards and techniques, and it must clearly substantiate the need for all of the student's specific accommodation requests. All documentation must be submitted on the official letterhead of the professional describing the disability. The report should be dated and signed and include the name, title, and professional credentials of the evaluator, including information about license or certification. If the original documentation is incomplete or inadequate to determine the extent of the disability or reasonable accommodation, the University has the discretion to require additional documentation. Any cost incurred in obtaining additional documentation when the original records are inadequate is borne by the student. If the documentation is complete but the University desires a second professional opinion, the University bears the latter cost. In general, it is not acceptable for such documentation to include a diagnosis or testing performed by a member of the student's family. Additionally, students requesting accommodations for the manifestations of multiple disabilities must provide evidence of all such conditions.

*(The following documents were referred to and used in the development of this policy and guidelines: McBurney Disability Resource Center- University of Wisconsin-Madison, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Division of Rehabilitation-Education Services document titled " Application Procedure", The consortium on ADHD Documentation, Educational Testing Services Document titled "Guidelines for Documentation of Psychiatric Disabilities in Adolescents and Adults.)*

1. **Mobility, Systemic or Health-Related Disabilities:**  
Students requesting accommodations on the basis of mobility, systemic or disease-related disabilities must provide documentation consisting of:
  - An identification of the disabling condition(s).
  - An assessment of the functional limitations of the condition(s) for which accommodations is being requested, and whether the degree of limitation is mild, moderate or substantial.
  - Suggestions as to how the functionally limiting manifestations of the condition(s) may be appropriately accommodated.
2. **Hearing Loss:**  
Deaf or hard of hearing students requesting accommodations on the basis of deafness or hearing loss must provide documentation consisting of:

- An audiological evaluation and/or audiogram, no older than 3 years if loss is progressive.
- An assessment of the functional limitations of the hearing loss for which accommodations is being requested, and whether the degree of limitation is mild, moderate or substantial.
- Suggestions as to how the functionally limiting manifestations of the hearing loss condition(s) may appropriately be accommodated.

### 3. Low Vision or Blindness:

Students requesting accommodations on the basis of low vision or blindness must provide documentation consisting of:

- An ocular assessment or evaluation from an ophthalmologist.
- A low-vision evaluation of residual visual function, when appropriate.
- An assessment of the functional limitations of the condition(s) for which accommodations is being requested, and whether the degree of limitation is mild, moderate or substantial.
- Suggestions as to how the functionally limiting manifestations of the visual condition(s) may be appropriately accommodated.

### 4. Specific Learning Disability:

Students requesting accommodation on the basis of a specific learning disability must provide documentation from a professional who has undergone comprehensive training and has relevant experience in differential diagnosis of a full range of cognitive and psychiatric disabilities (e.g., licensed clinical psychologists, educational psychologists and neuropsychologists). This documentation must include, but is not restricted to the following:

- **Diagnostic Interview**  
A diagnostic interview including a description of the presenting problem(s); relevant developmental, medical, psycho-social and employment histories; family history (including primary language of the home and the student's current level of English fluency); and a discussion of co-morbidity where indicated.
- **Assessment** A neuropsychological or psycho-educational evaluation is required and must provide clear and specific evidence that a learning disability exists and that alternative explanations for lower than expected performance have been ruled out. Assessment, and any resulting diagnosis, must consist of and be based on multiple forms of evidence (i.e., standardized test results, informal assessment results, observational and historical data) that supports a learning disability diagnosis. Evidence should be precise, objective, valid and acceptable in the field. Reports should follow statistically sound and widely accepted practices for interpreting data. Identifying a discrepancy between or among test scores is not sufficient to warrant the diagnosis of a learning disability or establish eligibility for accommodation. Evidence must establish a clear link between specific deficit areas and the functional limitations experienced by the individual.

For the evaluation to illustrate a substantial limitation to learning, the comprehensive assessment battery must assess the following domains:

- Aptitude/Cognitive Ability
- Academic Achievement
- Information Processing

**Clinical Summary** The clinical summary must: (a) indicate the substantial limitations to major life activities posed by the specified learning disability, (b) describe the extent to which these limitations impact the academic context for which accommodations are being requested, (c)

suggest how the specific effects of the learning disability may be accommodated, and (d) state how the effects of the learning disability are mediated by the recommended accommodations.

#### Currency

To establish the need for accommodation, documentation must reflect the current impact of the learning disability. In general, this means testing should have been conducted within the past three years for a high school student and within the past five years for an adult.

5. Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder: Students requesting accommodations on the basis of attention deficit-hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) must provide documentation by a professional who has undergone comprehensive training and has relevant experience in differential diagnosis and the full range of psychiatric disorders (e.g., licensed clinical psychologist, neuropsychologist, psychiatrist and other relevantly trained medical doctors). The documentation must include:

- Evidence of early impairment. The condition must have been exhibited in childhood in more than one setting.
- Evidence of current impairment. An assessment of the individual's presenting attentional symptoms and evidence of current impulsive/hyperactive or inattentive behaviors that significantly impair functioning in two or more settings must be provided. In an academic setting, functional impairment is most often expressed in poor academic performance across a variety of academic tasks. In adults, work history may demonstrate an inability to retain or maintain employment.
- A diagnostic interview. The interview must contain self-report and third-party information pertaining to: developmental history, family history of ADHD or other learning or psychological difficulties, relevant medical and medication history, a thorough academic history, a review of prior psycho educational test reports to determine whether a pattern of strengths or weaknesses is supportive of attention or learning problems.
- Evidence of alternative diagnoses or explanations being ruled out. The documentation must investigate and discuss the possibility of dual diagnoses and alternative or coexisting mood, behavioral, neurological and/or personality disorders that may confound the ADHD diagnosis.
- Neuropsychological or psycho educational assessment is needed to determine the current impact of the disorder on the individual's ability to function in an academic setting and to establish eligibility for classroom accommodations including alternative testing, note takers and/or alternative media (taped books electronic text). Such data should include subtest and standard scores.
- A specific psychological diagnosis as per the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual - IV (DSM-IV). Symptoms of hyperactivity/impulsivity that were present in childhood, and the current symptoms which have been present for at least the past six months and which impair functioning in two or more settings (e.g., school, work, home) must also be identified.
- An indication of whether or not the student was evaluated while on medication and the degree to which the prescribed treatment reduces the level or degree of impairment.
- A clinical summary which: (a) indicates the substantial limitations to major life activities posed by the disability, (b) describes the extent to which these limitations would impact the academic context for which accommodations are being requested, and (c) suggests how the specific effects of the disability may be accommodated, and (d) states how the effects of ADHD are mediated by the recommended accommodations.

(Refer to the 1998 Consortium on ADHD Documentation for additional guidance. Copies are available from Disability Services upon request.)

6. Traumatic Brain Injury: (Trauma to the brain resulting from cerebral vascular accidents, tumors, or other medical conditions) Students requesting accommodations on the basis

of a traumatic brain injury (TBI) or brain insult must provide documentation by a neuropsychologist. The documentation must include:

- Thorough neuropsychological evaluation including assessment of the areas of attention, visuoperception/visual reasoning, language, academic skills, memory/learning, executive function, sensory, motor, and emotional status. Data should include subtest scores and percentiles.
- Evidence of current impairment. A history of individual's presenting symptoms and evidence of behaviors that significantly impair functioning.
- A diagnostic interview. The interview must contain self-report and third-party information pertaining to: developmental history, family history, learning or psychological difficulties, relevant medical history, and a thorough academic history.
- Evidence of alternative diagnoses or explanations ruled out. The documentation must investigate and discuss the possibility of dual diagnoses and alternative or coexisting mood, learning, behavioral, and/or personality disorders that may confound the diagnosis.
- A specific psychological diagnosis as per the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual - IV (DSM-IV).
- A clinical summary which: (a) indicates the substantial limitations to major life activities posed by the disability, (b) describes the extent to which these limitations would impact the academic context for which accommodations are being requested, and (c) suggests how the specific effects of the disability may be accommodated, and (d) states how the effects of the disability are mediated by the recommended accommodations.

#### 7. Psychiatric Disability

Students requesting accommodations on the basis of a psychiatric disability must provide the current documentation from a licensed psychologist, psychiatrist, or licensed clinical social worker, which must include:

- A specific, current psychiatric diagnosis as per the DSM-IV which indicates the nature, frequency and severity of the symptoms upon which the diagnosis was predicated. A diagnosis without an explicit listing of current symptoms is not sufficient. Primary and secondary Axis I and Axis II diagnoses are required.
- Evidence of current impairment. An assessment of the individual's presenting symptoms and evidence of current behaviors that significantly impair functioning must be provided. In an academic setting, functional impairment is most often expressed in poor academic performance across a variety of academic tasks.
- Evidence is needed to determine the current impact of the disorder on the individual's ability to function in an academic setting and to establish eligibility for classroom accommodations including alternative testing, notetakers and/or alternative media (taped books electronic text).
- Prescribed medications, dosages and schedules which may influence the types of accommodations provided.
- A clinical summary which: (a) indicates the substantial limitations to major life activities posed by the psychiatric disability, (b) describes the extent to which these limitations would impact the academic context for which accommodations are being requested, (c) suggests how the specific effects of the psychiatric disability may be accommodated, and (d.) states how the effects of the psychiatric disability are mediated by the recommended accommodations.