

Learning Disability

Students requesting accommodations from the Office of Disability Services at Duquesne University must submit appropriate documentation to verify eligibility under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1992. The following guidelines are provided:

Qualifications of the Evaluator(s):

Comprehensive training of the evaluator and direct experience with an adolescent and adult population is essential which qualifies the evaluator to use the diagnostic terminology indicating Learning Disability. The evaluator should have documented credentials, and the report format should be typed and on letterhead with credentials noting the area of specialization. The documentation should be signed and dated, giving the name, title, professional credentials as an evaluator, including license or certification, area of specialization, employment, state/province of practice.

Date of Documentation:

The documentation must address both the scope and content described in these guidelines, as well as the individual's current level of functioning and need for accommodations. An assessment of the current impact of the disability on academic performance necessitates a current evaluation - this generally means a diagnostic evaluation within the past three years. Changes in the individual's performance and/or medication may necessitate an updated evaluation report. The update must also conform to the guidelines.

Diagnosis and Documentation:

A comprehensive battery is needed, including a diagnostic interview, assessment of aptitude, academic achievement information processing, and a diagnosis.

Diagnostic Interview

This should cover relevant academic history, learning processes in primary, secondary and post secondary education. It may include: description of presenting problems, developmental, medical, psycho-social and employment histories, family history including foreign language and English fluency, and a discussion of dual diagnosis.

Evidence of a substantial limitation to learning or other major life activity must be provided. The functional limitation should support the test profile and accommodation recommendations. Observations of the student during testing is also useful. Information

Processing: Specific areas should be assessed: short and long term memory sequential memory, auditory and visual perception/processing. processing speed. executive functioning and motor ability.

Assessment

A Neuropsych or psycho-educational evaluation (an Individual Evaluations Plan (IEP) or 504 plan alone are inadequate) is required, with specific evidence of a Learning Disability.

This comprehensive battery should address the following domains and include a number of the recommended testing instruments listed in the following areas of Aptitude, Academic Achievement, and Information Processing:

1. The testing instruments must be technically adequate (reliable, valid, standardized on an appropriate norm group) and document both the nature and severity of the Learning Disability.
 2. Scoring: standard scores and/or percentiles should be provided for all normed measures. Grade equivalents must be accompanied by Standard Scores or Percentiles.
- **Aptitude:** Complete intellectual assessment with sub-tests and standard scores reported.
 - Wechsler Adult intelligence Scale - Revised (WAIS-III or WAIS-R)
 - Woodcock-Johnson Psycho-educational Battery-Revised test of cognitive ability)
 - Kaufman Adolescent and Adult Intelligence Test
 - Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale (4th ed.)
 - **Academic Achievement:** comprehensive battery with sub tests and standard scores and include current level of academic functioning in relevant areas: reading (decoding and comprehension, math, oral and written language)
 - Scholastic Abilities Test for Adults (SATA) Stanford Test of
 - Academic Skills Woodcock-Johnson Psycho educational Battery
 - Revised: Tests of Achievement Wechsler Individual Achievement
 - Weschsler Individual Achievement Test (WIAT) or specific achievement tests such as:
 - Nelson-Denny Reading Skills Test
 - Stanford Diagnostic Math Test
 - Test of Written Language-3 (TOWL-3)
 - Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests-Revised

- Note: Wide Range Achievement Test -3 (WRAT-3) is not a comprehensive measure of achievement.
- **Information Processing:** Specific areas should be assessed: short and long term memory, sequential memory, auditory and visual perception/processing, processing speed, executive functioning and motor ability.
 - Detroit Tests of Learning Aptitude -3
 - Detroit Tests of Learning Aptitude - Adult
 - WAIS-R sub texts Johnson Psycho educational Battery-Revised (tests of Cognitive Ability)
 - other relevant instruments
- **Diagnosis:** The data should indicate whether a learning diagnosis is present or not and the evaluator needs to clearly state this. It is important to rule out alternate explanations for problems in learning (emotional, attention, motivational) or other problems that may be interfering with learning but may not constitute a Learning Disability. Terms like "suggests" or "indicative of" are not diagnostic.

Evidence to establish a rationale supporting the need for accommodations:

Clinical Summary

- A well written diagnostic summary based on a comprehensive evaluation process is necessary. The evaluator must integrate the data from the instruments with background information and observations. This should include:
- Ruling out alternative explanations: cultural, language, problems (motivation, attention, emotional), study skills.
- Identifying how patterns in the student's cognitive, achievement and information processing reflect the Learning Disability.
- Indicating that a substantial limitation to learning or other major life activity is presented, and the degree to which it impacts the student's ability to function in the learning environment. This serves as the basis for the accommodations that are needed.
- Record of prior accommodations and auxiliary aids, and the conditions under which they were used

Recommendations for Accommodations:

- Identify what accommodations are needed and why.
- Address how the accommodations are supported by the test results

Confidentiality:

The evaluation is considered confidential and informed and written consent is required prior to release. Documentation should be emailed to Office of Disability Services.

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