

## Acceptable Documentation of a Learning Disability (LD)



### I. Introduction

Student Accessibility works with students with diagnosed disabilities and provides academic services and accommodations to those students who require accommodations in order to have equal access to the institution. Students with learning disabilities are best served by providing comprehensive documentation that assists in identifying appropriate accommodations

### II. Definition of a Learning Disability

The National Joint Council on Learning Disabilities (1998) definition of a learning disability:

Learning disabilities is a general term which refers to a heterogeneous group of conditions manifested by significant difficulties in the acquisition and use of listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning or mathematical ability.

In addition, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Health Disorders 5 (DSM-5) provides the standard framework for the diagnosis of a learning disability:

- Learning disabilities are diagnosed when the individual's achievement on an individually administered, standardized tests in reading, mathematics, or written expression is substantially below that expected for age.
- Learning problems significantly interfere with academic or occupational performance.

A qualified professional must conduct the evaluation. Professionals generally considered qualified to evaluate specific learning disabilities are clinical or educational psychologists, school psychologists, neuropsychologists, learning disabilities specialists, and speech and language pathologists. Diagnostic reports must include names and titles of the evaluators as well as the date(s) of testing.

#### Documentation of disability must include:

1. A clear diagnosis of disability.
2. If applicable, must include comprehensive developmental history, family history, psychosocial history, academic history, language history, medical history, and clinical observations.
3. Documentation must state the major life activities that are affected by the condition, as well as the functional limitations of the disability within an academic environment.

4. If applicable, testing must be current and comprehensive and include test scores/data (standard scores). In most cases, this means within the past five years.

5. If available, include a psychoeducational report.

### **Recommended Instruments to Be Used for Testing:**

It is not acceptable to administer a single test instrument, nor is it acceptable to base a diagnosis on only one of the several sub-tests. Objective evidence of a substantial limitation to learning must be provided. The tests used must be reliable, valid and standardized for use with an adult population. The test findings should document both the nature and severity of the learning disability. Minimally, domains to be addressed must include (but are not limited to):

#### 1. Aptitude

- In evaluating aptitude, specific areas of information processing, memory, auditory and visual perception/processing, processing speed and reasoning must be assessed.
- The Woodcock-Johnson Psycho-Educational Battery-III (WJ-III): Tests of Cognitive Ability with subtest scores is the preferred instrument OR the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale-III or IV (WAIS III or WAIS IV).
- The Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC) is not an acceptable assessment instrument for an adult population.

#### 2. Achievement

- Current levels of functioning in reading, mathematics and written language are required.
- The Woodcock-Johnson Psycho-Educational Battery-III (WJ-III): Tests of Achievement, or the Wechsler Individual Achievement Test- III (WIAT III) are the preferred instruments.  
Note: The Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT) is not a comprehensive measure of achievement and is therefore not suitable as a sole measure of achievement.