



UNIVERSITY OF
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Helping Students Be Successful

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**Dean of Students Office
Disability Resources
Documentation Requirements for Learning Disabilities (LD)
and Cognitive Impairments**

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Documentation Requirements for Learning Disabilities (LD)
and Cognitive Impairments

I. A Qualified Professional Must Conduct the Evaluation

- A. The name, title, and professional credentials of the evaluator-including information about license or certification, as well as the area of specialization and state or province in which the individual practices should be clearly stated in the documentation. Comprehensive training and relevant experience with and LD population are essential.
- B. This documentation should be completed by a licensed psychologist or licensed or certified school psychologist who has direct knowledge of the student and his/her disability.
- C. All reports must be on letterhead, typed, dated, and bear the signature of the evaluator. Originals can be returned to the student, if requested.
- D. Competence in working with culturally and linguistically diverse populations is also essential. It is of utmost importance that evaluators are sensitive and respectful of cultural and linguistic differences.

II. Documentation Must Be Current

- A. Documentation must be current. Because the provision of reasonable accommodations and services is based upon UF's assessment of the current impact of the disability on academic performance, it is in a student's best interest to provide recent and appropriate documentation.
- B. It is important to recognize that accommodation needs can change over time and are not always identified through the initial diagnostic process. Conversely, a prior history of accommodations does not, in and of itself, warrant the provision of a similar accommodation.
- C. If documentation is inadequate in scope or content, or does not address the individual's current level of functioning and need for accommodations, reevaluation may be required.
- D. Generally, if the learning disability was diagnosed prior to completion of high school, testing conducted within the past three years is considered current.
- E. Generally, if the learning disability was diagnosed after completion of high school, testing conducted within the past five years is considered current.

III. Documentation Necessary to Substantiate the Diagnosis Must Be Comprehensive

- A. Standard scores and/or percentiles must be provided for all normed measures. Grade equivalents must be accompanied with standard scores and/or percentiles.
- B. The data must logically reflect a substantial limitation to learning for which the student is requesting accommodation.
- C. The particular profile of the student's strengths and weaknesses must be shown to relate to functional limitations that may necessitate accommodations.
- D. The testing instruments must be reliable, valid, and standardized for use with an adolescent/adult population.
- E. Informal inventories, surveys, self-reports, and direct observation by a qualified professional may be used in tandem with formal tests in order to further develop a clinical hypothesis.
- F. If the student has attended exceptional student education classes in the past, please provide the Disability Resources with a copy of their most recent individual education plan.
- G. When selecting a battery of tests, it is critical to consider the technical adequacy of instruments, including their reliability, validity, and standardization on an appropriate norm group. The professional judgment of an evaluator in choosing tests is important. Testing must be comprehensive in the assessment of a learning disability. This testing must include assessment of cognitive ability, achievement, and information processing. The following list is provided as a helpful resource but is not intended to be definitive or exhaustive.

1. Aptitude/Cognitive Ability

- *Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale-III (WAIS-III)*
- *Woodcock-Johnson Psychoeducational Battery-Revised: Tests of Cognitive Ability*
- *Kaufman Adolescent and Adult Intelligence Test*
- *Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale (4th ed.)*

The *Slosson Intelligence Test-Revised* and the *Kaufman Brief Intelligence Test* are primarily screening devices which are not comprehensive enough to provide the kinds of information necessary to make accommodation(s) decisions.

2. Academic Achievement

- *Scholastic Abilities Test for Adults (SATA)*
- *Stanford Test of Academic Skills (TASK)*
- *Woodcock-Johnson Psychoeducational Battery-Revised: Tests of Achievement*
- *Wechsler Individual Achievement Test (WIAT)*

or specific achievement tests such as

- *Nelson-Denny Reading Skills Test*
- *Stanford Diagnostic Mathematics Test*
- *Test of Written Language-3 (TOWL-3)*
- *Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests-Revised*

Specific achievement tests are useful instruments when administered under standardized conditions and when the results are interpreted within the context of other diagnostic information. The *Wide Range Achievement Test-3 (WRAT-3)* is not a comprehensive measure of achievement and therefore should not be used as a diagnostic measure of achievement.

3. Information Processing

- *Detroit Tests of Learning Aptitude-3 (DTLA-3)*
- *Detroit Tests of Learning Aptitude-Adult (DTLA-A)*
- Information from sub-tests on the *WAIS-R* or *Woodcock-Johnson Psychoeducational Battery-Revised: Tests of Cognitive Ability*, as well as other relevant instruments, may be useful when interpreted within the context of other diagnostic information.

IV. Documentation Must Include a Specific Diagnosis

- A. The report must include a specific diagnosis of the disability. The diagnostician should use direct language in the diagnosis of the disability, avoiding such terms as “suggest” and “is indicative of”.
- B. Nonspecific diagnoses, such as individual “learning styles”, “learning differences”, “academic problems”, “computer phobias”, “slow reader”, and “test difficulty or anxiety” in and of themselves do not constitute a learning disability.
- C. If the data indicate that a learning disability is not present, the evaluator must state that conclusion in the report.

V. Each Accommodation Recommended by the Evaluator Must Include a Rationale

- A. The evaluator must describe the impact of the diagnosed disability on a specific major life activity as well as the degree of impact on the individual. The diagnostic report must include specific recommendations for accommodations that the post-secondary institution can reasonably provide.
- B. A detailed explanation as to why each accommodation is recommended must be provided and should be correlated with specific functional limitations determined through interview, observation, and/or testing.

- C. The documentation must include any record of prior accommodations or auxiliary aids, including information about specific conditions under which the accommodations were used and whether or not they benefited the individual.
- D. A school plan such as and Individualized Education Program (IEP) or a 504 plan is insufficient documentation in and of itself but can be included as part of a more comprehensive evaluative report. If possible, the criteria for placement in a specialized program should be included.
- E. If no prior accommodations were provided, the evaluator must include an explanation of why no accommodations were needed in the past and why accommodations are needed at this time.
- F. If the requested accommodation is not clearly identified in the diagnostic report, the Disability Resources will seek clarification.
- G. The evaluator should support recommendations with specific test results or clinical observations.
- H. The evaluator must describe the impact the diagnosed learning disability has on the student's academic pursuits.
- I. The Disability Resources will make the final determination as to whether appropriate and reasonable accommodations are warranted and can be provided to the student. If the student is not satisfied with the determination, an appeal can be made through the University of Florida's ADA Coordinator within 180 days.

VI. An Interpretative Summary Must Be Provided

- A. A diagnostic summary based on a comprehensive evaluative process is a necessary component of the report. Assessment instruments and the data they provide do not diagnose; rather, they provide important elements that must be integrated by the evaluator with background information, observations of the client during the testing situation, and the current context.
- B. A clinical summary must include:
 - 1. Indication that the evaluator ruled out alternative explanations for academic problems, such as poor education, poor motivation and/or study skills, emotional problems, attentional problems, and cultural/language difference which may be interfering with learning but do not constitute a learning disability;
 - 2. Indication of how patterns in cognitive ability, achievement, and information processing are used to determine the presence of a learning disability;
 - 3. Indication of the substantial limitation to learning presented by the learning disability and the degree to which it affects the individual in the testing context for which accommodations are being requested; and

4. Indication of why specific accommodation(s) are recommended and how the effects of the LD or cognitive impairment would be mediated by the accommodation(s).

These guidelines were adapted from documents/books developed by:

Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD).

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Accommodations in Higher Education Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA); Edited by Michael Gordon and Shelby Keiser.

The primary intent of this document was to develop standard criteria for documentation used to determine appropriate accommodations for individuals with LD and cognitive impairments.