University of Texas at Arlington
Office for Students with Disabilities

Learning Disability Documentation Guidelines

In order to fully evaluate requests for accommodations or auxiliary aids and to determine eligibility for services, the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD) requires documentation of your disability. The documentation you provide should include an evaluation by an appropriately licensed professional that makes evident the current impact of the disability as it relates to the accommodation(s) requested and include a description of any and all functional limitations.

Learning Disabilities (LD) are a group of disorders manifested by significant difficulties in the acquisition and use of listening, spelling, reading, writing, reasoning, or mathematical ability. These disorders are intrinsic to the individual, presumed to be due to central nervous system dysfunction and are usually first diagnosed in childhood. In addition, there may be problems in organization skills, self-regulatory behaviors, and social skills. A learning disability is not the result of 1) mental illness, 2) visual, hearing, or motor impairments, 3) mental retardation, 4) emotional disturbance, or 5) environmental, cultural or economic disadvantage.

Documentation

Qualified Professional Must Conduct the Evaluation
Professionals conducting these evaluations must be qualified through professional licensing/credentials as well as through extensive training in the assessment and diagnosis of learning disabilities. In addition, professionals must be able to render a diagnosis of a specific learning disability according to DSM IV-TR standards and make recommendations for appropriate accommodations for adolescents and/or adults. The name, title, and professional credentials of the evaluator (including information about license and/or certification) should be included on the report. Examples of professionals considered to be qualified to evaluate specific learning disabilities might include clinical or educational psychologists; school psychologists; neuropsychologists; and certified educational diagnosticians with experience in the assessment of learning problems in adults. The evaluator must be impartial and not related to the person being evaluated.

Testing Should be Current
Although a person diagnosed as having a qualified learning disability is typically viewed as lifelong, the severity of the condition may change over time. Because reasonable accommodations and services are based upon UT Arlington's assessment of the current impact of the individual's disability/ies on his/her academic performance, recent and appropriate documentation should be submitted. For the most part, comprehensive testing should be conducted within the past five years. However, each request will be evaluated on a case by case basis. Please submit your most recent testing for review. If updates are recommended, options will be considered.

Revised 8/14
Prior Documentation
While a current assessment is always preferred, a high school plan such as an individualized education program (IEP), 504 plan and/or Summary of Performance should be submitted for review, if nothing more current is available.

Written Report
Actual test scores should logically reflect a substantial limitation to learning for which the individual is requesting the accommodations. Documentation should also rule out any other variable that might contribute to a learning problem (i.e. visual/hearing impairments, psychological stressors, language, etc.) These are conditions for which other or additional accommodations might be recommended.

Documentation should indicate a significant discrepancy calculation (based on industry standards) relative to expectancy and clinician recommendations:

A. **Expectancy** is defined as a standard score (or intelligence quotient) obtained on an intelligence test. In cases where a significant difference is calculated between verbal and performance scores, the verbal, performance, or full-scale score (whichever best represents the individual’s intelligence level, as documented) may be used.

B. **Significant discrepancy** is defined as a negative difference of more than 15 standard score points between the standard score on the intelligence test and the standard score obtained in an academic area as well as in a specific area of processing ability. This discrepancy in scores must be documented in terms reported in the technical manual for the individual test instrument.

Evidence of a significant academic deficiency relative to expectancy as well as to a significant discrepancy in at least one area of cognitive processing should be present.

Based on expectancy, a statistically significant discrepancy of at least one standard deviation shall be calculated in one or more of the following academic areas as measured by standardized tests:

1. Reading/Reading Comprehension
2. Written Expression
3. Mathematics (Calculation and/or Applied Problems)

In addition to the discrepancy measured between expectancy in at least one academic area, a discrepancy should also be found in at least one area of specific processing ability. These abilities as measured by standardized tests include:

1. Visual Processing (e.g., visual-perceptual speed, visual-spatial abilities, visual-motor)
2. Auditory Processing (e.g., auditory sequencing ability, auditory discrimination, auditory concentration skills, and auditory memory).

Revised 8/14
3. **Verbal Processing** (e.g., word retrieval abilities, and verbal fluency).
4. **Reasoning Ability** (e.g., ability to approach problem solving in a logical and sequential manner, and ability to shift cognitive strategies as the specific task requires).

A comprehensive report should include the following:

**Diagnostic Interview:** This should include (but is not limited to) relevant historical information regarding the individual's academic history and learning processes in elementary, secondary and postsecondary education. Also, the report should include information summarizing previous testing completed by other clinicians. A combination of individual self-report, interviews with others, historical documentation (e.g. transcripts, standardized testing, etc.) is recommended. Also, information should be provided summarizing any developmental history and current or relevant medical history and must indicate the exclusion of the following as the primary disabling condition:

1. Individual has a mental deficiency per DSM standards
2. Visually impaired
3. Deaf or hard of hearing
4. Physically impaired (and interferes with accurate test results)
5. Emotional disorder
6. Poor educational background or lack of opportunity to learn
7. Cultural differences or lack of experience with the English language

**Assessment of aptitude:** There should be a minimum of one comprehensive IQ test and one processing test.

**Measurement of academic achievement:** A standard score for the basic achievement areas of reading (word recognition, vocabulary, comprehension), math (calculation, application), and written language (mechanics, composition) needs to be available. Testing should include at least two achievement test scores in the specific area of the documented disability.

*(NOTE: Raw scores, standard scores and percentile scores are also requested for each of the testing completed).* In general, most students will have average or above intelligence with a significant deficit in at least one area of information processing (i.e. acquisition, integration, storage, retrieval). There may be a discrepancy between verbal and performance scores on a measure of overall intelligence, but this is not always the case. Documentation of a “learning disability” should be based on the specific criteria outlined above.

**Summary:** A summary includes a clear statement of the presence of a learning disability, discussion of possible alternative explanations for the results, a statement of functional
limitations and suggestions for reasonable accommodations, which must be directly linked to the stated limitation and supported by the test scores.

**General Guidelines for all Disabilities**

It is important to recognize that accommodation needs can change over time and are not always identified during the initial diagnostic process. A prior history of accommodations, without demonstration of current need, does not in and of itself warrant the provision of a like accommodation. OSD will make the final determination as to whether appropriate and reasonable accommodations are warranted and can be provided to the individual.

All documentation submitted to OSD is considered to be confidential under FERPA guidelines.

Documentation should be sent to the following address:
Office for Students with Disabilities
601 South Nedderman Dr.
102 University Hall, Box 19510
Arlington, Texas 76019
817-272-3364 (voice)
1-800-RELAY TX (735-2989)
817-272-1447 (fax)
[osd@uta.edu](mailto:osd@uta.edu)

Revised 8/14