

# Specific Learning Disabilities Documentation Requirements

The University of Alabama Office of Disability Services

## Evaluation by an appropriate expert

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 and who has expertise in evaluating the impact of learning disabilities on an individual's educational performance (licensed clinical psychologist, neuropsychologist, school psychologist, or psychometrist). Experience working with an adult population is **essential**.

## Documentation must be current

Generally, documentation must be **no more than 3 years old for a high school student** and **no more than 5 years old for an adult**. A school plan such as an IEP or 504 Accommodation Plan is **insufficient** documentation. **All testing instruments must be standardized for use on adults**.

## Documentation must include, but is not limited to, the following elements:

### **1. DIAGNOSTIC INTERVIEW**

The interview must relate a description of the presenting problem(s); developmental, medical, psychosocial and employment histories; family history (including primary language of the home and the student's current level of English fluency); a discussion of comorbidity where indicated; and relevant information regarding the student's academic history.

### **2. ASSESSMENT**

For the neurological or psychological evaluation to illustrate a substantial limitation to learning, the comprehensive assessment battery must address the following domains:

#### **a. Aptitude / Cognitive Ability**

An assessment of global intellectual functioning is required, as measured by the **latest version** of **one** of the following acceptable instruments. **Subtest and standard scores** must be reported:

#### Acceptable Instruments

- Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale III (or latest version). The WAIS is the preferred instrument.
- Woodcock-Johnson Psychoeducational Battery – Revised: Tests of Cognitive Ability
- Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale: Fourth Edition

#### Unacceptable Instruments

- The Kaufman Brief Intelligence Test (KBIT) is **not** a comprehensive measure and is therefore not suitable.
- Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC) – this instrument is **not** standardized for use on adults.

**b. Academic Achievement**

A comprehensive achievement battery with subtest and standard scores, indicating current level of functioning in the academic areas of **reading, math, oral and written language**, must be included, as measured by the **latest version** of **one** of the following achievement batteries:

**Acceptable Instruments**

- The Woodcock-Johnson Psychoeducational Battery – Revised: Tests of Achievement
- Wechsler Individual Achievement Test (WIAT)
- Stanford Test of Academic Skills (TASK)
- Scholastic Abilities Test for Adults (SATA)
- Specific achievement tests such as the Test of Written Language – 3 (TOWL-3), Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests – Revised, or the Stanford Diagnostic Mathematics Test.

**Unacceptable Instruments**

- The Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT)
  - Mini Battery of Achievement (MBA)
- (These are **not** comprehensive measures of achievement and are therefore not suitable for documentation purposes at UA.)

**c. Information Processing**

To address the specific areas of short and long-term memory, sequential memory, auditory and visual perception, processing speed, executive function, and motor ability, a comprehensive battery with subtest and standard scores must be administered. Information from the Woodcock-Johnson Tests of Cognitive Ability, the WAIS-III, **or** the Detroit Tests of Learning Aptitude – Adult (DTLA-A), **as well as** other instruments relevant to the presenting learning problem(s) may be used to address these areas.

**3. DIAGNOSIS**

A clear and specific statement that the student is diagnosed with a learning disability and the accompanying **DSM-V diagnostic code(s)** are required to determine eligibility for services.

**4. CLINICAL SUMMARY**

This portion of the evaluation must address:

- (a) The **substantial limitations** to major life activities posed by the specific learning disability, and the extent to which these limitations impact the academic context for which accommodations are being requested.
- (b) Suggestions as to how the specific effects of the learning disability may be accommodated.
- (c) **Rationale for such accommodations.** Any recommendation for an accommodation should be based on objective evidence of a substantial limitation to learning, supported by specific test results and clinical observations. Reports should establish the rationale for any accommodation that is recommended, using test data to document the need.\*

**5. ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS**

- (a) Interpretation of results is required. Test protocol sheets, handwritten summary sheets or scores alone are **not** sufficient.
- (b) All reports must be in narrative format, **typed**, signed by the diagnosing clinician, and must include the names, titles and professional credentials (e.g., licensed psychologist) of the evaluators as well as the date(s) of testing. Documentation must be submitted on the official letterhead of the professional diagnosing the disability.

\* A history of accommodations does not in itself warrant the provision of similar accommodations at UA. The final determination of appropriate and reasonable accommodation rests with the University of Alabama.

Email documentation to [ods@ua.edu](mailto:ods@ua.edu) or mail documentation to:

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Box 870185  
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This document will be made available in alternative formats upon request. Please contact the Office of Disability Services, (205) 348-4285 (Voice) or (205) 348-3081 (TTY) for assistance.