

Checklist for Learning Disorders or Cognitive Impairments

_____ Documentation should be prepared by a person who is an unrelated, neutral professional qualified, by training and practice, to diagnose and treat the impairment leading to the disability.

_____ A licensed psychologist, with appropriate clinical training and experience working with adults, should conduct the assessment and make the diagnosis for a learning disorder. A cognitive disorder (e.g. as a result of a traumatic brain injury or seizure disorder) should be evaluated by a licensed psychologist or neurologist. If students have not secured a professional, they should look in their insurance company's provider directory, the Yellow Pages or should ask a family physician for referrals.

_____ Include name, title, professional credentials, licensure/certificate information, original signature and contact information. Reports should be written in English or translated into English by a qualified translator.

_____ The report must be typed on dated letterhead of either the practitioner or the agency hosting the practice. Access Services will not accept handwritten notes on prescription pads, photocopies of physician's notes or hospital discharge papers.

_____ In order to determine appropriate accommodations for college classes, students should have been evaluated at age 16 or older with assessment instruments of age appropriate norms for high school seniors/college freshmen or older students. The determination of what is current may vary according to the nature of the disability or disorder. Access Services may change this timeframe, as appropriate.

_____ Provide specific diagnosis consistent with the criteria found in the American Psychiatric Association: Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 4th ed. (DSM-IV TR). For the criteria of a learning disorder, a student must exhibit one or more, but not all, areas of specific academic deficits, a correlated cognitive deficit and average intellectual ability. If another diagnosis is applicable, state that diagnosis.

_____ A comprehensive assessment battery and the resulting diagnostic report should include a diagnostic interview, test scores of the assessment of aptitude, academic achievement, and information processing.

_____ Provide actual test and subscale scores. Represent all standardized measures with standard scores or percentile ranks based on published norms; grade equivalents by themselves are not acceptable. This is important since college policies and procedures (e.g., petitioning for permission to substitute courses) require actual data to substantiate eligibility.

_____ State the specific functional limitations relating to an academic environment and/or academic performance. Describe the impact of the learning disorder(s): mild, moderate, or severe.

_____ Discuss any accommodations and/or auxiliary aids that have been used at the secondary or postsecondary level. Include information about the specific conditions under which the accommodation was used (e.g., standardized testing, final exams) and whether or not it benefited the student. If no accommodations have been previously supplied, explain why and the rationale for the student's currently needing the suggested accommodation(s).

_____ Include information on the current medication(s), if any, used to treat the condition and potential side effects on the student's ability to face college-level academic demands and stressors.

_____ Oral language skills should be assessed and discussed. Formal instruments or an informal analysis of a language sample are appropriate. Colleges are primarily interested in whether or not a student's learning or cognitive disorder is affecting oral language and/or if a separate speech disorder is also present.

_____ Social-emotional status should be assessed and discussed. Formal assessment instruments and/or clinical interview are appropriate. Colleges need to know differential diagnosis of psychological disorders that impact upon academics as distinct from learning disorders.

_____ College is typically quite stressful for students who have learning disorders and other cognitive impairments. In an attempt to best serve students, it is helpful to know about their personality characteristics, psychological welfare, self-esteem and stress level.

_____ Discuss cognitive processing strengths, weaknesses and deficits. Address the following processing areas: a) Visual spatial abilities, b) Memory (auditory and visual: short-term and long term), c) Fine motor/dexterity, d) Executive Functions (verbal and nonverbal reasoning). It is also helpful to know about the student's cognitive flexibility and automaticity with cognitive tasks and e) Attention (auditory and visual).

Aptitude (Cognitive or Intellectual Potential).

A complete intellectual assessment with all subtest and standard scores reported is required. According to guidelines from the national Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD), the following tests are suggested as acceptable. Other tests may be valid as well.

- Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale-III
- Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale-Revised
- Woodcock-Johnson Psychological Battery-Revised: Tests of Cognitive Ability
- Kaufmann Adolescent and Adult Intelligence Test
- Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale (4th edition)

The Slosson Intelligence Test-Revised, the Kaufman Brief Intelligence Tests and the Wechsler Abbreviated Scale of Intelligence (WASI) are primarily screening devices and are not comprehensive enough to provide the types of information necessary to make accommodation requests. The Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC) is not the appropriate scale to use for postsecondary education.

Achievement

Current levels of functioning in reading, mathematics, and written languages are required.

- a) Written Language (spelling and written expression). If a written language sample is available to review, this is most helpful.
- b) Reading (decoding and comprehension).
- c) Mathematics (applied word problems and calculations). Please indicate whether the student was successful with algebra problems. Scores rarely provide this.

Acceptable instruments include the most recent versions of:

- Woodcock Johnson III: Tests of Achievement
- Stanford Test of Academic Skills (TASK)
- Wechsler Individual Achievement Test II (WIAT)
- Scholastic Abilities test for Adults (SATA)

or specific achievement tests such as:

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

Specific achievement tests are useful instruments when administered under standardized conditions and interpreted within the context of other diagnostic information. The WRAT-3 is not a comprehensive measure of achievement and therefore is not useful if it is the sole measure of achievement.

Information Processing

- Detroit Tests of Learning Aptitude-3
- Detroit Test of Learning Aptitude-ADULT
- Information from WAIS-R, WAIS-3, Woodcock-Johnson Psychological Battery-Revised: Tests of Cognitive Ability, as well as other relevant instruments.

Without such written documentation, a student will be unable to receive appropriate academic accommodations that may be critical for his or her success.