

## **Learning Disabilities Documentation Guidelines**

**All documentation must be current and within the past 3 years**

Please refer to specific documentation guidelines for more comprehensive criteria for ADD/ADHD

### **General Information**

Students who are seeking disability services through the Office of Disability Services (“Disability Services”) at Ocean County College (“OCC”) on the basis of a diagnosis of a learning disability (LD or SLD) are required to submit documentation to verify eligibility under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 as amended. It is important to understand that a diagnosis of learning disabilities (LD or SLD) in itself does not substantiate a disability. In other words, information sufficient to render a diagnosis might not be adequate to determine that an individual is substantially impaired in a major life activity. Current and comprehensive documentation must be provided for a student to be eligible for support services and to be considered protected under the law.

Further information on the components of professionally prepared documentation such as: qualified professionals; diagnostic statements; diagnostic methodology; current functioning and current documentation; functional impairment; duration, progression, and stability of a condition; and documentation to support requested reasonable accommodations can be found in our General Documentation Guidelines file.

The documentation submitted to the Disability Services for LD or SLD must include all the information outlined in the Documentation Guidelines for Learning Disabilities outlined below for Disability Services to determine reasonable academic accommodations. Disability Services will review all requests for reasonable accommodations on a case-by-case and course-by-course basis and make the determination of whether or not the information submitted for the requested reasonable accommodations are supported. If the documentation submitted does not sufficiently support the need for the requested reasonable accommodation, additional information will be required.

### **I. Recent Assessment**

Professionals conducting assessments, rendering diagnoses of specific learning disabilities and making recommendations for appropriate accommodations must be qualified to do so. A certified or licensed professional such as a school psychologist, a neuropsychologist, or clinical psychologist is expected be part of the evaluation process. Learning disabilities specialists (LDT-Cs) and educational therapists are considered appropriate to be involved in the process of assessment but should not be the sole evaluator. The report must provide adequate information about the student’s current level of functioning. If such information is missing and/or outdated, the student may be asked to provide a more recent or complete assessment.

## II. Neuropsychological and/or Psycho-educational Testing

There should be a discussion of all tests that were administered and observations of the student's behavior during testing. Actual test scores must be provided. Standard scores are required; percentiles and grade and age equivalents are not acceptable unless standard scores are also included. In addition to actual test scores, interpretation of results is required. Test protocol sheets or scores alone are not sufficient; some form of narrative must accompany scores. If time constraints for exams are an issue, tests should be administered both timed and untimed and scores for both testing conditions should be reported. Non-standardized, non-normed measures (such as informal reading inventories or writing samples) may supplement standardized testing but are insufficient documentation by themselves.

### IEP'S AND 504 PLANS

Secondary schools and post-secondary institutions are governed under different laws about providing services to students with disabilities. IEP's and/or 504 plans were developed for secondary education and may not provide the necessary testing, diagnostic information, or information related to determining reasonable accommodations in higher education. A student's high school Individualized Education Program (IEP) or a 504 Plan is seldom sufficient documentation to establish the rationale for academic adjustments, auxiliary aids and/or services in the post-secondary setting. However, some IEP's and 504 plans may provide very useful information that could be used in the process of evaluating reasonable accommodations in higher education. A possible exception would be an IEP, or 504 Plan that meets all the requirements defined by these guidelines.

### A. DIAGNOSTIC INTERVIEW SUMMARY

The interview should focus upon the student's developmental and educational history, including any persistent academic or emotional problems. Comorbid conditions should be discussed and there should be a statement explaining whether the learning disability or the other condition is the primary diagnosis.

### B. NEUROPSYCHOLOGICAL AND/OR PSYCHO-EDUCATIONAL TESTS REQUIRED

Tests used to document eligibility **must** be normed, standardized, and otherwise technically sound (i.e., statistically reliable and valid) and should be standardized for use with an adult population, appropriate tests include:

#### APTITUDE TESTS

- Aptitude testing (also known as "tests of cognitive ability," intelligence testing," "IQ testing" or a "psychological evaluation") – examples include the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scales (WAIS) and the Woodcock-Johnson-IV - Tests of Cognitive Ability.

## ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT TESTS

- Academic achievement testing (sometimes called an “educational evaluation” or “academic testing”) – examples include the Wechsler Individual Achievement Test III (WIAT III), the Woodcock-Johnson-IV - Tests of Achievement. Screening assessments or brief batteries do not constitute a complete measure of achievement.

## IF APPLICABLE, ADDITIONAL SUPPLEMENTAL TESTS SUCH AS:

- Nelson-Denny Reading Test for both normal and extended time conditions
- Test of Written Language - 4
- Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests – Revised
- Wide Range Achievement Test 5 (WRAT5)

## C. CLINICAL SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS, ACCOMMODATIONS AND DIAGNOSIS:

1. **Clinical summary:** The clinical summary should integrate the elements of the battery with background information and observations of the client during the testing situation.
2. **Recommendations:** The recommendations should explain how the student’s performance demonstrates a need for accommodation(s) at the post-secondary level. This report should present evidence of a substantial limitation to learning and explain how the patterns of strength and weakness are sufficiently significant to substantiate a learning disability diagnosis.
3. **Accommodations:** The rationale for a recommended accommodation as expressed in the assessment report must be clear and convincing as to the necessity of the accommodations to achieve equal access. Further, reasonable adjustments, support services, and auxiliary aids are those which: do not constitute fundamental alteration of the nature of the course or of essential course requirements; do not cause undue administrative or financial burden to the university in effecting implementation; and are not items or services of a personal nature. For further information refer to the Supported Need for Requested Reasonable Accommodations.
4. **Rule Out other Factors:** the report should demonstrate that the evaluator has ruled out alternative explanations for the learning problem. Individual "learning styles" and "learning differences" in and of themselves do **not** constitute a learning disability. If social or emotional factors are believed to contribute to the pattern of observed scores, they should be discussed.
5. **Diagnosis:** The report must clearly state a diagnosis of a learning disorder (The components of and criteria for a diagnosis of learning disorders are outlined in the *DIAGNOSTIC AND STATISTICAL MANUAL OF MENTAL DISORDERS – Fifth Edition (DSM-V)*).

## **Documentation Retention**

All submitted materials will be held with OCC Disability Services as confidential educational records under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Students have a right to review their educational record. However, students are encouraged to retain their own copies of disability documentation for future use as the college is not obligated to produce copies for students. Under current New Jersey record retention requirements, disability documentation is mandated to be held for only two years after a student has stopped attending the college.