



Student Disability Services
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University of San Francisco Student Disability Services (SDS)

Guidelines for Documentation of a Specific Learning Disability

Students who are seeking support services from the University of San Francisco's Student Disability Services (SDS) on the basis of a diagnosed specific learning disability 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. Protection under these civil rights statutes is determined on a case-by-case basis and is based upon documentation of a learning disability that currently substantially limits a major life activity including learning.

The following guidelines are provided in the interest of assuring that documentation is appropriate to verify eligibility and to support requests for reasonable accommodations, academic adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids. The learning specialist in SDS is available to consult with diagnosticians regarding any of these guidelines.

1. Testing must be comprehensive. It is not acceptable to administer only one test for the purpose of diagnosis or establishing that substantial limitation in a major life activity currently exists in individuals with a previous diagnosis of LD. Minimally, domains to be addressed must include (but not be limited to):
 - **Aptitude:** Appropriate assessment instruments include: The Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale III (WAIS-III); The Woodcock Johnson Psychoeducational Battery-III (WJ-III): Tests of Cognitive Ability; and The Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale: 4th Edition. All assessments must include subtest scores.
 - **Achievement:** Current functioning levels in reading, mathematics, and written language are required. Appropriate assessment instruments include: The Woodcock-Johnson Psychoeducational Battery-III: (WJ-III) Tests of Achievement; Wechsler Individual Achievement Test-II; (WIAT II) Stanford Test of Academic Skills (TASK); Test of Written Language-3 (TOWL-3).
 - **Information Processing:** Specific areas of information processing (e.g. short-term and long-term memory; sequential memory; auditory and visual perception/processing; processing speed) must be assessed. Appropriate assessment instruments include information from subtests on the WAIS-III, the WJ-III Tests of Cognitive Ability, 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.

This is not intended to be an exhaustive list or to restrict assessment in other pertinent and helpful areas such as vocational interests and aptitudes.

2. Testing must be current. In most cases, this means testing that has been conducted within the past three years. Because the provision of all reasonable accommodations and services is based upon assessment of the current impact of the student's disabilities on his/her academic performance, it is in a student's best interest to provide recent and appropriate documentation.
3. There must be clear and specific evidence and identification of a learning disability. Individual "learning styles" and "learning differences" in and of themselves do not constitute a learning disability.
4. Actual test scores must be provided. Standard scores are the preferred measurement; although percentiles and grade equivalents may be used only if accompanied by standard scores. This is important since certain university policies and procedures (e.g. petitioning for permission to substitute courses) require actual data to substantiate eligibility.
5. In addition to actual test scores, interpretation of results is required. Test protocol sheets or scores alone are not sufficient.
6. Professionals conducting assessment and rendering diagnoses of learning disabilities must be qualified to do so. Trained, certified, and/or licensed school psychologists, neuropsychologists, clinical psychologists, learning disabilities specialists, and other professionals with training and experience relevant to adults and their evaluation are typically involved in the process of assessment. Experience working with the adult population is essential.
7. Tests used to document eligibility must be technically sound (i.e. statistically reliable and valid) and standardized for use with an adult population.
8. Diagnostic reports must include the names, titles, and professional credentials (e.g. licensed psychologist) of the evaluators as well as the date(s) of testing. All reports must be typed. Handwritten scores or summary sheets are not acceptable.
9. A written summary of or background information about the student's relevant educational, medical, and family histories that relate to the learning disability must be included.
10. Any recommendation for an accommodation should be based on objective evidence of a substantial limitation to learning supported by specific test results or clinical observations. Reports should establish the rationale for any accommodation that is recommended, using test data to document the need.
11. A description of any accommodation and/or auxiliary aid that has been used at the secondary or postsecondary level should be discussed.
12. Individual Education Programs (IEP's) and Section 504 plans are useful but are not, in and of themselves, sufficient documentation to establish the rationale for accommodations.