

Dickinson

Access and Disability Services (ADS)

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DOCUMENTATION GUIDELINES FOR STUDENTS WITH A LEARNING DISABILITY SEEKING ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS

Dickinson College students who seek accommodations based on their disability are responsible for completing an online *Disability Disclosure and Request for Accommodation* form (found at www.dickinson.edu/access), and for providing appropriate supporting documentation. A student who seeks academic accommodations on the basis of a learning disability is responsible for obtaining the needed evaluation and resulting documentation, and for initiating contact with Access and Disability Services. Dickinson College approaches requests for accommodations with the belief that each student's circumstance is unique and that a flexible approach is the right way to determine appropriate accommodations.

By itself, a medical diagnosis does not establish a need or an entitlement to accommodations under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act or the Americans with Disabilities Act as Amended (ADA-AA). Another way of saying this is that having any disorder or condition does not, by itself, lead to any conclusion under Section 504 or the ADA. Therefore, the documentation required by Dickinson College extends beyond the medical diagnosis and encompasses the four key elements of a person's disability status under Section 504 and the ADA. Those key elements are that:

- the student has a physical or mental impairment
- the impairment limits the student's participation in a major life activity*
- the degree of limitation is substantial and
- there is something that the college can do that would be reasonable, needed, and predictably effective in responding to the impairment.

Documentation that substantiates each of these four areas serves as a foundation that legitimizes a student's request for appropriate accommodations. If a student seeks accommodations on the basis of more than one disability, then more than one professional may need to be involved in developing the diagnoses and other documentation.

The Dean and Director of ADR will review the documentation and collaborate with the student to determine reasonable and appropriate academic accommodations. Students are encouraged to schedule a conversation with the Director as soon as possible after submitting documentation. The accommodations afforded to each student will be determined on an individual basis and will be based on the documentation provided.

Please see the next page for our disability documentation requirements.

* The Disability Documentation Form, list examples of a "major life activity" as defined under the ADA Amendments Act of 2008. According to the ADA, "A major life activity also includes the operating of a major bodily function, including, but not limited to, functions of the immune system, normal cell growth, digestive, bowel, bladder, neurological, brain, respiratory, circulatory, endocrine, and reproductive functions."

Acceptable documentation of a learning disability must meet the following requirements:

- The diagnosis must be of a specific learning disorder, and must be made by a qualified professional.**

Non-specific language referencing a learning “difference” or “weakness” does not meet the criteria of a disability. The diagnosis should specify the corresponding diagnostic code in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth or Fifth Edition (DSM-IV-TR or DSM-V) or the International Classification of Diseases Manual, Ninth or Tenth Revision (ICD-9 or 10).

- Include relevant educational, developmental, and medical history.**

- Reflect and describe the current functional limitation the disability has on the student’s learning or other major life activity and the degree to which it impacts the individual in the academic context.**

The age of acceptable documentation is dependent upon the disabling condition, the current status of the student, and the student’s request for accommodations. It is recommended that documentation of the disability have been conducted within the last three (3) years.

- The diagnosis is supported by appropriate assessments.**

We’re looking for a comprehensive psycho-educational test battery, which addresses Aptitude (IQ), Achievement (reading, math, and written language), and Processing (such as visual and auditory). The report should include the standardized and percentile scores for all sub-tests, as well as narratives regarding assessment findings.

Ideally, the assessments used should be normed for adults (i.e. the WAIS-III, rather than the WISC-III).

An IEP or Section 504 Plan from a student's high school years—including rationale for supports and evidence of any accommodations implemented—may be useful information, but it is not a substitute for the documentation described above.

- Include specific recommendations for accommodations with accompanying rationale.**

A connection must be established between the requested accommodations and the functional limitations on the student in the academic environment.

- The psycho-educational evaluation report, type-written on official letterhead, must be made by a licensed psychologist and signed and dated by the evaluator, noting his or her credentials.**

The diagnostician must be an impartial individual who is not a family member of the student.

Dickinson uses the Disability Documentation Guidelines recommended by AHEAD (the Association of Higher Education and Disability): <https://www.ahead.org/affiliates/connecticut/documentation>.

For a more detailed written explanation of the College's approach to disability accommodations, see our *Policy and Procedural Statement for Documentation of a Disability by Student*, found at www.dickinson.edu/ADS-PPS.

Disability documentation should be sent to ADS in one of the following ways:

Email: access@dickinson.edu

Fax: 717-254-8139

Mail: Access and Disability Services, Dickinson College
P.O. Box 1773, Carlisle, PA 17013-2896

Questions? Call (717) 245-1734

Our office hours are Monday-Friday 8:00am – 4:00-pm