DOCUMENTATION GUIDELINES FOR STUDENTS WITH A PSYCHIATRIC/PSYCHOLOGICAL DISABILITY

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/ODS), and for providing appropriate supporting documentation. A student who seeks academic accommodations on the basis of a disability is responsible for obtaining the needed evaluation and resulting documentation, and for initiating contact with the Office of 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 Director of Disability Services 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.

* According to the ADA Amendments Act of 2008, examples of major life activities include: seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, eating, sleeping, walking, standing, lifting, bending, learning, reading, communicating, working, performing manual tasks, caring for oneself, thinking, concentrating, and the operation of major bodily functions.
Acceptable documentation of a mental health disability must meet the following requirements:

- **Documentation is to be type-written on official letterhead, and signed and dated by the evaluator.**

- **The diagnosis must be made and substantiated by a qualified professional.**

  The documentation must identify a diagnosis of a psychological disorder according to the APA’s most recent Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (please include the DSM code), as well as primary and secondary Axis I and Axis II diagnoses. Inclusion of scores using the Global Assessment of Functioning (GAF) Scale is highly recommended, with a description of the student’s highest and lowest GAF scores.

- **Include the date of diagnosis (and by whom it was made), the date when last evaluated, current and past treatment history, and relevant educational, developmental, historical, and familial data.**

- **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.**

  If the disability is managed by medication, list type(s), dosage(s) and existing side effects, including whether the prescribed medication will impact the student’s functioning in the academic environment.

  The age of acceptable documentation is dependent upon the disabling condition, the current status of the student, and the student’s request for accommodations. Due to the changing nature of psychiatric disorders, documentation should include a recent evaluation or updated assessment within the past six (6) months.

- **The diagnosis must be supported by appropriate assessments.**

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

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


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/ODS-PPS](http://www.dickinson.edu/ODS-PPS).

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

- **Email:** disabilityservices@dickinson.edu
- **Fax:** 717-254-8139
- **Mail:** ODS, Dana Hall, Suite 106, Dickinson College  
  P.O. Box 1773, Carlisle, PA 17013-2896

  Questions? Call (717) 245-1734  
  Our office hours are Monday-Friday 8:30am – 4:30am