



Disability Documentation

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I. Purpose.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires colleges or universities to make necessary modifications to ensure that the institution does not discriminate or have the effect of discrimination against a qualified student with a disability. The USG is committed to providing equal educational opportunities to all students, and offers students with disabilities a variety of services and accommodations to ensure that both facilities and programs are accessible.

II. Policy Statement

The USG has established sets of common standards and procedures for evaluating and administering accommodations for students with disabilities, which can be found in the Academic Affairs Handbook.

III. Exclusions (if applicable)

N/A

IV. Procedures

1. Definition of Disability

- An individual must demonstrate that his/her condition meets the definition of a disability under the Rehabilitation Act, 1973 and/or the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), 1990, and its Amendment (2009). The ADA defines a disability as a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities.
- Substantially limits, under ADA, refers to significant restrictions as to the condition, manner, or duration under which an individual can perform a particular major life activity as compared to most people.
- Whether a condition is substantially limiting to support an accommodation request is a decision made by qualified professional(s) based upon multiple sources of information.
- A clinical diagnosis is not synonymous with a disability. The specific symptoms that are present should be stated in the documentation. Evidence that these symptoms are associated with substantial impairment in a major life activity is required for provision of accommodations. A detailed description of current substantial limitation in the academic environment is essential to identify appropriate academic accommodations, auxiliary aids, and services. Specific requests for accommodations need to be linked to the student's current functional limitations, and the rationale for each recommendation clearly stated.

2. General Documentation Guidelines

- All institutions are required to have written policies and procedures for review of documentation submitted by students with disabilities. Decision-making for the provision of institutional-level accommodation is

provided by the Office of Disability Services (ODS) or a designated office at an individual college or university.

- Secondary education eligibility reports, Individualized Educational Plans, Summary of Progress reports, or previous provision of special education services may not be sufficient documentation for college-level accommodations.
- Documentation should provide a diagnostic statement identifying the disability, describe the diagnostic criteria and methodology used to diagnose the condition, and detail the progression of the condition if its impact on the student's functioning is expected to change over time.
- Documentation should provide an adequate representation of the student's current functional abilities. In most situations, documentation should be within three years of the student's application for services. Professional judgment, however, must be used in accepting older documentation of conditions that are permanent or non-varying, or in requiring more recent documentation for conditions for which the functional impact may change over time.
- Documentation must include the names, signatures, titles, and license numbers of the appropriate evaluators, as well as the dates of testing and contact information. Evaluators must be licensed professionals whose training and licensure status is consistent with expertise in the disability for which they provide documentation.

3. Specific Documentation Guidelines

The following specific documentation guidelines are organized into nine disability categories:

1. Learning disabilities
2. Attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder
3. Pervasive developmental disorders
4. Acquired brain injuries
5. Psychological disorders
6. Sensory disorders
7. Mobility disorders
8. Systemic disorders
9. Other disabilities

In addition, all disability categories are required to follow the general documentation guidelines provided in Appendix D.

4. Students with Learning Disorders

The USG is committed to providing equal educational opportunities to all students. USG institutions offer students with disabilities a variety of services and accommodations to ensure that both facilities and programs are accessible. The information provided on working with students with disabilities is an overview of the resources available and the policies and procedures in place that are intended to facilitate accessibility and academic success.

All institutions of the USG shall adopt the common criteria for documenting disabilities and employ a common methodology for providing services to students with diagnosed disabilities.

The criteria for documenting disabilities can be found in Appendix D. Specific documentation guidelines for nine disability categories are described in Appendix E.

5. Regents' Centers for Learning Disorders

Learning Disorders include Learning Disabilities, Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Pervasive Developmental Disorders, Acquired Brain Injury, and Psychological Disorders as described in Appendix E. The Board of Regents of the USG has established the following three centers for the provision of assessment, resources, and research related to students who have learning disorders that impact academic, cognitive and/or behavioral/emotional functioning.

- Regents' Center for Learning Disorders at Georgia Southern University
- Regents' Center for Learning Disorders at Georgia State University
- Regents' Center for Learning Disorders at The University of Georgia

Each Regents' Center for Learning Disorders (RCLD) is responsible for serving designated colleges and universities (referring institutions) within a geographic region. The host institution serves as fiscal agent for each RCLD. See Appendix F for a list of RCLDs and their assigned institutions.

Purpose of the RCLDs. The RCLDs provide the following services:

- Comprehensive standardized assessments for students with learning disorders
- Review of documentation submitted by referring institutions in support of student requests for accommodations
- Recommendations regarding appropriate accommodations and services
- Assistance to students, faculty and staff at referring institutions through consultation, networking, and program development
- Clinical training opportunities in graduate level psychology, education, and related programs
- Research focusing on assessment and accommodation of students with disabilities in postsecondary settings

In addition to their primary mission of serving students enrolled in USG institutions, the Centers may be authorized to serve other groups of students. Current information on the availability of services for non-USG students can be obtained by contacting each RCLD directly.

Organizational Structure

The RCLDs consist of professionals who are specialists in the assessment of adults and in evaluation of disabilities that impair learning. Each RCLD has, at the minimum, the following personnel:

- Director. The director is responsible for overseeing the daily operation of the RCLD and for carrying out USG policy regarding student disabilities. The Academic Vice President of the host institution is the supervisor of record.
- Psychologist. The licensed psychologist oversees the evaluation process, including training, interviewing, scheduling, testing, staffing, and report writing. The psychologist ensures that the professional and ethical standards of the American Psychological Association are followed.
- Liaison. The liaison promotes and maintains contact between the referring institutions and each RCLD, assists in the referral and feedback process for RCLD evaluations and RCLD review of documentation of disability, assists referring institutions in the development of policies and procedures to serve students with disabilities on their campuses, and provides community outreach and education to support the mission of the RCLD.
- Other qualified personnel are involved directly in interviewing, testing, and writing reports for students who are evaluated in the RCLDs.

USG Accommodations for Students With Learning Disorders

In order to assure consistency throughout the USG, all RCLDs use the same general evaluation procedures, test battery and report format. This common evaluation methodology assures that all USG institutions employ the same definition and evaluation model.

Evaluations performed by external professionals or organizations will be reviewed using the same methodology as if the evaluation was conducted by an RCLD.

Some accommodations for USG requirements must be approved by an RCLD. Students with learning disorders, who are requesting the accommodations outlined below, are required to submit documentation to an RCLD for approval:

- Admissions - Substitution of the RHSC foreign language requirement. See Section 3.11.3, Admission Considerations.
- Regents' Tests accommodations, beyond what can be granted with institutional approval. See Section 3.11.4, Regents' Test Administration.
- Learning Support - Testing accommodations for the Collegiate Placement Examination (CPE), or COMPASS modifications or, additional semesters in Learning Support beyond what can be granted with institutional approval. See Section 3.11.5, Learning Support Considerations.

Each USG institution is responsible for providing approved accommodations or modifications, including assistive technologies. The Director of the Regents' Testing Office, the RCLDs, and the Alternative Media Access Center (AMAC) are available to assist institutions with arranging for these accommodations.

Outside Evaluations

Referring institutions must have institutional policies and procedures for reviewing documentation of disabilities that is not based on an evaluation conducted by an RCLD. Institutional policies and procedures must be consistent with BoR policy.

Referring institutions are required to submit documentation of learning disorders to meet USG requirements to an RCLD when a student requests accommodations. Referring institutions may also elect to send outside documentation for review to the appropriate RCLD under other circumstances.

Referral for Evaluations

Referring institutions are required to submit a referral packet containing the following items to the appropriate RCLD to initiate the evaluation process:

- Information letter and checklist completed by the Disability Service Provider (DSP)
- Questionnaire on academic strengths and weaknesses, historical information, and behaviors that can affect learning (completed by the student)
- Questionnaire on student's functioning ability (completed by a person who knows the student well and can provide an independent view)
- Academic transcripts from current and/or previous institutions
- Recent vision and hearing sensory screenings
- Samples of written work
- Copies of previous medical or psychological evaluations related to learning difficulties

The DSP at the referring institution is responsible for coordinating the completion of the referral packet and communicating with the RCLD regarding the student's referral, evaluation, and accommodations. See Appendix G for the referral process flowchart. For more information regarding disability documentation, see Appendices D and E.

Evaluation Considerations:

- a. Professional Standards and Confidentiality
 - American Psychological Association ethical standards are upheld.
 - Information gathered before, during, and after an evaluation will be kept strictly confidential.
 - Information will not be released to any person or institution without written permission of the student.

- The Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) provide additional guidelines on right of access and disclosure of protected information.

b. Liability Issues

- Neither the referring institutions nor the RCLDs are liable for students while they are traveling to and from the RCLDs for the evaluation.
- A contact person at the referring institution must be designated for emergency purposes while the student is on the RCLD campus.
- RCLDs require liability insurance coverage for all RCLD personnel involved in the evaluation process. This liability coverage is necessary to meet the standards of professional practice as outlined in State Licensing Law.

c. Cost of Evaluations

- Students are assessed a \$500 fee for each evaluation (subject to annual review).
- Payment schedules may vary across RCLDs.
- Evaluation scholarships may be available at individual RCLDs and/or referring institutions.
- Students may contact their local Georgia Department of Labor, Rehabilitation Services to determine if they qualify for services, which may include funding to offset evaluation costs.

d. Appeals Procedure

- Students wishing to dispute a decision of an RCLD with regard to eligibility for accommodations may appeal by submitting a request for independent review of their documentation by the directors of the other two RCLDs.

The request must meet the following conditions:

- Specify the issue(s) of disagreement in writing
- Be submitted to the DSP at the student's home institution
- Be initiated within 30 days of receiving the disputed decision
- A student wishing to appeal the decision of the independent review may appeal to the President of the home institution. The President's decision is final. The Board of Regents does not hear appeals for eligibility for accommodation.

6. Alternative Media Access Center

The Alternative Media Access Center (AMAC), an initiative of the USG, is committed to removing barriers and providing access to knowledge for individuals with physical, sensory, and learning print-related disabilities. AMAC serves individuals with print-related disabilities in a variety of ways.

AMAC works with all USG institutions serving postsecondary students as well as high school students transitioning to postsecondary institutions. AMAC offers a variety of services to meet the individual needs of students with print-related disabilities and the institutions serving them, including access to the following:

- Alternative media production
- Electronic files (e-files) requested from publishers
- High quality scanned image files
- E-text formatting services
- NEON, AMAC's online repository of available alternative media that tracks students, orders, and media production
- Assistive technology software and hardware
- Other national repositories, services and products (e.g., Recording for the Blind and Dyslexic)
- Password protected electronic material delivery service

- Monthly student services reports
- Training and technical assistance
- Braille text conversion or contract services. AMAC specializes in math, science, foreign language Braille transcription services.
- AMAC services and costs vary depending on membership status. AMAC services help institutions to:
 - Protect themselves against copyright infringement laws
 - Comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act standards and provide students with print-related disabilities equal and timely access to materials
 - Increase the knowledge of institutional information technology departments, faculty, and staff on accessible digital media and accessible information technology through the incorporation of universal design for learning environments

AMAC is not a replacement for disability services, but a resource that offers expertise in alternative media production and assistive technology software and hardware. The AMAC team works closely with disability service providers and students to ensure that they receive high quality and timely services.

7. Admissions Considerations

Applicants with disabilities are expected to have completed the Required High School Curriculum (RHSC) with the appropriate instructional accommodations. No exemptions or substitution are permitted for these required courses with the exception of the foreign language requirement.

Students who are unable to complete the RHSC foreign language requirement successfully due to a documented disability may petition for a substitution for the foreign language requirement (see Appendix H, Admissions Consideration Flowchart) using the following guidelines:

Foreign Language Requirement

Two years of a single foreign language or two years of American Sign Language is required for admission to USG colleges and universities. To receive permission for a substitution, students should do the following:

- Notify the Office of Admission at the time of application that they are petitioning for a RHSC foreign language substitution
- Contact the DSP at the institution for assistance in completing the petition.
- Submit their petition documentation with the admission application

If the petition is approved, the student will be allowed to satisfy the RHSC foreign language requirement by substituting another type of course. The approval of a petition for substitution does not waive the requirement.

Approval of a petition for a course substitution for the RHSC foreign language requirement does not extend to the foreign language requirements of certain degree programs at the University level. Students must submit a separate petition, following their institution's standard procedures for modifications to program requirements, to request a course substitution for foreign language coursework required for a specific program of study or degree.

Other Considerations:

- Students with disabilities will not be penalized for taking standardized admissions tests (e.g. ACT, SAT, GRE, LSAT, MCAT) with accommodations. Students seeking disability accommodation should contact the testing agencies (College Board and ACT).
- To be considered for admission, students are expected to achieve the institution's admission requirements, including minimum SAT or ACT scores with the testing accommodations.

8. Learning Support Considerations

Students with documented disabilities, who are required to enroll in Learning Support (LS), must fulfill all stated requirements, including test (COMPASS or CPE) and course requirements. Students will be provided with appropriate test and/or course accommodations. Documentation of accommodations provided must be maintained at the institution and summarized in the annual report on accommodations. See Section 2.9.1, Administrative Procedures for Learning Support Programs. Accommodations for students with learning disorders that can be granted with institutional approval are limited to the following:

- Extended time on COMPASS or CPE
- Authorized use of a calculator for mathematic testing
- Separate test administration
- Maximum of two additional semesters of LS

Accommodations and test administrations other than those listed above must be approved by an RCLD.

SDRC Steps for Receiving Services

What is needed to receive services:

1. Complete the online Voluntary Declaration of Disability (VDD) form. Please print the form once completed.
2. Compile documentation of your condition/diagnosis. It is best to supply copies rather than originals.
3. Mail printed Voluntary Declaration of Disability form and copies of appropriate documentation to:

Student Disability Resource Center
P.O. Box 8037
Statesboro, GA 30460

What the Student Disability Resource Center will do:

1. We will review the submitted documentation. If a system review is necessary, we will forward the documentation to the Regents Center for Learning Disorders (RCLD).
2. If the student qualifies for services, we will notify him or her by mail.
3. When appropriate, SDRC professional staff members will assist students in procuring documentation that meets Board of Regents standards.