

BARD COLLEGE AT SIMON'S ROCK

THE EARLY COLLEGE

Guidelines for Documentation of a Learning Disability

At Bard College at Simon's Rock, students who request accommodations for a disability are required to submit documentation to verify eligibility under Section 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA). These guidelines are provided in the interest of assuring that evaluation reports are appropriate for documenting eligibility for students who seek accommodations and services for a **learning disability**. The guidelines describe the necessary components of acceptable documentation.

1. Testing must be comprehensive.

A comprehensive assessment battery and the resulting diagnostic report must include a clinical interview and assessments of aptitude, academic achievement and information processing. The evaluation must provide clear and specific evidence that a learning disability does or does not exist. Any diagnosis must be based on a comprehensive assessment battery that does not rely on any one test or subtest. Test scores and data must be included.

- a) **Aptitude:** The Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale, Third Edition (WAIS-III) with subtest scores is the preferred instrument. The Woodcock-Johnson Psycho-Educational Battery-III: Test of Cognitive Ability and the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale, Fifth Edition are also acceptable.
- b) **Achievement:** Current levels of academic functioning in reading, math and writing must be included in the battery. Acceptable instruments include the Woodcock-Johnson Psycho-Educational Battery-III: Tests of Achievement with fluency measures; Stanford Test of Academic Skills (TASK); Scholastic Ability Test for Adults (SATA); Wechsler Individual Achievement Test II (WIAT II) with reading rate; and if applicable, additional supplemental tests such as the Test of Written Language-IV (TOWL-IV); Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests-Revised; Nelson-Denny Reading Test; or the Stanford Diagnostic Mathematics Test. The Wide Range Achievement Test-3 (WRAT-3) is not suitable.
- c) **Information processing:** Specific areas of information processing such as short and long term memory, sequential memory, auditory and visual perception/processing, processing speed, executive functioning, motor ability, should be addressed. Acceptable instruments include Detroit Tests of Learning Aptitude-3 (DTLA-3) or Detroit Tests of Learning Aptitude-Adult (DTLA-A). Use of specific subtests from the WAIS-III or Woodcock-Johnson Tests of Cognitive Ability is acceptable.

2. Documentation must include a specific diagnosis of a Learning Disability.

There must be clear and specific evidence and identification of a learning disability. Terms such as learning difficulties or learning differences are not equivalent to a diagnosis of a learning disability.

3. Documentation must be current.

Generally, this means testing has been conducted within the past three years. Because the provision of reasonable accommodations is based upon assessment of the current functional limitations of the person's disability, it is in the best interest of that person to provide recent and appropriate documentation. Bard College at Simon's Rock acknowledges that learning disabilities are normally viewed as lifelong. Learning disabilities are normally viewed as lifelong. For the purposes of documenting a learning disability only, testing that has been completed within the past five years will be accepted.

4. A qualified professional must provide the documentation.

Professionals conducting assessments, rendering diagnoses of specific learning disabilities (LD) and making recommendations for appropriate accommodations must be qualified to do so. Clinical or educational psychologists, learning disability specialists, or physicians known to specialize in learning disabilities are most often used. It is not appropriate for professionals to evaluate members of their own families.

5. Recommendation(s) for accommodations and services.

Testing must include information about the functional limitations of the student. Please indicate how the student's disability will affect participation in courses, programs, services, or any other activity of the college. A prior history of accommodation, without demonstration of a current need, does not, in and of itself, warrant the provision of a similar accommodation. The documentation should include specific recommendations for accommodations that are appropriate at the postsecondary educational setting, as well as an explanation of why each accommodation is recommended. A school plan such as an IEP or a 504 plan, though useful information as to past accommodations, in and of itself is not sufficient documentation. It may be included as part of the comprehensive report.

6. Confidentiality

The documentation is confidential and will be used only for the purpose of enabling the College to provide the student with appropriate supportive academic accommodations and services. No part of the documentation will be released without the student's written consent.

ALL DOCUMENTATION WILL BE HELD IN THE STRICTEST CONFIDENCE

Please send to: Jean Altshuler, Interim Disability and Academic Support Services Specialist
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Guidelines adapted from text created by Polly Waldman.

Guidelines adapted from Educational Testing Services (2007). *Policy Statement for Documentation of a Learning Disability in Adolescents and Adults, Second Edition.*

Guidelines adapted from the Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD)

<http://www.ahead.org/resources/best-practices-resources/elements>