

DOCUMENTATION OF LEARNING DISABILITIES

It is the responsibility of each student who requests services from Shorter University to provide a comprehensive written evaluation of his/her learning disability

To verify the student's eligibility under Federal and State mandates and to document his/her need for reasonable accommodations and support services, this evaluation must demonstrate fulfillment of the following requirements:

A. Testing Must Be Comprehensive

It is not acceptable to administer only one test in making a diagnosis. The domains to be addressed must include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. **APTITUDE:** The Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale (WAIS-III or WAIS-R) with scaled scores and percentiles and/or the Woodcock-Johnson Psycho-Educational Battery-Revised (WJ-III or WJ-R): Part 1, Tests of Cognitive Ability (with standard scores and percentiles) are the preferred instruments.
2. **ACHIEVEMENT:** The student's current levels of functioning in reading, mathematics, and written language must be assessed under timed and untimed conditions as appropriate to corroborate underachievement in specific academic areas. Acceptable instruments include: (a) the Woodcock-Johnson Psycho-Educational Battery: Part II, Tests Of Achievement (WJ-III or WJ--R) , Part II or, (b) specific achievement tests like the Nelson-Denny Reading Test, Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests-Revised. (The Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT-3 or WRAT-R) is not a comprehensive measure of achievement and, therefore, is not suitable by itself.) Additional formal and informal tests as well as observations may be integrated with the above assessments to assist in determining the presence of a learning disability and differentiating from co-existing disorders.
3. **INFORMATION PROCESSING:** Specific areas of information processing (for example, short- and long-term memory, reasoning, sequential memory, auditory and visual processing, and processing speed) must be assessed. Use of subtests from the WAIS-III, WAIS-R and/or the cognitive portion of the Woodcock-Johnson Psycho-Educational Battery- (WAIS III or WJ-R) is acceptable. Additional testing such as the Wechsler Memory Scale (WMS-3 or WMS-R) or the Learning Efficiency Test-II, designed to assist in corroborating the existence of processing disorders as identified by the WAIS-III or WAIS-R or the WJ-III or WJ-R, Part I is recommended.

B. Test Instruments

The test instruments used to determine eligibility must be statistically valid and reliable, and standardized with age-appropriate norms.

C. Test Score Data

Test score data must be included in the diagnostic reports to document the basis of the diagnosis. Test data must be reported in standard scores and percentiles based on national norms. Additionally, diagnosing professionals are encouraged to report standard scores based on both age and grade norms when available (as they are for the WJ-III).

D. Testing Must Be Current

It is in the student's best interest to provide recent and age-appropriate documentation as this will enable staff to determine the functional limitations requiring reasonable accommodations and support services in the academic setting. The testing should have been conducted during adulthood (18 years or older) or within three years of the student's initial request for disability-related services at the College. Written reports must include the date of testing. The appropriateness of the most current documentation will be determined by the program director. Additional testing may be required to determine the most appropriate accommodation(s).

E. Diagnosing Professionals

The professional(s) conducting the assessment and rendering diagnoses of specific learning disabilities must be qualified to do so. Qualified professionals include licensed educational psychologists, clinical psychologists, learning disabilities specialists, and speech and language pathologists. These professionals must have expertise in learning disabilities, training in administering the tests used, and be experienced in working with adults. The diagnosing professional's name, title, signature and license number (if applicable) must be included on letterhead stationary.

F. Intake History and Presenting Concerns

A written summary of the student's educational, medical, and family histories and presenting concerns that may relate to learning disabilities must be included in the diagnostic report. This summary should demonstrate that the student's difficulties in acquiring and using various academic skills are not the result of other factors such as sensory impairment, serious emotional disturbance, cultural differences, or insufficient instruction, but, indeed, point to a lifelong history of learning difficulties.

G. Written Report

The reports must describe the testing procedures, the instruments used to assess the individual, and interpretation of the test results related to the behavioral observations and intake history. The

diagnosing professional is encouraged to use direct language in the written report, including whether a learning disability is confirmed or ruled out.

Finally, there must be clear and specific evidence and identification of the student's learning disability. Individual learning or processing differences do not, by themselves, constitute a learning disability. The determination of a learning disability is based on: (a) an educational history, (b) behavioral observations, (c) clearly specified and significant intra-cognitive and cognitive-achievement discrepancies. To establish eligibility for accommodations under state and federal law, the documentation must show current (See Section D) functional limitations imposed by the learning disability in the academic setting, and evidence that the learning disability limits a major life activity.

II. ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS AND SUPPORT SERVICES

Shorter University's Student Support Services are not intended to remediate but are to provide students equal access by reducing the negative impact of their disabilities.

"Remediation" is defined as instruction in basic skills not acquired earlier in the educational process (for example, basic spelling), while "accommodation" refers to the provision of services that ensure equal access to a Student with a learning disability (e.g., providing extended examination time for a student who processes information more slowly than other students because of a learning disability).

Academic accommodations and support services are determined on an individual basis. Each accommodation is based on functional limitations as identified in the documentation and is designed to meet a student's needs without fundamentally altering the nature of the student's instructional program(s) or altering any directly related licensing requirement. Accommodations and support services are provided upon the recommendation of the Director of Student Support Services.

It is the responsibility of the Program Director to determine appropriate accommodations and services. This determination will be made after interviewing the student and reviewing the information furnished by the diagnosing professional(s). If the College's disability specialist does not find appropriate and sufficient evidence on which to base decisions concerning accommodations and services for a student with a learning disability, the student may be referred for additional assessment (e.g. tests of intelligence, cognition/information processing, and academic achievement).