

Guidelines for Documentation of A Disability at Paul Smith's College

Learning Disability (LD) To ensure the provision of reasonable and appropriate services for students with a learning disability at Paul Smith's College, a **qualified professional** (e.g., clinical or educational psychologist, school psychologist, neuropsychologist, learning disabilities specialist, medical doctor) must provide current and comprehensive documentation of the student's disability.

1. Comprehensive training and direct experience with an adolescent and adult LD population is essential. The name, title, and professional credentials of the evaluator, including information about license or certification as well as the area of specialization, employment, and state/province in which the individual practices should be clearly stated in the documentation.
2. The provision of all reasonable accommodations and services is based upon assessment of the impact of the student's disability on his or her academic performance at a given time in the student's life. To determine the current need for accommodations, PSC requires recent and appropriate documentation relevant to the student's learning environment **based on tests normed to adult levels**.
3. Documentation should validate the need for services based on the individual's current level of functioning in the educational setting. A school plan such as an **individualized education program (IEP) or a 504 Plan is insufficient documentation**, but it can be included as part of a more comprehensive assessment battery. A comprehensive assessment battery and the resulting diagnostic report should include a diagnostic interview, assessment of aptitude, academic achievement, information processing, and a **diagnosis**.
4. The neuropsychological or psycho-educational evaluation for the diagnosis of a specific learning disability must provide **clear and specific evidence** that a learning disability does or does not exist.
5. Assessment, and any resulting diagnosis, should consist of and be based on a comprehensive assessment battery that does not rely on any one test or subtest.

Minimally, the domains to be addressed include the following:

- Aptitude—A complete intellectual assessment with all subtests and standard scores reported.
- Academic Achievement—A comprehensive academic achievement battery is essential with all subtests and standard scores reported for those subtests administered. The battery should include current levels of academic functioning in relevant areas such as reading (decoding and comprehension), mathematics, and oral and written language.
- Information Processing—Specific areas of information processing (e.g., short- and long-term memory, sequential memory, auditory and visual

perception/processing, processing speed, executive functioning, and motor ability) should be addressed.

- Standard scores and/or percentiles should be provided for all normed measures. Grade equivalents are not useful unless standard scores and/or percentiles are also included. **The data should logically reflect a substantial limitation to learning for which the student is requesting the accommodation.**
- The tests should be reliable, valid, and standardized for use with an adolescent/adult population. The test findings should document both the nature and severity of the learning disability.
- The diagnostic report should **include specific recommendations for accommodations** as well as an explanation as to why each accommodation is recommended.

Attention Disorders (ADHD) To ensure the provision of reasonable and appropriate services for students with attention disorders at Paul Smith's College, the following professionals would generally be considered qualified to evaluate and diagnose ADHD provided they have comprehensive training in the differential diagnosis of ADHD and direct experience with an adolescent or adult ADHD population: clinical psychologists, neuropsychologists, psychiatrists, and other relevantly trained medical doctors.

1. Professionals conducting assessments and rendering diagnoses of psychological or ADHD must have training in differential diagnosis and the full range of psychiatric disorders. The name, title, and professional credentials of the evaluator, including information about license or certification as well as the area of specialization, employment, and state or province in which the individual practices should be clearly stated in the documentation.
2. The provision of all reasonable accommodations and services is based upon assessment of the impact of the student's disability on his or her academic performance at a given time in the student's life. To determine the current need for accommodations, it is in the student's best interest to provide recent and appropriate documentation relevant to the student's learning environment within the past three years. Flexibility in accepting documentation that exceeds a three-year period may be important under certain conditions if the previous assessment is applicable to the current or anticipated setting. If documentation is inadequate in scope or content, or does not address the individual's current level of functioning and need for accommodations, reevaluation may be warranted.
3. Documentation should validate the need for services based on the individual's current level of functioning in the educational setting. A school plan such as an individualized education program (IEP) or 504 plan is insufficient documentation, but it can be included as part of a more comprehensive assessment battery.
4. Documentation should be comprehensive. It should include evidence of early impairment, evidence of current impairment, rule out alternative diagnoses or explanations, relevant testing, identification of DSM-IV criteria, a specific diagnosis, and an interpretive summary.
5. Each accommodation recommended by the evaluator should include a rationale. A detailed explanation should be provided as to why each accommodation is recommended and should be correlated with specific functional limitations determined through interview, observation, and/or testing. Current documentation should validate the need for services based on the individual's present level of functioning in the educational setting.

Psychological Disorders To ensure the provision of reasonable and appropriate services for students with psychological disorders at Paul Smith's College, a **licensed professional** (e.g., psychiatrist, psychologist, certified social worker, physician) must provide current and comprehensive documentation of the student's disability.

1. The name, title and professional credentials of the evaluator, including information about license or certification as well as the area of specialization, employment and state/province in which the individual practices should be clearly stated in the documentation.
2. The provision of all reasonable accommodations and services is based upon assessment of the impact of the student's disabilities on his or her academic performance at a given time in the student's life. To determine the **current need** for accommodations, it is in the student's best interest to provide recent and appropriate documentation relevant to the student's learning environment within the past three years.
3. Documentation should validate the need for services based on the individual's current level of functioning in the educational setting. A school plan such as an **individualized education program (IEP or a 504 plan) is insufficient** documentation, but it can be included as part of a more comprehensive assessment battery.
4. Documentation should include a DSM-IV **Diagnosis**, date of diagnosis, date of the last contact with the student, instruments/procedures used to diagnose the psychological disorder, presenting symptoms of this disorder/diagnosis, medications currently taken and the possible side effects of the medication, description of the impact of the disorder/disability on the student's academic performance, recommended academic accommodations (e.g., note taking assistance, testing modifications, adjusted course load, etc.), and any additional information relevant to meeting the student's disability-related academic needs.
 - The tests used should be reliable, valid, and standardized for use with an adolescent/adult population. The test findings should document both the nature and severity of the disability.
 - The diagnostic report should include **specific recommendations for accommodations** as well as an explanation as to why each accommodation is recommended.

Interdepartmental Ordinarily, documentation of psychological/psychiatric disorders is sent to the Director of Student Development. The Center for Accommodative Services requires a copy of evidence to establish the **functional limitations** of the disabling condition supporting the need for academic accommodations should the student desire such services.