GUIDELINES FOR DOCUMENTATION OF
A LEARNING DISABILITY

The following are guidelines for the documentation of a learning disability. These
guidelines have been developed to provide necessary information to Disability Services
when arranging appropriate accommodations:

The following guidelines are provided in the interest of assuring that evaluation reports
are appropriate to document eligibility.

1. Testing must be comprehensive. It is not acceptable to administer only one test
   for the purpose of diagnosis. Minimally, domains to be addressed must include
   (but need not be limited to):

   a. **Aptitude.** The Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale-Revised (WAIS-III)
      with subtest scaled scores is the preferred instrument. The Woodcock-
      Johnson Psycho-Educational Battery-III: Tests of Cognitive Ability, or
      the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale: Fifth Edition, are acceptable.

   b. **Achievement.** Current levels of functioning in reading, mathematics, and
      written language are required. Acceptable instruments include the
      Woodcock-Johnson Psycho-Educational Battery-III: Tests of
      Achievement; Stanford Test of Academic Skills (TASK); Scholastic
      Abilities Test for Adults; or specific achievement tests such as the Test of
      Written Language-2 (TOWL-3, Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests-
      Revised, or the Stanford Diagnostic Mathematics Test. The Wide Range
      Achievement Test Revised is NOT a comprehensive measure of
      achievement and, therefore, is not suitable.

   c. **Information Processing.** Specific areas of information processing (e.g.,
      short-and long- term memory; sequential memory; auditory and visual
      perception/processing; processing speed) must be assessed. Use of the
      subtest scaled scores from the WAIS-r or the Woodcock-Johnson Tests of
      Cognitive Ability is acceptable.

This is not intended to be an exhaustive list or to restrict assessment in other pertinent and
helpful areas such as vocational interests and aptitudes.
2. Testing must be *current*. In most cases this means within the past three years. Since assessment constitutes the basis for determining reasonable accommodations, it is in a student’s best interest to provide recent and appropriate documentation to serve as the basis for decision-making about a student’s needs for accommodations in a college environment which is academically competitive.

3. There must be *clear* and *specific* evidence and identification of a learning disability. Individual “learning styles” and “learning differences” in and of themselves do not constitute a learning disability.

4. Test scores/data should be included in the comprehensive diagnostic report. This is important since certain University policies and procedures (e.g., petitioning for permission to substitute courses) require actual data to substantiate eligibility.

5. Professionals conducting assessment and rendering diagnoses of specific learning disabilities must be qualified to do so. Trained and certified/licensed psychologists, learning disabilities specialists, and educational therapists typically are involved in the process of assessment. Experience in working with an adult population is essential.

6. Evaluators should be able to demonstrate that the selection of assessment instruments is based upon their suitability (i.e., reliability, validity, other technical characteristics) for use with an adult population. Assessment instruments must be current.

7. Comprehensive diagnostic reports must contain the names and titles of the evaluators and the date(s) of testing. The report also must contain the following information:
   
   a. Background information on the student and reason for referral, including: current areas of difficulty, medical history, employment history, psychological history, processing abilities, interpersonal skills, educational history, family history, developmental history, academic strengths and weaknesses, study skills and work habits, and personal issues.

   b. A statement concerning the evaluation measures that were used and a brief description of each.

   c. Information concerning the student’s behavior during the assessment, including, but not limited to, the following areas: attitude toward testing, physical appearance, attention, visual/auditory/motor problems, language, affect/mood, and unusual behaviors/verbalizations.

   d. An analysis and interpretation of the results of the assessment, including both a narrative explanation and illustrative test scores.
e. A summary of the entire assessment process which specifically addresses the concerns raised in the reason for referral and that includes a determination of the presence of a learning disability.

f. Recommendations which include the student’s strengths and weaknesses in order to determine appropriate strategies to assist the student to become a more efficient learner and to be successful in personal and career endeavors. In recommending support services, modifications, or accommodations, it is critical for a diagnostician to identify the areas that are affected by a student’s learning disability and to substantiate those conclusions with hard diagnostic data. Diagnosticians also must provide suggestions for specific techniques that would allow the student to be successful in a postsecondary setting.

All documentation is confidential and should be submitted by the diagnostician directly to:

University of New England
Disability Services
716 Stevens Avenue
Portland, ME 04103
(207) 221-4418 phone
(207) 523-1919 fax

Documentation that is submitted must originate with the evaluator(s), and will not be accepted from any other individual, including the student on whom the evaluation was conducted.

These Guidelines have been adapted from Brinckerhoff, Shaw, & McGuire’s text Promoting Postsecondary Education for Students with Learning Disabilities (PRO-ED publishers, Austin, TX, 1993)

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