

**UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA  
SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

**PRACTICES FOR THE DOCUMENTATION AND ACCOMMODATION OF  
STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES**

Federal and State law and University of California policies require the University to provide reasonable accommodation in its academic programs to qualified students with disabilities, including students with learning disabilities. The University employs the definition of learning disabilities developed by the National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities: The term “learning disabilities”

...refers to a heterogeneous group of disorders manifested by significant difficulties in the acquisition and use of listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning, or mathematical abilities. These disorders are intrinsic to the individual, presumed to be to central nervous system dysfunction, and may occur across the life span. Problems in self-regulatory behaviors, social perception, and social interaction may exist with learning disabilities, but do not by themselves constitute a learning disability. Although learning disabilities may occur concomitantly with other [disabling] conditions (for example, sensory impairment...serious emotional disturbance) or with extrinsic influences (such as cultural differences, insufficient or inappropriate instruction), they are not the result of these conditions or influences.

University of California students with learning disabilities typically have average to superior ability, yet experience marked difficulty in one or more academic areas as a result of a significant information processing disorder. To be considered a disability that warrants accommodation, the disorder must substantially interfere with the student’s participation in the educational process.

**I. DOCUMENTATION OF LEARNING DISABILITIES**

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

To verify the student’s eligibility under Federal, State, and University 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-R or WJ-III): Part I, 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-R OR WJ III) 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 (WJ-R or WJ III) are 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-R or WJ III, 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 University. Written reports must include the date of testing.

The appropriateness of the most current documentation will be determined by a Learning Disabilities Specialist, the program director, or other qualified staff member designated by the Disabled Student Services 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 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 report must describe the testing procedures, the instruments used to assess the disability(ies), 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 disability(ies). 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, (d) current functional limitations imposed by the learning disability in the academic setting, and (e) evidence that the disorder substantially interferes with the student's educational progress.

## **II. ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS AND SUPPORT SERVICES**

University academic accommodations and support services are not intended to remediate, but rather 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 a Learning Disabilities Specialist, the Disabled Student Services Director, or other qualified staff member designated by the Director.

It is the responsibility of a Learning Disabilities Specialist, the Program Director, or other staff member designated by the 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 University'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).

In their regulations implementing these Practices, campuses have procedures for resolving disputes regarding the provision of academic accommodations and support services.

For questions regarding assessment procedures, accommodations, and services at UC Riverside, contact Dr. Jean Doña or Marcia Schiffer at Services for Students with Disabilities.

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