Guidelines for Documentation of a Learning Disorder or Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder

Students seeking support services from the Learning Needs and Evaluation Center (LNEC) on the basis of a diagnosed learning disorder (LD) or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) must submit formal documentation that verifies their eligibility for reasonable disability accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. The following guidelines are provided to assist students and evaluators in providing appropriate, sufficient testing and/or documentation. LNEC documentation guidelines are based on Association on Higher Education and Disability guidelines, and are similar to those of other large universities and national testing boards.

1. **Your evaluation must be conducted by a qualified diagnostician.** The diagnostician must have comprehensive training and appropriate state licensure for evaluating adults who have learning and attention disorders. This individual is usually a **licensed clinical or school psychologist, licensed neuropsychologist, or learning disorders specialist.**

2. **The assessment must be current.** Accommodations are based on an assessment of the current nature and impact of your disorder on your ability to learn. Testing must have been conducted **within the last three years prior to your first request for accommodations.**

3. If disability accommodations are recommended, the assessment should provide specific evidence across a student’s testing results and history that a substantial impairment in functioning compared to the average population exists. **Regardless of how high a student’s strongest scores are, a discrepancy in test scores is not sufficient to demonstrate that a disability exists if lowest scores are average or above.** Although a large discrepancy may indicate the need for diagnosis and treatment, a discrepancy alone does not necessarily demonstrate that a disability is present or that the student is entitled to accommodations.

4. Many providers diagnose ADHD clinically, without full psychoeducational testing. In order to show the impact ADHD is currently having on learning and determine whether a disability is present, **full psychoeducational testing is necessary.**
5. Due to differences in relevant laws, students’ eligibility for disability accommodation may change markedly between high school and college. Documentation from primary and secondary schools (IEPs, for instance) is useful, but not sufficient by itself.

6. The evaluation must be comprehensive. Minimally, the evaluation should include:

   A. A diagnostic interview, which includes relevant background information in support of the diagnosis. This may include:
      • Current limitations and difficulties (presenting problem)
      • Academic history, including a summary of previous evaluation results and reports of classroom performance and behavior
      • Relevant family history (e.g., ADHD/LD diagnosis), life-context (e.g., problems with family resources or school system), and/or cultural considerations (e.g., noting if first language, language used during schooling, or primary language spoken in the home is not English)
      • Any pertinent current or past medical history as well as history of medication management and current use.
      • Information about current or past psychological conditions.

   B. Complete psychoeducational or neuropsychological testing. Testing reports should be submitted on the letterhead of the qualified professional. Actual test scores must be provided; standard scores are preferred, but percentiles are also acceptable. Scores must be age-based, not grade-based. Tests used should be reliable, valid, and standardized for diagnosing LD/ADHD in an adult population. The following domains should be included in the assessment:

   APTITUDE: The Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale-Third Edition (WAIS-III), with subtest and standard scores, is the preferred instrument for evaluation. Other acceptable instruments include the Woodcock-Johnson-III Tests of Cognitive Ability (WJ-III-Cog), the Kaufman Adolescent and Adult Intelligence Test or any other comprehensive, well-established aptitude measure that is normed for adults. Short forms of aptitude tests such as the K-BIT or WASI are not acceptable if used as the sole measure of aptitude.

   ACHIEVEMENT: Academic achievement testing should address current levels of functioning in such areas as reading (decoding and comprehension), mathematics, and written language. Acceptable instruments include: Woodcock-Johnson-III Tests of Achievement (WJ-III-ACH), Scholastic Abilities Test for Adults, Peabody Individual Achievement Tests, or specific achievement tests, such as the Nelson-
Denny Reading Skills Test or the Test of Written Language (specific measures are usually combined with other individual tests or a broader based measure of achievement to present a full picture of academic functioning). The Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT) is not a comprehensive measure of academic achievement and therefore is not acceptable if used as the sole measure of achievement.

**INFORMATION PROCESSING:** Specific areas of executive functioning such as memory, auditory and visual processing, processing speed, and motor ability must be assessed. While subtests from the comprehensive achievement and cognitive measures may be sufficient to evaluate the above areas, additional instruments are often needed to fully support a conclusion that a learning deficit exists. Such instruments might include the Wechsler Memory Scale, Third Edition (WMS-III), The California Verbal Learning Test-II (CVLT-II), or selected neuropsychological tests, such as instruments comprising the Benton or Halsted-Reitan Neuropsychological Batteries.

**OTHER HELPFUL ASSESSMENT MEASURES:** While not specifically required to formally document LD or ADHD, additional measures of personality and emotional functioning may be integrated with the above documents to better outline exacerbating effects of coexisting mood, behavioral, neurological, and/or personality difficulties.

C. The report provided must include a **specific diagnosis** which must be supported by the test data, academic history, anecdotal and clinical observations. Differential diagnosis must be considered. If accommodations are recommended, a clear connection between deficit areas and the need for a specific accommodation should be shown.

D. The diagnostic report must include the names, titles and contact information of the person(s) conducting the evaluation. The report must include a date.

All documentation submitted for consideration to LNEC is confidential. When submitting documentation, **please include a copy of any available releases** allowing communication between the LNEC and the diagnostician. Documentation should be sent to:

Learning Needs and Evaluation Center  
University of Virginia  
P.O. Box 800760  
Charlottesville, VA 22908  
Fax: 434-243-5188