



# SOUTHWESTERN ADVENTIST UNIVERSITY

## **Specific Learning Disability Documentation Guidelines**

In order to receive services and accommodations at Southwestern Adventist University, you must provide a current copy of documentation of your disability to the Director of Students with Disabilities (SWD). You can not receive accommodations until you provide appropriate documentation to the Director of Students with Disabilities.

What follows are the guidelines that specify the procedures and the information that must be contained in all documentation of a student's Specific Learning Disability. Specific format is left to the professional; however, all reports must include information about the student's presenting concerns, history (developmental, family, medical psychological, employment), educational assessment, psychological functioning and a summary/recommendation.

The following documentation guidelines are provided to help the evaluating professional document findings in a manner that meets requirements of the American's with Disabilities Act and supports the request for accommodations, including academic adjustments and/or auxiliary aids.

### **I.A Qualified Professional Must Conduct the Evaluation**

Professionals conducting assessments and rendering diagnoses of specific learning disabilities and making recommendations for appropriate accommodations must be qualified to do so. Comprehensive training and relevant experience with an adolescent and adult LD population are essential. The name, title, and professional credentials of the evaluator, information about license or certification (e.g., licensed psychologist) as well as the area of specialization, employment, and state in which the individual practices must be clearly stated in the documentation. For example, the following professionals would generally be considered qualified to evaluate specific learning disabilities provided that they have additional training and experience in evaluating adolescent and adult learning disabilities: clinical or educational psychologists; school psychologists; neuropsychologists; learning disabilities specialists; medical doctors with training and experience in the assessment of learning problems in adolescents and adults.

### **II. Testing Must Be Current**

Because the provision of all reasonable accommodations and services is based upon the assessment of the current impact of the disability on academic performance, it is in a student's best interest to provide recent and appropriate documentation. Southwestern Adventist University requests that the diagnostic evaluation have been completed within the past three years.

### **III. Documentation Necessary to Substantiate the Learning Disability Must Be Comprehensive**

Documentation must validate the need for services based on the candidate's current level of functioning in the educational setting and must include the following:

Because learning disabilities are most commonly manifested during childhood, historical information of learning difficulties in elementary, secondary and post-secondary education must be included. An evaluation report must also include a comprehensive diagnostic interview by a qualified evaluator who addresses relevant background information to support the diagnosis. Such information includes:

- Description of presenting problems
- Developmental history
- Relevant medical history including the absence of a medical basis for present symptoms
- Academic history including results of prior standardized testing and reports of classroom performance
- Family history
- Psycho-social history
- Relevant employment history
- Discussion of dual diagnosis, alternative or co-existing mood, behavioral, neurological, and/or personality disorders
- Relevant history of medication use that may affect the individual's learning

#### **Assessment**

Objective evidence of a substantial limitation to learning must be provided. Minimally, domains to be addressed must include the following:

##### **1. Aptitude/Cognitive Ability**

A complete intellectual assessment with all subtests and standard scores reported is essential.

##### **2. Academic Achievement**

A comprehensive academic achievement battery is required with all subtests and standard scores.

##### **3. Information Processing**

Specific areas of information processing (e.g., short and long term memory, sequential memory, sequential memory, auditory and visual perception/processing, processing speed, executive functioning, motor ability) must be assessed.

#### **Documentation Must Include a Specific Diagnosis**

Individual "learning styles," "learning differences" and "academic problems" in and of themselves do not constitute a learning disability. The diagnostician is encouraged to use direct language in the diagnosis and documentation of a learning disability, avoiding the use of such terms as "suggests" or "is indicative of."

## **Actual Test Scores from Standardized Instruments Must Be Provided**

Standard scores and/or percentiles must be provided for all normed measures. Grade equivalents must be accompanied with standard scores and/or percentiles. The particular profile of the candidate's strengths and weaknesses must be shown to relate to functional limitations that may necessitate accommodations.

## **Each Accommodation Recommended by the Evaluator Must Include a Rationale**

The diagnostic report must include *specific recommendations for accommodation(s)* as well as a detailed explanation of why each accommodation is recommended. The evaluator(s) must describe the impact the diagnosed learning disability has on a specific major life activity as well as the degree of significance of this impact on the individual.

## **IV. An Interpretative Summary Must Be Provided**

A well-written diagnostic summary based on a comprehensive evaluative process is a necessary component of the report. A clinical summary must include:

1. Indication that the evaluator ruled out alternative explanations for academic problems;
2. Indication of how patterns in cognitive ability, achievement and information processing are used to determine the presence of a learning disability;
3. Indication of the limitation to learning and the degree to which it affects the individual;
4. Indication of why specific accommodations are needed and how the effects of the specific disability are mediated by the accommodations.

## **V. Confidentiality**

The Director of Students with Disabilities will maintain confidentiality of the evaluation and will not release any part of the documentation without the student's informed consent or under compulsion of legal process.

Guidelines condensed from the *Policy Statement for Documentation of Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder in Adolescents and Adults* retrieved from Educational Testing Services Web site. For a detailed copy of these guidelines see [www.ets.org](http://www.ets.org).