

Guidelines for Documentation of a Psychological Disability

Each student requesting accommodations through the office of Disability Support Services is required to submit documentation to verify eligibility under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act (2008). As defined by Section 504 and the ADAAA, an individual with a disability is a person who has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits a major life activity. Academic adjustments and other accommodations are implemented to provide equal access to college programs and services.

In order to determine eligibility, a qualified professional must certify that the student has been diagnosed with a disability and provide evidence that it represents a substantial impact to a major life activity (e.g., caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, seeing, hearing, eating, sleeping, walking, standing, lifting, bending, speaking, breathing, learning, reading, concentrating, thinking, communicating, working, etc.). It is important to understand that a diagnosis in and of itself does not substantiate a disability. In other words, information sufficient to render a diagnosis might not be adequate to determine that an individual is substantially impaired in a major life activity. DSS requests documentation of a disability for the purpose of establishing disability status, understanding how the disability may impact a student, and providing adequate information on the functional impact of the disability so that effective reasonable accommodations can be determined. Reasonable accommodations are individually determined based upon the information provided by the student in the intake interview and the functional impact of the condition as evidenced by supporting documentation. Prior history of having received an accommodation does not, in and of itself, warrant or guarantee its continued provision. An Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or 504 plan is almost never sufficient documentation of a disability at the post-secondary level.

Documentation of a psychological disability must be provided by a doctor with training and expertise related to the particular psychological condition identified, such as a psychologist, psychiatrist, or certified social worker. The diagnostic report must be submitted on official letterhead with name(s), title(s), professional credentials, address, and telephone number of the person providing the documentation. All reports must be signed and dated. These guidelines are provided in the interest of assuring that documentation is appropriate to verify eligibility and support requests for reasonable accommodations, academic adjustments, auxiliary aids and/or services at the postsecondary level. A documentation verification form has been developed as an alternative to a traditional diagnostic report. The form can be found at the DSS website (<http://www.shu.edu/offices/disability-support-services/>).

Documentation must include the following information:

1. **Diagnosis** – A current medical diagnosis including appropriate medical reports, relevant medical history, and a clinical summary.
2. **Current Treatment** – Identification of treatment, medications, assistive devices, or other services currently prescribed or in use.
3. **Evaluation of Impact** – Identification of the substantial limitation on a major life activity presented by the disability, and a description of the current functional impact of the disability in a college setting. The assessment should validate the need for services based on the impact of the student's disability and level of functioning in an educational setting.
4. **Specific Recommendations** – Suggested accommodations and/or academic adjustments, with an explanation supporting the need for each accommodation to achieve equal access.