

Diagnostic Documentation Required For a Learning Disability

Identification of a Learning Disability

In identifying a learning disability, the University of Washington Tacoma generally follows the approach of Title 392, Chapter 171 of the Washington Administrative Code. According to Title 392, Chapter 171, Section 406 (which applies to public schools in the state but is not binding on the University), a learning disability is indicated by a

severe discrepancy between the student's intellectual ability and academic achievement in one or more of the following areas: oral expression, listening comprehension, written expression, basic reading skill, reading comprehension, mathematics calculations and mathematics reasoning.

A disability that is the result of visual or hearing problems, motor difficulties, mental retardation, behavioral or emotional disturbance, or environmental, cultural or socio-economic factors is not a learning disability for the purposes of this policy. Please note that a student with a documented disability, other than a learning disability, may be entitled to reasonable accommodations for that disability.

Diagnostic Documentation Required For Learning Disabilities

The tests used in the diagnostic reports must be administered by a licensed psychologist and must meet the criteria listed below. Minimally, domains to be addressed include but are not limited to:

- aptitude (such as the WAIS-R)
- achievement
- information processing
- memory
- general psychological evaluation (e.g., diagnostic interview or structured personality inventory).

Each diagnosis of a learning disability must contain the names and results of tests (including raw test scores and protocols), specify the nature and effects of the learning disability upon university-level academic and related endeavors, and suggest appropriate educational compensation strategies. The evaluator must address the student's ability to function effectively in a university environment (e.g., ability to focus on assignments, organize one's time, attend class, work in groups and alone, do independent research, and take projects to completion).

The diagnostic report is to be used for two purposes: 1) to document the existence, nature, and extent of the learning disability and 2) to identify reasonable accommodations. Because the provision of all reasonable accommodations and services is based upon assessments of the current impact of the student's disability on his or her academic performance in a specific academic program, it is in the student's best interest to provide recent and appropriate documentation. In most cases, this means that the testing has been conducted within the past three years. Learning assessments must be based on adult-level learning. Assessments made at a pre-college level will qualify as acceptable documentation only if they reflect adult capabilities and the academic demands of higher education. If you have questions about the appropriateness of your last documentation, call Disability Support Services at (253) 692-4501 (voice)/(253) 692-4413 (TTY) to discuss it.

If the diagnostic report is incomplete or inadequate to determine the present extent of the disability or appropriate accommodations, the University may require supplemental assessment of the disability at the student's cost. If the diagnostic report is complete but the University requires a second opinion (may include getting a second opinion regarding the diagnostic report or a re-evaluation of the disability) the University may select the licensed psychologist and shall bear the cost of the second assessment.

Requirements for Diagnostic Tests for Learning Disabilities

Tests used to assess the student's intellectual ability and academic achievement shall be:

- current
- reliable as demonstrated by reliability coefficient of .85 or above
- normed on representative national samples
- individually standardized procedures described in the test manuals

Assessment materials, procedures, and instruments used for the purpose of assessment and placement shall be selected and administered so as not to be racially or culturally discriminatory. All tests and other evaluation materials shall have been validated for the specific purpose for which they are used and shall accurately reflect whatever factors the tests purport to measure.