



COLLEGE COMMITTEE ON DISABILITY ISSUES
COMITÉ COLLÉGIAL EN BESOINS PARTICULIERS

Guidelines

Learning Disability Documentation and Services Provided

Adopted

May, 2005

Guidelines

These guidelines were created in the interest of promoting greater consistency between post-secondary institutions providing services and accommodations to students with documented learning disabilities.

Although these guidelines are suggested best practice, it is recognized that colleges may have a challenge to meet the financial requirements to provide appropriate assessments to meet these guidelines. These guidelines can assist colleges in meeting the accessibility requirements under the Ontario Human Rights Commission. Documentation following LDAO guidelines is considered most useful in guiding the selection of support services and developing self-advocacy skills.

A. Considerations for assessment referrals:

1. Assessments may be full or partial depending on missing documentation criteria. (see Appendix 1)
2. Full Assessments are required when the assessment provided is out of date for reasons of age (completed 5 or more years prior to onset of requested services) or as required by specific program licensing bodies; any assessment completed after the age of 18 is considered current.
3. Partial Assessments are required when current assessment is missing any of the following components:
 - a. Diagnosis or diagnostic statements by a appropriately qualified member of the College of Psychologists,
 - b. Recommendations which are applicable to current academic setting,
 - c. Important components related to new LDAO definition (i.e. missing data on thinking and reasoning abilities, psychological processing, and/or academic functioning), and/or
 - d. Information about suspected processing deficits due to new testing instruments/practices.

4. Assessments can be **prioritized** based on urgency:

Priority: High

- Potential need for "extended accommodations" i.e. math help sheets, crib sheets, open book exams, alternate format exams (multiple choice), reader or scribe
- Intake completed late in program and student requires accommodations for licensing exams
- Enrolled in program of short duration
- High risk of failure

Priority: Medium

- No formal assessment has ever been completed
- Faculty made referral (and are willing to provide interim accommodations) and have verified student's academic potential
- Length of time on wait list (preferably no longer than six months)

Priority: Low

- Has an old assessment that needs to be updated
- Currently low user of disability support services
- Good academic performance with minimal accommodations

B. Recommendations for level of services related to type of documentation:

Level 1 Documentation (no diagnosis)

- Historical evidence of a learning disability including a Delta screener or IPRC/IEP or medical records
- Educational assessments which provide evidence of academic difficulties
- Partial reports which do not include a clear diagnosis (see Appendix 1)

Services are **temporary or interim** at this level and based on the student's demonstrated need. An interim period is ideally one semester.

Services are selected in the interest of student success, based on the evidence of learning difficulties as supported by partial documentation.

Recommended Services as required to meet student's needs:

- Assessment (charged to BSWD if available),
- Content tutoring (through general student services),
- Learning Strategist,
- Assistive Technology training and Lab Access (including scanning textbooks),
- Note-taking supports through photocopying/NCR copies of classmates notes
- Common Testing Supports as supported by faculty (extra time, separate room, etc.)
- Reduced course load (no OSAP reduced course load privileges).

Caution:

The following services are not recommended as they require the Disability Office to “verify” the student’s disability:

- Bursary of Students with Disabilities (BSWD) for additional services and equipment purchases (specialized tutoring, computer, etc.),
- Alternate format textbooks from W. Ross MacDonald,
- Extended Testing Accommodations (reader, scribe, technology, memory aids, word lists, etc.), and
- Memo to OSAP approving reduced course load (40-60%).

Level 2 Documentation (diagnosis but needing update)

- Psychological assessments which contain diagnostic statements but which are in need of an update either for reasons of age or partial data.

Services are **temporary or interim** at this level and based on the student’s demonstrated need. An interim period is ideally one semester.

Eligible for full range of services. Consider *Accommodation Process* (Appendix 2) in determining appropriate accommodations.

Recommended Services as required to meet student's needs:

- Full Assessment (charged to BSWD, if available),
- Content tutoring (through general student services),
- Learning Strategist,
- Assistive Technology training and Lab Access (including scanning textbooks),
- Note-taking supports through photocopying/NCR copies of classmates notes or classroom notetaker,
- Common Testing Accommodations (extra time, separate room, etc.),
- **Bursary of Students with Disabilities (BSWD) for additional services and equipment purchases (specialized tutoring, computer, etc.),**
- **Alternate format textbooks from W. Ross MacDonald,**
- **Extended Testing Accommodations (reader, scribe, technology, memory aids, word lists, etc.), and/or**
- **Reduced course load (OSAP reduced course load privileges).**

Caution:

In cases where diagnostic assessment is questionable due to age or insufficient data:

- Provide students with a letter of understanding that should the current assessment not support the diagnosis, their interim services will be adjusted.
- Disability offices should be careful about purchasing equipment through the BSWD when academic functioning data is out-of-date.

Level 3 Documentation

- Current and full psychological assessments, which meet all diagnostic and documentation criteria.

Services are **permanent** at this level and based on student's demonstrated need.

Eligible for full range of services. Consider *Accommodation Process* (Appendix 2) in determining appropriate accommodations.

Recommended Services as required to meet student's needs:

- Content tutoring (usually available through general student services),
 - Learning Strategist,
 - Assistive Technology training and Lab Access (including scanning textbooks),
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- Note-taking supports through photocopying/NCR copies of classmates notes or classroom notetaker,
- Common Testing Accommodations (extra time, separate room, etc.),
- Bursary of Students with Disabilities (BSWD) for additional services and equipment purchases,
- Alternate format textbooks from W. Ross MacDonald,
- Extended Testing Accommodations (reader, scribe, technology, memory aids, word lists, etc.),
- Reduced course load (OSAP reduced course load privileges),
- **Testing Accommodations for Provincial licensing bodies, and**
- **Confirmed eligible for ESF services.**

C. Response to Alternative Diagnosis: (Learning Disability is not diagnosed using the LDAO criteria)

1. Disability Offices' qualified staff or consultants will make a clinical decision on a case-by-case basis as to whether the diagnosed disorder is **disabling** the student in their current educational program. A diagnosis could be a disorder but the issue is whether it is disabling. For example, if a student enrolled in a social service program (which does not require mathematics) is diagnosed with a Math Disorder, there may be no accommodation requirements.
2. When other disabling learning disorders are diagnosed which do not meet the LDAO criteria, disability offices will accommodate as appropriate. (See Appendix 2)
3. Dedicated ESF funding is contingent upon an LD diagnosis utilizing LDAO definition and criteria. However, required services may be funded by alternative sources.
4. When contracting external assessment services, Disability Offices should clarify postsecondary documentation requirements. They may provide psychological practitioners with a copy of background information on documentation and diagnostic criteria (see Appendix 4) and request that practitioners utilize the LDAO criteria when diagnosing a learning disability.
5. When diagnosis is based on DSM-IV criteria, qualified staff or consultants to the Disability Offices should review the report utilizing the documentation and

diagnostic criteria checklists (see Appendix 1 and 3) to determine whether appropriate LDAO criteria are met. When in doubt, partial assessments can be requested to provide missing documentation components.

6. When partial assessments are required, it is the clinician's decision as to which components are most appropriate in the supplementary assessment.

The following checklist sets out the post-secondary documentation requirements. Full reports of this type are most useful in guiding support services and developing self-advocacy skills.

APPENDIX 1

Documentation Criteria Checklist:

Relevant background information	
Statement of the validity of the present assessment	
Behavioural observations during assessment	
Description of individuals strengths and needs based on formal test results (thinking and reasoning and academic achievement)	
Documented evidence of the cause of the learning difficulties (psychological processing deficits)	
Indicates how the observed pattern of both abilities and achievement demonstrates the presence of a specific learning disability	
A clear diagnostic statement that the individual has a Learning Disability.	
A description of the specific impact of the disability on activities of daily living (including academic skills development).	
Recommendations specifically linked to processing strengths and deficits	
Signature by an appropriately qualified member of the College of Psychologists and/or the College of Physicians and Surgeons	

APPENDIX 2

Accommodation Process:

The following criteria will need to be considered in the process of determining the appropriate accommodations for students disabilities:

1. The documentation should provide evidence that there is a **disabling condition**.
2. There should be evidence that the disabling condition creates a significant **functional limitation** on the student's ability to meet the requirements of their academic program or specific course.
3. An appropriate accommodation should **minimize the impact** of the disabling condition while **maintaining academic integrity**.

APPENDIX 3

Diagnostic Criteria Checklist: *(to be used by qualified staff and consultants)*

<p>A. A non-random, clinically significant discrepancy* between one or more of the specific psychological processes related to learning (phonological processing; memory and attention; processing speed; language processing; perceptual-motor processing; visual-spatial processing; executive functions) and otherwise average abilities essential for thinking and reasoning.</p>	
<p>B. Academic achievement that is unexpectedly low relative to the individual's thinking and reasoning abilities OR academic achievement that is within expected levels, but is sustainable only by extremely high levels of effort and support.</p>	
<p>C. Evidence that learning difficulties are logically related to observed deficits in specific psychological processes.</p>	
<p>D. Evidence that learning difficulties cannot primarily be accounted for by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - other conditions, such as global developmental delay, primary sensory deficits (e.g., visual or hearing impairments), or other physical difficulties, - environmental factors, such as deprivation, abuse, inadequate or inappropriate instruction, socio-economic status, or lack of motivation, - cultural or linguistic diversity., and/or - any other co-existing condition such as Developmental Coordination Disorder, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder or anxiety. 	

Note: Learning disabilities may co-exist with many conditions, including attentional, behavioural and emotional disorders, sensory impairments or other medical conditions.

* See supporting document for a discussion of “clinically significant discrepancy”.

APPENDIX 4

Background Information for Psychological Service Providers:

Learning Disability Association of Ontario: Recommended Practices For Assessment, Diagnosis and Documentation of Learning Disabilities - Supporting Document

<http://www.ldao.ca/resources/education/pei/assessment/supporting.php>

Learning Disability Association of Ontario: Definition of Learning Disabilities and Recommended Practices For Assessment, Diagnosis and Documentation of Learning Disabilities

<http://www.ldao.ca/resources/education/pei/assessment/index.php>

Learning Opportunities Task Force: Recommended Practices for Assessment, Diagnosis, and Documentation of Learning Disabilities

<http://lotf.ca/english/about/reports/2Assessment.pdf>

