

Criteria for Outside Evaluation of Students with Learning Disabilities

CRITERIA FOR OUTSIDE EVALUATIONS

The Board of Regents endorsed criteria for the evaluation of learning disabilities in September, 1991. All System institutions should be reviewing outside evaluations for students with learning disabilities based on these criteria. These criteria were established in an effort to assure that all institutions of the University System employ the same definition and evaluation model. Following is a simplified and updated version of the criteria for use by System institutions and professionals conducting private evaluations who request the criteria. In addition, clinicians might also review the Association of Higher Education Administrators of Disabilities (AHEAD) Guidelines for Documentation of a Learning Disability (www.ahead.org/ldguide.htm) or the Guidelines and Questionnaire for Test Accommodations for Examinees with Disabilities prepared by the United States Medical Licensing Examination Board (www.nbme.org), as they provide similar but more detailed guidance regarding the criteria used for evaluating outside evaluations for these organizations. The Regents policies are generally consistent with these other nationally recognized general guidelines, although specific criteria within the Regents policy may differ.

Secondary education eligibility reports, individualized educational plans and provision of special education services in and of themselves are not sufficient documentation for college-level accommodations, although this information should be included with reports from any comprehensive evaluation. If no prior services or accommodations have been provided, this needs to be carefully explained as learning disabilities and related disorders are not typically newly identified in adulthood.

GEORGIA BOARD OF REGENTS CRITERIA FOR ACCEPTING OUTSIDE EVALUATIONS DOCUMENTING LEARNING DISABILITIES

1. Documentation must be within 3 years of the student's application for assistance. (The exception to this guideline is if the evaluation was completed after the student was 18 years of age and the evaluation utilized appropriate adult standardized tests and is still considered by an RCLD to adequately represent an individual's current functioning.) Documentation must be comprehensive, including history, diagnostic interviews, test results (including standardized test scores when available), differential diagnosis, details regarding a student's functional limitations, and recommendations for accommodations which are appropriate in college, graduate or professional educational settings.

2. A specific learning disability must be stated within the documentation submitted. The criteria a student must exhibit are one or more, but not all, areas of specific academic deficits; a correlated cognitive or information processing deficit; and average intellectual ability. If another diagnosis is applicable, it should be stated. The evaluation must be

signed by a professional with expertise in evaluating adult populations and appropriately licensed by the state.

3. One of the following individually administered general intelligence tests must have been utilized. Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale-III (WAIS-III) Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-III (WISC-III) Stanford Binet IV Kaufman Adult Intelligence Test - (KAIT)

Please list subscale scores.

4. Cognitive or information processing strengths, weaknesses, and deficits should be specifically discussed. Clear documentation of deficit areas is necessary in order for colleges to provide appropriate modifications. Please discuss all of the following processing areas:

a. Visual-spatial abilities

b. Memory

c. Fine motor/dexterity

d. Executive Functions (It is also helpful to know about the student's cognitive or processing flexibility and automaticity with cognitive and academic tasks.)

e. Attention

5. Oral language skills should be assessed and discussed. Formal language evaluation and/or an informal analysis of a language sample are appropriate. Colleges are primarily interested in whether or not a student's language disability is impacting oral or written language and/or if a separate speech disorder is also present. The assessment of auditory comprehension is also helpful.

6. Social-emotional status should be assessed and discussed. Formal assessment instruments and/or clinical interview are appropriate. Colleges need to know differential diagnoses of psychological disorders that impact upon academics from learning disabilities (e.g., anxiety, mood disorders, substance abuse). College is typically quite stressful for students who have learning disorders. In an attempt to best serve students, it is also helpful to know about their personality characteristics, psychological welfare, self-esteem and stress level.

7. Achievement assessment in the following areas is required:

a. Written Language (spelling and written expression). If a written language sample is available to review, this is most helpful.

b. Reading (decoding, word attack, and comprehension). Please indicate the student's ability to comprehend longer passages, more typical of college text than some assessment instruments provide, and their automaticity and fluency in reading appropriate level texts.

c. Mathematics (applied word problems, calculations, algebra). Please indicate whether or not the student was successful with algebra problems. Scores rarely provide this. For example, students can score within the low average range on the WRAT without attempting any of the algebra problems.

8. Assessment instruments must have age appropriate norms for high school seniors/college freshmen or older nontraditional students. All standardized measures must be represented by standard scores and percentile ranks based on published norms. These can certainly be supplemented by informal assessment.

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