



## Documentation of Psychological and Neurological Disorders

Vassar College follows best practices for disability documentation used by postsecondary institutions to determine the accommodations to which an individual may be entitled.<sup>1</sup> Disability documentation for the purpose of providing accommodations, auxiliary aids, or services must both establish disability and provide adequate information on the functional impact of the disability so that effective accommodations can be identified. All documentation is reviewed on an individual, case-by-case basis. Individuals are encouraged to provide their clinicians with a copy of these guidelines. The cost of obtaining disability documentation is the responsibility of the individual. Questions about Vassar College's documentation requirements should be directed to the Office for Accessibility and Educational Opportunity, Vassar College, Box 164, 124 Raymond Avenue, Poughkeepsie, NY 12604-0164, (845) 437-7584.

### **A. Qualified Professional Must Provide the Documentation**

Psychological and neurological disorders comprise a range of conditions characterized by emotional, cognitive, and/or behavioral dysfunction or impairment. Not all conditions are disabilities. A professional providing documentation should be licensed or otherwise properly credentialed, have undergone appropriate and comprehensive training, and have relevant experience in diagnosing and/or treating individuals with psychological or neurological disorders. The individual's name, title, and professional credentials must be clearly stated in the documentation. Documentation from family members will not be accepted even when the family members are otherwise qualified by virtue of training and licensure/certification. All reports must be in English, typed or printed on professional letterhead, dated, and signed.

### **B. Documentation Must Be Current**

Documentation must address how the condition(s) *currently* impacts the individual in the current setting (postsecondary educational, residential or workplace setting). The need for recent documentation depends on the facts and circumstances of the individual's condition and need for specific accommodations, auxiliary aids, or services. If the condition is not stable, information on the typical progression or prognosis of the condition, current treatment plan, and recommended timelines for re-evaluation should be included (including information about the individual's own strategies).

### **C. Documentation Must Be Comprehensive**

Documentation should be comprehensive and based on objective criteria and diagnostic methods congruent with a particular disability and current professional practices in the field. Methods may include formal instruments, medical examinations, structured interview protocols, performance observations, standardized tests, and unstructured interviews. Quality documentation will generally include:

- Statement of a specific diagnosis or diagnoses
- Description of the individual's current functional limitations in a work, academic, residential, or other campus setting as well as across other settings;

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<sup>1</sup> Updated November 8, 2010. Guidelines adapted from Educational Testing Services (2001). Guidelines for Documentation of Psychiatric Disabilities in Adolescents and Adults. and from AHEAD: Association on Higher Education and Disability: Seven Essential Elements of Quality Disability Documentation.

- Description of both current and past medications, auxiliary aids, assistive devices, support services, and accommodations including their effectiveness in ameliorating functional impacts of the disability. Information should also be included about any significant side effects from current medications, services, or treatments that may impact physical, perceptual, behavioral or cognitive performance.
- If applicable, please provide information about tests and dates of administration, clinical observations, and specific test results of psychiatric, psychoeducational or neuropsychological testing.

#### **D. Recommendation and Rationale for Requested Accommodations Must Be Provided**

Effective and reasonable accommodations are individually determined and based on the functional impact of the condition and its likely impact on the current environment (classroom, residential, or workplace setting, course assignments, program requirements, etc.). Recommendations for specific accommodations, auxiliary aids, or services must be logically related to the functional limitations of the individual as a result of their condition(s). If connections are not obvious, a clear explanation of the relationship should be provided. For students, school plans such as an Individualized Education Plans (I.E.P.) or a 504 Plan can be helpful, and may provide insight in making current decisions about accommodations, auxiliary aids, or services. I.E.P. and 504 Plans, however, are not binding on Vassar College, and a prior history of accommodations without demonstration of current need does not warrant the provision of accommodations. If no prior accommodations were provided, the evaluator must include a detailed explanation of why no accommodations were needed or provided in the past and why accommodations are needed at this time.

#### **E. Privacy and Confidentiality**

Disability documentation will be treated in a confidential manner and shared only on a need-to-know basis to ensure the provision of reasonable and effective accommodations, auxiliary aids, and services. Disability-related information is collected and maintained on separate forms and kept in secure files with limited access.

#### **Send Documentation To:**

Office for Accessibility and Educational Opportunity  
Vassar College, Box 164  
124 Raymond Avenue  
Poughkeepsie, NY 12604