

REQUESTING ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS FROM THE STUDENT ACCESSIBILITY CENTER (SAC)

PROCEDURE

The Student Accessibility Center at Ashland University provides academic services and accommodations for students with diagnosed disabilities to ensure nondiscrimination and equitable access to their education. The ADA defines a disability as a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, a person who has a history or record of such an impairment, or a person who is perceived by others as having such an impairment. Examples of major life activities include walking, sitting, standing, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, working, caring for oneself, and other similar activities. If a condition substantially limits a student's access to educational opportunities, that condition is considered a disability, and the student may be eligible for accommodations that remove an academic/institutional barrier. Reasonable accommodations are not determined based on disability or diagnosis alone.

DOCUMENTATION GUIDELINES

While third-party documentation may be sufficient to establish the presence of a disability, documentation alone does not inform whether accommodations are reasonable. Medical information will be considered but it is not the definitive information that informs our final decisions. We consider a multitude of factors. A medical provider's recommended accommodation does not automatically bind SAC/AU to approve the accommodation as being reasonable. When recommendations within documentation primarily enhance academic success or are considered outside the scope of what is necessary for equal access, the student will be referred to other resources and or given options that may be able to address the specific need. All documentation is reviewed on a case-by-case basis, and accommodations are determined through an interactive process. If the third party returns the Verification Form without sufficient information for the Student Accessibility Center to determine whether an accommodation is necessary, the Director of the Student Accessibility Center will inform the individual in writing of the verification's insufficiency and may request additional information, including speaking directly with the individual supplying the third-party verification, within seven (7) business days of receiving the verification. The individual making the request for accommodation must cooperate with the Student Accessibility Center in a timely manner in providing all information needed to determine whether the requested accommodation is necessary.

All accommodation recommendations must be logical, reasonable and necessary and related to the student's functional limitations based on evidence from the documentation/information submitted by the student. The SAC reserves the right to request updated documentation and/or additional documentation to support specific accommodations.

Professionals Who Can Provide Clinical Documentation

- The provider must have comprehensive training and experience in the relevant specialty and hold appropriate licensure and/or certification
- The provider must be familiar with the history and functional limitations of the student's condition and provide detailed information about the substantial nature and level of the impairment and its impact on major life activities
- It is recommended that the documentation provided is not from a family member or someone with a personal relationship with the student or student's family

Relevant Documentation

- Documentation must reflect the status of the student's current functional limitations
- Typically, diagnoses with no anticipated fluctuation of functional limitations require a current report.

- Typically, diagnoses that may change or are considered episodic, require updated documentation every 6 months to a year.

Documentation Guidelines

Documentation should include:

- A specific medical diagnosis, including present symptoms, their duration, and severity
- A discussion of relevant developmental, historical, and familial information
- Objective measures used to determine diagnosis (attach results)
- Description of the student's presenting impairment and its substantial impact on major life functions in an educational environment
- Rationale for recommended accommodation(s) that is logically related to functional limitation(s), based on evidence from the clinical evaluation
- Duration in which the student has been under the clinician's care and date of last contact
- Recommendations for accommodations in post-secondary academic environment can be helpful if they include a clear rationale. Each recommendation should be based on interview, observation, and/or testing and correlated with both the diagnosis and the student's functional limitations. **NOTE: Test anxiety alone is not a disability.**

If the documentation which has been submitted does not contain sufficient information to determine appropriate accommodations, the student will be contacted by the SAC

Supporting Documentation

The qualified evaluator's report, while necessary, is by no means the only documentation we can use to better understand and accommodate the student. Other helpful documents include records of previous accommodation, high school 504 plans or IEP's, previous medical evaluations, report cards, transcripts, and parent, teacher, tutor, therapist or employer reports. SAC reserves the right to access student transcripts (e.g. classes taken and grades earned at AU) for evaluation purposes.

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Once the documentation is received and reviewed, an Intake meeting will be scheduled to determine accommodations. In-person, face-to-face Intakes typically take 1 hour. Phone or Virtual Intakes are available as well. Intakes include the following:

- Interview to collect demographic information as well as information regarding the challenges students encounter as a result of the symptoms of the disability, and the history of their use of accommodations in the past if any.
- Determination of appropriate accommodations that will enable the removal of barriers students face as a result of their disability.
- Review and signing of the Confidentiality Policy and Exam Accommodations Agreement policies and procedures as necessary (only for students eligible for testing accommodations).
- Review of general procedures including the scheduling of tests in the testing areas, and/or requesting assistive technology or alternative versions of textbooks for students eligible for these accommodations, etc.

Students will be informed if, after reviewing documentation and conducting an intake meeting, more information/documentation is needed to determine the existence of a disability and/or the need for requested accommodations. Students will receive accommodation letters at the end of the Intake meeting if there are reasonable accommodations that can be made. Accommodation letters are distributed by students to their professors as evidence of eligibility for accommodations. Professors who do not receive letters from students are not obligated to provide accommodations. In these situations, professors are encouraged to contact SAC to verify eligibility and to receive a copy of the letter, or to refer an inquiring student.

Intake meetings are conducted one time after students initially request accommodations. Students will meet with SAC each semester to receive updated accommodation letters, review existing accommodations, and to review and sign a new Exam Accommodations Agreement if eligible.

Questions regarding accommodations should be directed to Julie Donatini, Director at: jdonatin@ashland.edu, or by phone at: 419-289-5904.