

RECOMMENDED MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR EVALUATION OF SPECIFIC LEARNING DISABILITIES

These guidelines are based on the recommended best practices of the Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD). The intent is to develop standard criteria for verifying specific learning disabilities (LD). This information is also a reference for diagnosticians who provide Learning Disability testing and assessment services for Willamette University students.

Reports must be on the administering professional's letterhead and must include a DSM-IV **specific diagnosis**. Individual "learning styles," "learning differences," and "academic problems," in and of themselves, do not constitute a learning disability. The nature and severity of the functional limitation(s) must be supported by the test data, academic history, and anecdotal and clinical observations. This may include the student's level of motivation, study skills and other non-cognitive factors. These results must support the fact that the individual's functional limitations are due to the stated disabilities.

At the time of the student's request for college disability services, the assessments should be performed within the past three years; however, if a student has been tested after the age of 18 and the evaluation meets the guidelines stated herein, the documentation will be considered on an individual basis. If students are tested prior to the age of 18, the documentation may be inadequate.

I. MODEL FOR ASSESSMENT

Formal testing instruments should not be used in isolation when assessing the student's performance abilities. It is highly recommended that other informal methods be incorporated into the assessment process and reports such as personal interviews and observation to provide a better understanding of the global functioning of the individual. A comprehensive assessment will provide a link to the individual learning strategies and accommodations.

Additional information that may help define the nature and extent of an individual's learning disability:

Observations by the diagnostician such as raised anxiety level, distractibility, excessive time to finish tests, and uncommon errors on written exercises.

Documentation of a learning disability in elementary or secondary school, and the services that were provided.

Case history factors:

- Birth trauma or complications
- Illness, high fever, concussion, seizures, unconsciousness, etc.
- Delayed or abnormal development of speech, language, motor skills or social skills
- Medical or physical condition that has been shown to correlate highly with learning disabilities
- Learning disability among family members
- Hyperactivity as a child and medications used

counseling services
phone: 503.370.6471
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- Physical abuse
- Substance abuse
- Autism Spectrum Disorder Symptoms

II. PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS: Test administrators must meet the requirements set forth below.

Appropriate professionals include, but are not limited to, those in the following occupations:

State licensed clinical psychologists

Staff of postsecondary institutions, disability services offices and departments of special education

Vocational Rehabilitation Division diagnosticians

Holding these degrees:

| | |
|-------|-------|
| Ph.D. | Psy.D |
| Ed.D | Psy.D |
| Ph.D | |

In these fields:

Psychology
Special Education
Education

These professionals should have two or more years of direct assessment experience with adults or late adolescents who manifest specific learning disabilities, and are trained in the administration and interpretation of that particular assessment tool.

In appropriate cases, other disciplines not specifically trained in learning disabilities evaluation, such as speech pathologists, may be included as part of a professional evaluation team.

III. ACCEPTABLE TEST INSTRUMENTS:

Both of the following minimum standards (in A and B) need to be met in the assessment process:

A. Use of one instrument from the following list of Intellectual Assessment Tools: **(preference in order listed)**

Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale – Revised or III (WAIS-R or WAIS III)

Stanford Binet Intelligence Scale (4th Edition)

Woodcock-Johnson Psycho-Educational Battery – Revised, Standard and Supplemental Batteries (WJBWB-R)

B. Use of one instrument from the following list of Achievement Tests:

Woodcock-Johnson Psycho-Educational Battery – Revised

Wechsler Individual Achievement Test (WIAT)

Tests of Achievement, Standard Battery (Knowledge and Supplemental Battery optional)

Standard Test of Academic Skills (STAS)

Scholastic Abilities Test for Adults (SATA)

On test instruments that evaluate mental processing skills, it is necessary for the assessment report to **include standard scores and percentile rank**. These could be specific tests for processing and/or subtests and index scores from the administered cognitive tests.

To obtain **criterion-referenced information**, the following specific achievement instruments may be used in addition to the required instruments, but **cannot replace** the acceptable test instruments.

| INSTRUMENT | MEASURES |
|--|----------------------|
| Detroit tests of Learning Aptitude-Adult 2,3 | Academic Aptitude |
| Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test – Revised | Oral Comprehension |
| Peabody Picture Achievement Tests – Revised | Academic Achievement |
| Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test | Academic Achievement |
| Stanford Diagnostic Mathematics Test | Academic Achievement |
| Formal Reading Inventory | Academic Achievement |
| Test of Adolescent Language 111 | Academic Achievement |
| Gray Oral Reading Test | Academic Achievement |
| Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests – Revised | Academic Achievement |
| Test of Written Language – 2 | Academic Achievement |
| Rating Scales | |

IV. OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES for verification of specific learning disabilities include:

The **Full Scale score** as measured by the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale (or the Woodcock-Johnson Broad Cognitive Ability score) shall fall within the **average range or higher**.

A **significant difference** (1.5 standard deviations or more, based on age norm) is measured between the full-scale score on an accepted test of cognitive ability, and the standard score in one or more areas of achievement on an accepted test of achievement. If a significant difference does not exist, the diagnostician will justify the need for providing logical information that defines a functional limitation as it relates to a specific learning disability.

Consideration is made for a wide disparity of scores—based on age norm—either intertest or intratest. For example, the disparity will be defined as approximately 1.5 standard deviations between the Full Scale Cognitive standard score and the area of deficit standard score.

Inability to complete a neuropsychological test battery due, for example, to sequencing problems, slow speed, lack of comprehension of the test or similar problems is to be reported.

Environmental deprivation, educational deprivation, as well as hearing and vision deficits will be ruled out as causal factors when achievement is significantly low.

V. AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER

Additional assessment instruments applicable to the diagnosis of an autism spectrum disorder (sometimes referred to as syndrome) will be included in this battery of tests as deemed appropriate by the assessor. The basic evaluation for a specific learning disability will be part of the comprehensive assessment for the autism spectrum disorder.