

# DOCUMENTATION FOR LEARNING DISABILITIES

A Full psycho-educational or neuropsychological assessment report, that was completed with the student at **age 18 or within 5 years of initial registration** at the university. If within the 5-year span prior to age 18, an updated assessment may be needed for continuing accommodations beyond first academic year but a report in the above listed time frame will be helpful for most accommodations for at least the first year of study. The student's Accessibility Advisor will discuss with the student whether an updated assessment will need to be pursued to determine the need for accommodations for additional academic years of study.

The Accessibility Advisor's role is to work with a student to explore their learning experiences and challenges and review disability documentation in the context of their academic program requirements. This discussion and review may lead to some accommodations and/or supports and strategies for the student. To fully review the implications of disability documentation as part of this process, we need the FULL report, including all TEST SCORES.

Assessments must be conducted **in person** (except for the period of March 2020 – April 2023 during the worldwide health pandemic) and outline impairments not “relative weaknesses”. If a learning disability is identified, this must be clearly and specifically stated in the report.

Psychoeducational Assessments and Reports should address the following:  
*(adapted from OPA guidelines for Learning Disability Assessments)*

## Criteria #1:

Provide a clear diagnostic statement The report must have a clear diagnostic statement identifying the student's learning disability. If another diagnosis is applicable, this should be stated as well.

## Criteria #2:

The diagnostic testing should be comprehensive, and no single test should be used in isolation for the purpose of diagnosis. The diagnostic testing must address several domains including but not necessarily limited to:

### Aptitude:

The Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale - IV (WAIS IV) listing the sub-test scores is the preferred instrument. The Stanford Binet Intelligence Scale: Fourth Edition is an acceptable alternative.

### Achievement:

A review of your academic history and an assessment of the current levels of functioning in reading, mathematics, and written language. Acceptable instruments include but are not limited to: Canadian Test of Basic Skills; Woodcock-Johnson Psychoeducational Battery - Revised: Tests of Achievement; Stanford Test of Academic Skills (TASK); or specific achievement tests such as the Test of Written Language -2 (TOWL-2),

Woodcock Reading Mastery Test, or the Stanford Diagnostic Math Test. The Nelson Denny Test on its own will not suffice as a measure of reading/reading comprehension.

### **Information Processing/Memory:**

Relevant areas of information processing (e.g., short, and long-term memory, sequential memory, visual/auditory perception, attention, fine-motor dexterity, processing speed) should be assessed using multiple subtests from the WAIS IV or Woodcock Johnson Tests of Cognitive Ability and should ideally include the Wechsler Memory IV Scales.

### **Social-Emotional Status:**

A combination of formal assessment instruments and clinical interview may be used. We are aware that social-emotional issues may occur concurrently with, or may be secondary to, learning disabilities. It is helpful to know as much about these issues as possible to provide the most appropriate service to you. We also request that attention be given to the differential diagnosis of psychological disorders other than learning disabilities that may have an impact on academic performance.

### **Executive Functioning:**

Formal test administration should be included in addition to self-report questionnaires. Tools such as the Wisconsin Card Sorting test; Trail Making test, Digits Forwards/backwards or Verbal Fluency Test are examples.

### **Effort Testing:**

Test batteries should include formal measures of effort in the testing (such as Rey 15 item Test TOMM test) and where indicated, screening questionnaire for mood effects on performance.

### **Criteria #3:**

The assessments must be no more than five [5] years before your start date at U of T. We prefer to receive assessments that have been completed within five [5] years of your anticipated start date at U of T, though we will review ones completed earlier to see if interim accommodations can be offered while a new assessment is obtained. This interim period of accommodation will be limited to one term and the range of accommodations that can be offered may be limited. Referral to a learning strategist may be provided to support you while you obtain the updated assessment.

### **Criteria #4:**

Include all test scores/data. This information helps us in planning an appropriate support plan and reasonable accommodations. Additional details: Students with psycho-educational reports that fail to meet the criteria listed above may be required to undergo further diagnostic assessment prior to receiving full accommodations.

An **updated** psychoeducational assessment may be requested to maintain, help determine and/or request additional supports and accommodations at the university level. This may also be required to satisfy the requirements of external funding bodies that provide funds for supports equipment and services. If so, the Accessibility Services office may be able to assist with the cost and understanding the process.

## **Psychoeducational Assessment Fees**

Psychoeducational assessments are done on a fee for service basis by psychologists or psychological associates in the community. They are not covered by provincial health plans (e.g., OHIP) and tend to be quite costly. However, there may be subsidies or funds to help cover this cost when you are a student. OSAP

(Ontario Student Assistance Program): You must apply for OSAP or student aide in your province/territory even if you do not plan to use the loan. If you are eligible, we can access a bursary which will pay for all or most of the assessment. If your application is denied, other possible sources of funding can be explored with your Accessibility Advisor.

Employee benefits: Check your family's employee benefits or your own employee benefits to see if you have coverage or are covered by a parent's plan for a registered psychologist. This can cover or defray the cost of a new assessment.

Please do not let the cost of an assessment deter you from registering with our service. Fill out our online registration package and we will follow up with you to discuss what is possible.

## Psychoeducational/Neuropsychological Assessments conducted during COVID - 19 Health Restrictions or Post-COVID Backlog at Assessment Centres (March 9, 2020 to April 30, 2023)

During the pandemic and post pandemic backlog at assessment centres, many assessments were conducted virtually and were accepted for some provisional accommodations only. Many of the tests involved in a full psychoeducational assessment involving standardized testing do not lend themselves to be able to provide accurate assessments if done virtually and we can only cautiously accept the findings of such assessments. This form of test administration does not allow for full and controlled testing of visual spatial, visual memory and visual motor skills which affects the ability to rule out other causes of functional challenges other than a learning disability.

Interim accommodations were provided on these virtual assessments with the view that post pandemic, students would be required to undergo an updated in- person assessment where tests could be conducted in the standardized manner for which they were originally designed and normed.

If your assessment was conducted virtually during this time, please submit it to our office and an accessibility advisor will review with you what accommodations can be provided to you initially. We may require that an updated assessment conducted in person be conducted in your first year of registration with us. In determining what accommodations can be offered initially to you, we will review the virtually conducted assessment and the findings based on our guidelines for virtual assessments that has been posted on our website since March 2020.

## Individual Educational Plan (IEP)

An initial restricted set of accommodations may be possible for a short period of time with IEP documentation demonstrating academic accommodations across both the elementary and secondary education years for learning disabilities.

These initial accommodations will not extend beyond one academic term without an updated psychoeducational assessment that is conducted in person.

Accommodations including access to cue sheets, formula sheets and calculators cannot be provided based on an IEP report (even on an interim basis).

Students are encouraged to bring other corroborating documentation including grade school reports, speech language therapy reports, occupational therapy reports to help formulate interim accommodations in the initial term while an assessment is undertaken. Your Accessibility Advisor will discuss your learning experiences and challenges with you during your intake meeting to explore what accommodations and supports can be provided to you while you undergo an assessment.

## Cue Sheets / Formula Sheets

A cue sheet is intended to provide information to help cue the student to recall learned information.

Cue sheets may be provided as an accommodation in instances where there is evidence of:

- An impairment (not weakness) in auditory, visual, or verbal memory recall/retrieval, which is usually demonstrated on formal psychoeducational or neuropsychological testing; or
- The presence of significant word retrieval/expressive language disabilities, which are identified on formal psychoeducational/neuropsychological or speech language communication assessments.

Substantial documentation confirming disability-related functional impairments affecting recall of information or significant word retrieval deficits is necessary for consideration of this accommodation. Documentation provided must include formal test scores and have been completed within five [5] years of commencing studies or have been conducted at 18 years of age or older. Scores must demonstrate impairments not relative weaknesses.

An IEP document is not sufficient for provision of a cue sheet as an accommodation.

See more information on cue sheet process at the following link:  
[studentlife.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/What-is-a-Cue-Sheet\\_v2-AODA.pdf](https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/What-is-a-Cue-Sheet_v2-AODA.pdf)