
LEARNING DISABILITY DOCUMENTATION

Accommodations for learning disabilities are given for areas of disability where **impaired performance** is identified through **formal psycho-educational or neuropsychological testing** and where other reasons for impairment have been ruled out

PSYCHO-EDUCATIONAL TEST REQUIREMENTS

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.

We need the FULL REPORT, including appendices with ALL TEST SCORES. Reports must clearly outline dates of assessment and that the assessment was conducted in person. Any alteration of standard tests must be outlined within the report.

TEST REQUIREMENTS

If assessment is prior to age 18 and > 5 years old it will be sufficient for the initial accommodations in the first year, but an updated assessment will be needed for accommodations in the subsequent years if program longer than one year.

If a new student has a Psycho-educational Assessment from age 16, accommodations can extend beyond the first year.

Accommodations provided are based on **impairment not relative weakness** demonstrated on tests and may not match accommodations summarized in the report as reports of this age were not necessarily conducted in the context of considering impact on post secondary studies or the specific essential requirements for university level courses/programs.

PSYCHO-EDUCATIONAL REPORTS FOR LEARNING DISABILITIES

The psychoeducational testing or neuropsychological testing must be conducted in person and all tests administered under standardized conditions. Where tests are abbreviated or only select subtests are given, this must be clearly stated.

The standardized testing battery must be completed at a set point in time over one full day or two half day sessions. Individual IQ or achievement tests cannot be administered over several sessions and must be given in the entirety in one sitting. Exceptions where testing may need to be extended over more sessions are:

- extreme motor challenges, chronic health conditions, or severe sensory challenges requiring considerable breaks between sessions.

These exceptions should be documented within the written report summary.

DEFINITION OF LEARNING DISABILITY

- In reviewing assessment reports for learning disabilities, we use the following criteria:
 - Ontario Psychological Association Criteria for Diagnosis of a Learning Disability (June 2018)



CRITERIA FOR PSYCHO-EDUCATIONAL REPORTS FOR LEARNING DISABILITIES

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 FOR PSYCHO-EDUCATIONAL REPORTS FOR LEARNING DISABILITIES

Criteria 2 - Diagnostic testing must be **comprehensive** and test several areas of cognition

1. Aptitude
 2. Achievement
 3. Information processing
 4. Memory
 5. Visual spatial and visual motor
 6. Executive functions
 7. Effort testing (test batteries should include formal measures of effort in the testing & where indicated, screening questionnaires for effect of mood and performance). Efforts tests administered should be outlined in the report and if testing conducted over multiple days, effort tests should be administered on each day.
- Must demonstrate below average achievement (impairment)

CRITERIA FOR PSYCHO-EDUCATIONAL REPORTS FOR LEARNING DISABILITIES

Criteria 3 - The assessment must be no more than 5 years before you start at University of Toronto.

- If test is from before age 18, it will be valid only for first year after which an updated assessment is needed.

NOTE: The test report must include **ALL TEST SCORES!**

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 the elementary and secondary education years**. These initial accommodations will not extend beyond one term without an updated psychoeducational assessment
- Accommodations including access to cue sheets, formula sheets and calculators cannot be provided on the basis of 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.

CUE SHEETS/FORMULA SHEETS

Requests to use cue sheets/ formula sheets require formal psycho-educational/neuropsychological test results showing significant impairment (not weakness) of memory or language retrieval issues. Tests must include those that assess whether cueing of material aids retrieval/recall of learned material rather than decreasing need to learn material.

Cue sheets can not be provided unless assessment was complete at age 17 or greater using adult measurement tools and the testing was conducted in person (**not virtually**) with the full environmental controls of a psychological assessment centre office.

Cue sheets may also be considered with full speech language assessment results that indicate significant impairment of language retrieval on formal, normed measurement tools where cueing has been formally assessed to increase amount of language based recall.

Testing must have included multiple assessment measures to derive conclusions. (For e.g. memory is measure on more than one test) Tests must have been given in a standardized manner to draw conclusions against the norms developed for a particular test.

GETTING DOCUMENTATION DURING COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS OR POST COVID BACKLOG

- 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.
- We will not be accepting these as valid assessments for the purpose of seeking funding for academic supports as the virtual nature means that a full battery cannot be administered. This limitation means that visual spatial, visual memory and visual motor skills cannot be fully assessed and lack of information in this area can effect the ability to fully rule out other causes of functional challenges other than a learning disability.
- For psychoeducational tests administered in person with COVID precautions, some screening of anxiety is recommended to address heightened anxiety they may be experiencing in this testing situation.

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PROVISIONAL LEARNING DISABILITY ACCOMMODATIONS

- During the current restrictions it may not be possible to get assessments completed fully, and given this we have established procedures for providing “[provisional learning disability accommodations](#)”, following a thorough intake interview with an Accessibility Advisor specializing in neurological based disabilities, provision of historical learning documentation (report cards, outdated psychoeducational assessments) and review of other available supporting documentation. A general health practitioner recommending learning disability accommodations is not sufficient unless the practitioner has administered psychoeducational assessments.
- Provisional Accommodations may be available following the above process until April 30, 2022 (updates pending public health advisories) after which full and updated documentation will be required to consider ongoing accommodations & renewal.



PROVISIONAL LEARNING DISABILITY ACCOMMODATIONS

- When in- person assessments are available within the geographical location of the student (as permitted by local public health professionals) the student will need to follow up with proceeding to an assessment within their next term (Summer or Fall 2022) in order to register for further accommodations.
- Once an updated psychoeducational assessment is conducted, accommodations will be based on this new assessment and may result in no, less, or more accommodation given the new and current full documentation. Your Accessibility Advisor will review the new report and meet with you to discuss accommodations going forward. Once the in- person assessment is fully completed, consideration of supports through the Bursary for Students with Disabilities can then proceed where eligibility rules have been met.



PSYCHO-EDUCATIONAL TESTING CONDUCTED VIRTUALLY AFTER MARCH 8TH, 2020 DUE TO COVID RESTRICTIONS

Modified (conducted virtually) Psychoeducational/Neuropsychological Assessments **will only be considered for some limited interim accommodations** provided the following additional conditions are clearly met:

Setting: The physical conditions under which the assessment was conducted are outlined and clearly provide for a controlled environment: quiet space, limited distractions in the room, the room is enclosed with a door, no outsiders other than the student being assessed, that the student remained in full view of the computer screen at all times. The computer used to conduct the assessment was not located in a public space.

Confidentiality: The student clearly signed an honour agreement that they have not employed any unauthorized electronic devices nor sought assistance for answers by any individual not a part of the testing session. The student has signed an agreement not to photograph, copy or distribute any test forms they were exposed to in the test situation.

Timing of Assessment: That the assessment be conducted over two sessions to improve reliability and allow for multiple measurements of various skills over the two different days. That no testing session was less than 2 hours long. To honour the spirit of the assessment process which notes that assessment is a picture of skills at a point in time, both testing dates should occur within a one month period.



PSYCHO-EDUCATIONAL TESTING CONDUCTED VIRTUALLY AFTER MARCH 8TH, 2020

Computer/Test Setup: The assessor was at all times able to view the student during the assessment and observe all vocalizations and actions. That test materials presented on the screen were presented in the same manner as the original test (for e.g., test forms were not enlarged or test protocols not rewritten from standardized test) . Where a student has provided a response by typing rather than handwriting responses, this has been indicated. A clear indication that the student was advised that opening unauthorized tabs on the computer during testing (for e.g., opening an online dictionary during a oral spelling test) will void the test results for that measure and they cannot be reported.

Test List: The tests administered are all clearly listed along with any modifications that were made to the standard testing procedures and a statement that this alteration of the test means that results on the test must be interpreted with caution.

Unassessed Cognitive Skills: Some skills do not lend themselves to virtual assessment (for examples puzzle designs, building structures) and where this is the case, the assessment clearly outlines the shortcomings of the assessment and outlines areas of cognition that can not be commented on and therefore lists diagnoses as “provisional”.

Effort Tests: Formal tests of effort must be administered on all testing days to ensure a student has given adequate effort during testing and the names of test given in this regard must be identified.

PSYCHO-EDUCATIONAL TESTING CONDUCTED VIRTUALLY AFTER MARCH 8TH, 2020

Report Findings: If a full test battery was not administered it becomes difficult to make a diagnosis of LD while ruling out other potential causes of disability and as such, recommendations for accommodations will be viewed with caution and some less fulsome accommodation may be possible on an interim basis. Further testing in the future (following current pandemic period of restrictions) to assess those areas not examined during the virtual assessment may be required by the University to continue accommodations once the public health crisis has subsided.

Goal : In- person standard assessment:

Where possible, and once public health permits, psychoeducational assessments conducted in person (even with COVID precautions including the student and assessor wearing masks/gloves and working with a clear shield between assessor and student) is the more fulsome and preferred method of assessment. At present, only these can allow for the full delineation of a learning disability for the purpose of full accommodations and access to bursary funding for accommodation supports. In-person assessments allow for all tests to be given in the standardized manner for which they were developed and within the confines of a professionally controlled setting. The process of reviewing virtual assessment results at this time is an interim measure during the COVID pandemic and is designed to facilitate support for students.

LIMITATIONS OF USE OF VIRTUALLY CONDUCTED PSYCHOEDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENTS:

- ❑ The assessment results will be considered to be provisional and post pandemic, a full in person assessment may be necessary for continued accommodations
- ❑ We will be unable to complete forms for request for accommodations for standardized graduate school/certification tests based on these reports (for e.g. LSAT, MCAT, GRE, Licensing board exams) Students should approach the assessing psychologist to complete such a form or submit their actual psychoeducational assessment to the testing agency/licensing body for consideration of accommodations
- ❑ Any requested letter regarding your accommodations provided during this period to bodies external to the University will clearly indicate that the accommodations were provided provisionally on the basis of a psychoeducational assessment that was conducted virtually



CHECKLIST FOR VIRTUAL ASSESSMENTS:

In reviewing reports, Accessibility Advisors will check that all conditions have been met in the received document. Students are advised to share this document with the assessing psychologist if proceeding with a virtual assessment at this time.

- Testing Dates are clearly displayed in the report
- Setting where testing was done is described in the report
- Format of testing outlined (for e.g. in person/ virtually/ combined)
- The report indicates that the student undergoing the assessment has been made aware that the assessment, given modifications, may only be accepted in part and that further supporting documentation may be necessary for initial and/or ongoing accommodation



CHECKLIST FOR VIRTUAL ASSESSMENTS (CONTINUED):

- If done virtually, the student was alone in the assessment room and the space was enclosed
- The student has signed acknowledgement that they are not accessing any electronic aids not authorized by the assessor
- The student signs a confidentiality agreement not to share any aspect of the test forms and will not photograph, copy or distribute any test forms
- The assessment was conducted over two days
- The assessors was at all times able to view the student during the assessment.



CHECKLIST FOR VIRTUAL ASSESSMENTS (CONTINUED):

- The tests administered are all clearly listed as well as any modifications of the test made for the student.
- Areas of cognitive function not assessed are outlined in the report
- Effort tests were administered and are reported on

- The test materials presented on the screen were presented in the same standardized manner for which the test is designed or the modifications/alterations are clearly outlined in the report.

- If the full psychoeducational battery is not administered, a diagnosis is not specified related to learning disability but rather provisional/qualified conclusions are presented.



QUESTIONS ABOUT VIRTUAL ASSESSMENTS:

Should a student or assessing psychologist have questions/inquiries about acceptable documentation please contact our front desk at 416-978-8060 or accessibility.services@utoronto.ca and an Advisor will follow up

- Note these procedures are accurate as of December 16, 2021 and are subject to update as public health conditions/directions are revised
- Assessments conducted in person prior to March 8th, 2020 will be fully considered for diagnosis and recommendations provided they were conducted at age 18 or within 5 years of starting studies at the university.