



## **Determining Eligibility for Services**

Providing documentation of disability is the responsibility of the student. In general, the less obvious the disability, the more information is required to assess a student's needs and make accommodation recommendations. Documentation should be recent, relevant and comprehensive and, where appropriate, contain test scores and interpretation (e.g., learning disability reports, audiograms, etc.). If the original documentation is incomplete or inadequate to determine the extent of the disability or reasonable accommodation, West Chester University has the discretion to require additional documentation. Any cost incurred in obtaining additional documentation is also borne by the student. If the documentation is complete but the university desires a second professional opinion, the University bears that cost.

Note: Pending the receipt of appropriate documentation, the university reserves the right to deny services or accommodations.

Accommodations provide access to the University's programs and range from physical access (ramps, elevators) to nondiscriminatory practices in defining essential requirements in a major. (As is common in practice, the term "accommodation" is used throughout this document as synonymous with the modification of policies, practices, and procedures; the provision of auxiliary aids and services; academic adjustments and modifications to the environment intended to remove barriers to equivalent access.)

The OSSD offers an interactive process that stresses relevant and timely requests for accommodation, which are supported by evidence of limitations and promises an effective response. The following are descriptions of terms that help clarify the procedure for securing accommodations.

**Interactive:** Accommodation requests usually require a face to face meeting w/OSSD staff, where student makes a request for specific modifications to classroom procedure. Students can present documentation of their disability at that time or send it in advance once they are admitted to WCU.

**Relevant and Timely:** Requests should precede the need for an accommodation so there is sufficient time to make arrangements. Accommodations will not be granted retroactively. Some requests such as those for captioners, ASL, etext and alternate formats need to be made 4 weeks in advance of the semester.

Supported and reasonable requests: Accommodation requests must be related to the initial presentation of the limitation and when the situation warrants a change. Requests to alter accommodations to improve a grade are not appropriate.

Effective responses: OSSD will provide Letter of Accommodations (LOAs) each semester upon written request. LOAs will be sent via secure email to students. Faculty who receive LOAs should be provided an opportunity to discuss provisions, for example extended time on tests prior to implementation. The OSSD recommends that students present LOAs in the initial week or two of class and at least a week prior to the first test.

If the accommodation is not met in class or you need additional assistance return to the OSSD. We provide proctoring for tests, if you need a reader or scribe and a distraction reduced environment.

### **Documentation Requirements:**

- 1. Student history and self-report-** Students should be prepared to discuss the need for specific accommodations and the history of accommodation use. Such history may need to be supported by documentation. Students who do not have a written history ( such as IEP, 504) may need to go into greater detail about the current situation and how their request is defined by a limitation caused by disability.
  - a. The weight given to the individual's description will be influenced by its clarity, internal consistency, and congruency with the professional's observations and available external documentation. It is often possible to evaluate whether a requested accommodation is reasonable or not with minimal reliance on external documentation. This is true even if the student has never received formal accommodations or recently acquired a disability and is seeking guidance to determine accommodations that might be effective.
- 2. Interview-** Initially a one-one meeting is the best environment to discuss accommodation needs. Students may feel more comfortable when parents accompany them, but the interaction should focus on the student's needs and understanding of the process. In this setting students can discuss in confidence how he or she may be "limited by their impairment." There is no further need to discuss limitations once the LOA is issued.
- 3. Third Party documentation-** Evidence of professional evaluation can confirm and enhance requests for accommodation and may be necessary to determine the extent and relevance of limitations that require accommodations. Documentation is more appropriate and useful when the diagnosis is new or the situation that impacts the student's access has recently changed. Third party documentation may include:
  - a. IEP or SOP
  - b. Medical, psychiatric, psycho-educational evaluation (links to details and forms)
  - c. Veteran's discharge statement
  - d. Vocational Rehab report

## **Terminology:**

**Disability:** An individual with a disability is defined as anyone with a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities.

**Major life activity:** Examples of major life activities include walking, sitting, standing, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, working, caring for oneself, and other similar activities.

**Functional limitation:** A substantial impairment in the individual's ability to function in the condition, manner, or duration of a required major life activity.

**Physical/Mobility/Chronic Health Disabilities:** Known as mobility, systemic, or a disease-related disability, these result from congenital conditions, accidents, or progressive neuromuscular diseases. These disabilities include, but are not limited to conditions such as spinal cord injury (paraplegia or quadriplegia), spinal bifida, chemical sensitivities, amputation, cardiac conditions, cystic fibrosis, paralysis, polio/post polio, AIDS/HIV, Arthritis, Asthma, Cancer, Cerebral Palsy (CP), Chronic Pain, Diabetes Mellitus, Epilepsy/Seizure Disorder, Epstein Barr Virus/Chronic Fatigue, Hemophilia, Lupus, Lyme's Disease, Motor Neuron Diseases, Multiple Sclerosis, Muscular Dystrophy, Renal-Kidney Disease, Respiratory Disorders, Sickle Cell Anemia, Stroke, and Tourette's Syndrome.

**Psychiatric disabilities:** Comprise a range of conditions characterized by emotional, cognitive, and/or behavioral dysfunction. A diagnosis of a disorder does not, in and of itself, meet the definition of a disability necessitating reasonable accommodations under the ADA or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.