

# ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES

As defined by Section 504 and the ADA, an individual with a disability is a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity, including learning. Academic accommodations are implemented to provide equal access to college programs and services. Students must contact the Office of Student Success to schedule appointments for accommodation requests or to discuss matters of concern. For further information, please call 732-987-2363. Students needing academic support beyond their ADA accommodations may enroll in The Learning Connection (TLC) (<http://catalog.georgian.edu/undergraduate/campus-life-services-support/the-learning-connection/>) program.

## Procedure for Requesting Accommodations

- Students must make an appointment to meet with the disabilities officer (DO) each semester to fill out forms, discuss the impact of the disability in the academic setting, and request accommodations. This should be done before the semester begins or the first week of classes.
- Documentation must be presented to the DO that supports the accommodations requested and states the functional limitations the disability causes (see documentation guidelines below).
- Approved accommodations are kept in the student's file, and the student delivers copies to their faculty members. If the course is online, then the DO will scan and send the accommodation letter to the professor.
- After accommodations have been granted, the DO recommends that the student privately discuss accommodations with the faculty member. The student does not have to disclose the disability to the faculty member, unless they choose to.
- Accommodations are divided into those needed for the classroom and for testing.
- Note-takers depend on availability; otherwise, the most appropriate alternative will be provided.

## Documentation Guidelines

Accommodations are based on supportive documentation and must be current (within the past three years). The following guidelines are the documentation requirements for various types of disabilities. Please present these requirements to the certifying professional so your documentation is appropriate.

### Documentation for Sensory, Physical & Psychological Disabilities

Supportive documentation of a disability is used to determine eligibility for disability services and accommodations, which must be provided by an appropriately certified professional who is knowledgeable about **you and your condition**. Such professionals include physicians, educational psychologists, therapists, mobility specialists, and rehabilitation counselors.

**Documentation must include the following components, and must be current (generally within the past three years):**

- **Diagnosis:** A current medical diagnosis, including appropriate medical reports, relevant medical history, and clinical summary.
- **Current treatment:** Identification of treatment, medications, assistive devices, or other services currently prescribed or in use.
- **Evaluation of:** Identification of the substantial limitation on a major life activity presented by the disability, and a description of the

current functional impact (limitation) of the disability in a college setting. The assessment should validate the need for services based on the impact of the student's disability and level of functioning in an educational setting.

- **Specific recommendations:** Suggested accommodations and/or academic adjustments, with an explanation supporting the need for each accommodation to achieve equal access.
- **Past use of disability services:** Description of the accommodations and services used in the past.

Documentation for psychological disabilities must be current within six months of the accommodation request. **Please request the Disability Verification Form for Students with Psychological Disabilities from the Office of Student Success** to be filled out by the certifying professional.

## Substantiation of a Learning Disability Qualifications of the Evaluator

Professionals conducting assessments, rendering diagnoses of specific learning disabilities, and making recommendations for appropriate accommodations must be qualified to do so. Trained and certified and/or licensed psychologists, learning disabilities specialists (LDT-Cs), and educational therapists are typically involved in the process of assessment. Experience in working with an adolescent or adult population is preferred. It is not considered appropriate for professionals to evaluate members of their families.

## Documentation

1. Documentation should validate the need for services based on the individual's current level of functioning in a postsecondary educational setting. A comprehensive assessment battery and the resulting diagnostic report should include background information; a diagnostic interview; and assessment of aptitude, academic achievement, and information processing, as well as a diagnosis. An IEP from high school must be accompanied by a psychological evaluation and an educational evaluation no more than three years old.
2. There must be clear and specific evidence and identification of a learning disability. Individual "learning styles" and "learning differences" in and of themselves do not constitute a learning disability. The diagnostician is expected to use direct language in the diagnosis and documentation of a learning disability, avoiding the use of terms such as "suggests" or "is indicative of." (**Please provide this information to your diagnostician.**) If the data indicate that a learning disability is not present, the evaluator should state this in the report.
3. A well-written clinical diagnostic summary based on the comprehensive evaluation process as defined is a necessary component of the report. The clinical summary should include:
  - a written summary of background information about the student's educational, medical, and family histories that relate to the learning disability;
  - demonstration that the evaluator has ruled out alternative explanations for academic problems as a result of poor education, poor motivation and/or study skills, emotional problems, attentional problems, and cultural or language differences;
  - indication of how patterns in the student's cognitive ability, achievement, and information processing reflect the presence of a learning disability;
  - indication of the substantial limitation to learning or other major life activity presented by the learning disability and the degree to which it affects the individual (functional limitations) at

the postsecondary level in the learning context for which the accommodations are being requested;

- indication as to why specific accommodations are needed and how the effects of the specific disability are accommodated; and
- an addendum of scores.

The report should be printed on letterhead, signed, and dated; the signature of the evaluator should include his or her credentials.

### **Recommendations for Accommodations**

1. The diagnostic report should include specific recommendations for accommodations as well as an explanation as to why each accommodation is recommended.
2. A description of any accommodation and/or auxiliary aid that has been used at the secondary or postsecondary level should be discussed. Include information about the specific conditions under which the accommodation was used (e.g., standardized testing, final exams) and whether or not it benefited the student. If no accommodations have been previously provided, a detailed explanation as to why none has been used and the rationale for the student's current need for accommodation(s) must be provided.
3. Accommodation needs can change over time and are not always identified through the initial diagnostic process. Conversely, a prior history of accommodation does not in and of itself warrant the provision of a similar accommodation at the postsecondary level.
4. Before your third year of enrollment at GCU, you may be required to provide updated documentation to support accommodations.

### **Testing Accommodations**

Students who receive testing accommodations may request to take exams in the Office of Student Success (please call for procedure and scheduling of exams). Please call Lisa Capurso at 732-987-2363 to schedule exams. Email: lcapurso@georgian.edu.

### **Service Animals**

According to Titles II and III of the ADA, public colleges and private colleges that are "places of public accommodation" must modify their policies and practices to accommodate the use of a service animal by a person with a disability. The Department of Justice, which enforces Titles II and III of the ADA, defines a service animal as "any dog that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability, including a physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual, or other mental disability" (28 C.F.R. 35.104). Emotional support animals are not included within the definition of service animal. Section 504 also requires recipients of federal funds to permit "dog guides" in campus buildings (34 C.F.R. 104.44(b)). Emotional support animals may be requested through Disability Services (please contact the Office of Student Success for appropriate forms and documentation policies and procedures).