



LAWRENCE ACADEMY
Academic Support Office
Policy on the Documentation of
Disabilities and the Granting of Accommodations

Introduction

The following guidelines are for the purpose of verifying eligibility for accommodations in compliance with the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA). Individuals with disabilities have certain protections and the right to reasonable accommodations and equal access to programs and services. To access these rights, an individual is required to furnish documentation that the disability substantially limits a major life activity, such as mobility, seeing, hearing, learning, etc., when compared to most people. The requirements for documentation outlined in this document are adapted from policies used by other private schools, colleges, the College Board, and ACT.

In order to provide a fair and equitable basis for determining whether or not a student should receive accommodations while enrolled at Lawrence Academy, the school has adopted the following guidelines to determine eligibility for these accommodations. Parents of students currently receiving accommodations or who are investigating the possibility of accommodations for a learning, psychological, physical, or other health-related disability are advised to pursue documentation that complies with the guidelines outlined in this document. Students may have been granted accommodations at a previous institution; this alone does not constitute grounds for continued accommodations without current and appropriate documentation following the accompanying guidelines. Likewise, a written plan from a previous school (such as an Individualized Education Plan [IEP] or a 504 plan) or a medical doctor's note cannot be used as the sole justification for accommodations at Lawrence Academy. In addition, there are certain accommodations that might be recommended by an evaluator or other professional that are not compatible with Lawrence Academy's educational program.

The academic accommodations offered at Lawrence Academy for students with learning disabilities, ADHD, other psychological, and health-related disabilities that affect learning and classroom performance are:

- 50 percent extended time for in-class quizzes, tests, and exams.
- Small-group setting for assessments (i.e., final end-of-term written exams).
- Use of a calculator (according to the math department policy on calculator use; see last page).
- No penalty for spelling errors when spell check cannot be used (foreign language exception – unless the correct spelling is an essential element for the exercise).
- Use of a computer for written expression tasks, including assessments.
- Use of audio books/digital text and/or text-to-speech software (i.e., Kurzweil) to access information from books, handouts, assessments, and other text material.

Reasonable accommodations for physical and other health-related disabilities will be discussed and approved on an individual basis in collaboration with the Health Office. In order for accommodations to be in place for the start of the school year, documentation must be received by **July 1** each year. Any documentation received after that date will be reviewed, and a Learning Profile with an accommodation plan will be created by the start of the next term.

Documentation Requirements for Requesting Accommodations

- 1. The assessment (or reevaluation) must be conducted by a credentialed and appropriate evaluator and/or medical professional:** The evaluator and/or medical professional must have comprehensive training in assessment and relevant experience with adolescents with learning, psychological, physical, or health-related disabilities. The name, title, and professional credentials of the evaluator/medical professional, including information about license or certifications (e.g., “licensed psychologist”), as well as the area of specialization, place of employment, and state in which the individual practices, must be clearly stated in the documentation. The medical professional must have specific expertise in the area of concern (i.e., vision, hearing, neurology, etc.). No examiner should have a conflict of interest with the student, such as being related by blood or marriage.
- 2. The documentation is current:** For a diagnosis of any learning disorder or ADHD, Lawrence Academy requires that an evaluation or reevaluation must have taken place within the last three years. Documentation that requests academic accommodations for psychological, physical, or health-related conditions must be renewed every 6-12 months, depending upon the individual situation, particularly those active health conditions that are subject to changes in diagnosis and treatment. For newly enrolled students with known conditions, documentation must be submitted to the school by July 1.
- 3. The documentation clearly states the specific diagnosed disability:** In order for accommodations to be considered, the evaluator and/or medical professional must have made a specific diagnosis of a recognized learning, psychological, physical, or health-related disability and must have specifically and explicitly stated the diagnosis with reference to professional standards, for example, the DSM-V. Speculative language (i.e., “suggests,” “has problems with,” or “could have problems with”) or non-specific diagnoses (i.e., “has a relative weakness”) and general observations on learning, emotional health, personality style, or physical or health-related conditions do not constitute a disability. If the data indicates that a disability is not present, the examiner must state that conclusion in the report. Most importantly, the diagnosis must indicate a substantial functional limitation (see #6) and rule out alternatives or other possible diagnoses when appropriate.
- 4. The documentation contains relevant educational, developmental, and medical history, as well as a summary of findings:** For learning and psychological disabilities, including ADHD, a neuropsychological, psychological, or psychoeducational evaluation report should include the summary of a comprehensive diagnostic interview by the evaluator. For permanent and temporary physical and health-related disabilities, a documentation summary may be written by the medical professional treating the student. A combination of student self-reports, reports from parents and/or teachers, and historical documentation, such as transcripts and/or standardized test scores, is recommended. Other relevant factors should also be included, such as a description of the presenting problem(s), developmental history, academic history, or relevant family, emotional, psychosocial, and medical history. A summary should:
 - rule out other explanations for academic problems, such as poor education, poor motivation and/or study skills, and cultural/language differences.

- indicate how patterns in cognitive ability, achievement, information processing, attention, executive functions, or other factors are used to determine the presence of a learning disability or ADHD, or ...
- explain what data or information was used to determine the psychological, physical, or health-related disability.
- indicate the substantial limitation to the learning presented by the disability and the degree to which it affects the individual in the testing or classroom context for which accommodations are being requested.
- give an indication of why specific accommodations are needed and how the effects of the specific disability are mediated by the accommodations.
- include a record of prior accommodations, including information about conditions under which the accommodations were used.

5. The documentation includes a listing of and results from assessment procedures and evaluation instruments used:

For psychological, physical, and health-related disabilities, this requires a comprehensive diagnostic/clinical evaluation, which includes:

- A history of presenting symptoms, date of onset, duration and severity of the disorder and relevant developmental and historical data, relevant treatment and response to treatment options, and a reference to specific measures used to help substantiate the diagnosis.

For learning disabilities, ADHD, and psychological conditions, the diagnosis must be based on a comprehensive set of tests that cover the following areas, and the score summaries from all tests and subtests must be included in the report. The following is a list of the areas and suggested instruments for use in each area; other instruments may also provide a satisfactory assessment of abilities in these area. Additional types of testing (e.g., medical exam, depression scales, ADHD rating scales, neurology evaluation, and/or speech and language testing) may also be required to adequately support a diagnosis.

- Cognitive Abilities: Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale-III (WAIS-III), Wechsler Intelligence Scales for Children-IV (WISC-IV), Woodcock-Johnson III (W-J III) Tests of Cognitive Ability
- Academic Achievement: W-J Tests of Achievement, Wechsler Individual Achievement Test (WIAT)
- Academic Skills in Timed Settings: Nelson-Denny Reading Test, Gray Oral Reading Test (GORT-IV), Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test (SDRT), Stanford Diagnostic Math Test (SDMT), W-J Fluency Measures
- Information Processing: Detroit Tests of Learning Aptitude 3 (DTLA-3), Detroit Tests of Learning Aptitude-Adult (DTLAA), WISC-IV, WAIS-III, W-J Tests of Cognitive Ability, Test of Memory and Learning, Second Edition (TOMAL-2)
- Behavior/Executive Function: Conners Comprehensive Behavior Rating Scales (CBRS), Delis-Kaplan Executive Function System (D-KEFS), BASC-2 (Behavior Assessment System for Children, Second Edition), Brown Attention-Deficit Disorder Scales (BrownADDScales)

- 6. The documentation describes the functional limitations of the diagnosis:** The ADA defines a disability as a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities (e.g., eating, sleeping, standing, walking, breathing, learning, communicating, etc.) when compared with most people in the general population. A description or statement of the student's functional limitation as a result of a disabling diagnosis is required. The documentation must provide a specific explanation of how the diagnosed learning, psychological, physical, or health-related condition is a disability and, therefore, impacts the student's daily functioning within the school or testing environment. It should explain the degree of impact of the disorder on a specific major life activity and the degree of impact on the individual in a classroom and/or timed academic setting. Current evaluations/clinical assessments, medical reports, historical information, and teacher observation can be used to support a statement of functional limitation.

- 7. The documentation explicitly calls for specific accommodations:** The documentation must include specific recommendations for accommodations as well as a detailed explanation of why each accommodation is recommended. The evaluator should support recommendations with specific test results or clinical observations to explain the expected outcome for the student in the academic or test setting. Note that a diagnosis in and of itself does not automatically warrant approval of requested accommodations. A prior history of accommodation, without documentation of a current need, does not in and of itself guarantee that the accommodations will be provided while enrolled at Lawrence Academy. Furthermore, if there is no prior history of accommodations (i.e., if the documentation presented is from an initial assessment), the evaluating professional must include a detailed explanation of why accommodations were not needed in the past and why they are being requested now. There are certain accommodations that might be recommended by an evaluator or other professional that are not compatible with Lawrence Academy's educational program. The first page of this document lists the reasonable academic accommodations available for students with learning disabilities, ADHD, other psychological, and health-related disabilities that affect learning and classroom performance. Lawrence Academy will make the final determination as to whether accommodations are warranted and the school can provide the recommended accommodations.

Process

- **Documentation and Disability Disclosure Form:** Upon receipt of documentation and a Disability Disclosure Form signed by the student and parent (July 1 for incoming students), the director of academic support (in conjunction with the school counselor, where appropriate) will review the documentation and make a recommendation to the director of studies. The final approval of any accommodations will rest with the director of studies.
- **Learning Profile:** A written Learning Profile will be designed based upon the student's needs and the school's ability to accommodate those needs. It includes: a statement of disability, a list of learning strengths and challenges, a list of accommodations, and other recommendations for the student and classroom teachers. The Learning Profile will be reviewed with the student. The Learning Profile is an internal, confidential document that will be digitally accessible to faculty, learning coaches, and other staff who work directly with the student.
- **Accessing Accommodations and Support:** All new students with a Learning Profile and all returning students with a new Learning Profile are required to meet with a learning specialist to review the learning profile and to discuss how to access accommodations and advocate for learning needs. Students with documented learning disabilities are allowed (and sometimes required) to schedule time once a week in the Academic Support Office to check in and receive support. This type of meeting is small group. For 1:1, individualized support, Lawrence Academy offers a limited number of learning coaching sessions for an additional fee. Refer to the Learning Coaching Description and Learning Coaching Policies and Fees on the Academic Support webpage for specific information about this type of support.
- **Accommodation Agreement Form:** Students with approved accommodations learn to advocate by working directly with their classroom teachers regarding their learning needs and accommodations. To that end, we require students with approved accommodations to complete an Accommodation Agreement Form at the start of each year. Students must pick up an Accommodation Agreement Form from the Academic Support Office and have their advisor, teachers, and learning coach (if applicable) sign it within the first two weeks of the fall term or soon after accommodations are approved. (Students with term electives will need to pick it up again at the start of each term to have their new teachers sign it.)
- **Standardized Test Accommodations:** Applying for 50 percent extended time accommodation for standardized college entrance exams (PSAT, SAT, ACT, etc.) requires substantial current documentation of a disability, functional limitation, and a documented history of using 50 percent extended time for test-taking in school. A student must have been actively using a similar accommodation for four school months and must have an active LA Learning Profile on file before an application can be submitted to the organizations that sponsor these exams. The College Board and ACT have detailed and strict policies for approving accommodations. There is no guarantee a student who receives this accommodation at Lawrence Academy will be approved to use it for standardized tests. For more information on the process or its requirements, refer to the College Board and/or ACT websites. The director of academic support is available to help students and their families with this process.

Math Department “Use of a Calculator” Accommodation Statement

The calculator is used as a tool to broaden the types of problems available to solve and to offer different modalities (graphical, algebraic, tables) by which students can look at data and other types of problems. It can be used for calculations when, in the opinion of the teacher, it does not circumvent the mathematical ideas being taught and/or tested. For example, Math 1 students are not allowed to use the calculator for signed number operations in the fall term, when much of the focus is developing competence with signed numbers and order of operations; however, it may be used in later terms, when signed numbers and order of operations are not the focus of the material being introduced.

Request for a Language Waiver

Lawrence Academy requires two years of two levels of one language in order to graduate, and we offer no alternative courses to meet this requirement. A language waiver is a modification of this graduation requirement, and LA must make the determination if a student is eligible for one based upon several factors. All newly enrolled students will be placed in a language course based upon their current level, grade, and credits needed. A language waiver is not transferrable from another school; however, evidence from the school to support this request may be submitted. Significant documentation of a language-based learning disability by a qualified evaluator using specific testing and history of difficulty learning a language is required before the director of studies will convene a meeting. The meeting must include the student, student’s advisor, parents, the language department head and/or current language teacher, director of college counseling, and director of academic support; as a team, the decision to alter a student’s high school program will be discussed. The consequences of such a decision will be discussed in terms of how this will help a student better access the other areas of the curriculum and how this will affect the college admissions process.

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