

Williams College
Office of the Dean of the College

FACT SHEET - PSYCHOLOGICAL DISABILITIES

Definition: A psychological disability is a condition which is listed in the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, Fourth Edition, (DSM IV)*, and is identified as a moderate to severe clinical disorder or personality disorder. In addition, the condition must reflect a psychiatric or psychological condition that interferes with a major life activity such as working, learning, caring for oneself, etc. In order to be considered a disability, the disorder(s) must substantially limit a major life activity.

Diagnosis: The diagnosis should include medical information as well as psychoeducational testing. Current and comprehensive information must be requested and obtained from a licensed professional (e.g. psychiatrist, psychologist, certified social worker, physician.) The following data should be gathered: DSM IV diagnosis; date of diagnosis; description of presenting symptoms; medications being administered and possible side-effects. The documentation should include the following: the name, title and professional credentials of the evaluator, including information about license or certification; area of specialization; employment and state/province in which the individual practices. All reports should be on letterhead, typed, dated and signed.

The staff in psychological services of the Health Center has experience in providing such diagnostic evaluations. In addition, the Dean's Office may be able to provide you with information about other professionals in this area who are also qualified to conduct such assessments.

Eligibility for accommodations: Students are asked to provide a recent professional evaluation which identifies the disability, describes the substantial limitation caused by the disability, and recommends modifications to be provided. The documentation is intended to assist the student and the College in determining reasonable, appropriate and effective accommodations. This documentation should include information regarding the onset, longevity and severity of the (presenting) symptoms, as well as the specifics describing the impact of the disability on the student's academic performance; and suggested academic accommodations. All information is confidential, shared only with individuals determining the appropriate accommodations, and is not released to others without the student's permission.

Implementation: Students requesting accommodations submit a professional assessment of their disabilities to the Dean's Office for review. The request is discussed with the student, the evaluator providing the assessment, the Health Center or Psychological Services Center and/or an outside disabilities consultant as necessary to determine an appropriate course of action. The dean communicates the need for the accommodation in writing, advising the appropriate individual that a particular accommodation must be implemented. Such a procedure continues on a semester-by-semester basis.

Grievance Procedure: If a student is refused an accommodation he or she believes is necessary, he or she may consult with the Associate Dean for Student Services or Assistant Dean of the College or the Assistant to the President. If an agreement cannot be reached, the student may take the grievance to the Disabilities and Accommodations Advisory Group which would review the original request and any additional relevant information in order to make a recommendation.

Questions:

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