Documentation Guidelines for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD, ADD)

To receive academic accommodations for ADHD (ADD) in a university setting a student should submit clinical information that can allow a lay person to confirm and understand the need for specific types of accommodations. Thus, the paperwork should meet the following guidelines:

1. It should be written by a licensed doctor (psychologist, neurologist, pediatrician, psychiatrist, or family physician).
2. It should identify the doctor’s agency, mailing address, and phone number.
3. It should describe a conventional method the doctor used to evaluate the student for ADHD.
4. There should be a concise historical summary about the student “as a youngster” that supports such a diagnosis.
5. There should be sufficient information about the student “as an adult.” For instance, there may not be enough information if all the information was written when the student as a child or young adolescent.
6. There should be descriptions of existing ADHD symptoms, their magnitude and frequency, to the extent that the diagnosis seems justified.
7. There should be an explanation regarding how the symptoms will substantially limit the student’s functioning in relation to important aspects of college (listening to lectures, writing notes, taking tests, completing assignments, etc.).
8. It should outwardly assign the diagnosis, preferably using the multi-axial format described in the DSM-V.
9. There should be recommendations about the kinds of appropriate and reasonable accommodations that will be needed for equal access and opportunity.

Concise statements may be sufficient if they adequately provide enough information to meet these guidelines. Documentation that’s copied directly from a medical file may not meet guidelines 7 and 9 (above). The best form of documentation could be both the summary of a relatively recent evaluation and a concise doctor’s letter outwardly explaining the information related to guidelines 7 and 9.

Please keep in mind that having a diagnosis of ADHD does not necessarily mean accommodations are required. Some students with ADHD do very well without accommodations. This is the reason it’s important to submit information on guideline 7.