Documentation Guidelines for a Psychological, Neurological, or Mental Health Issue

To receive accommodation in a university setting for a psychological, neurological, or mental health issue students should submit documentation that sufficiently delineates the nature of the issue. It should meet the following guidelines:

1. The author’s credentials are indicated and confirm an appropriate level of expertise for the issue. It is signed and dated by the clinician; practitioners with a Master’s degree should obtain the dated co-signature of an appropriate doctor.

2. There’s sufficient information regarding the student “as an adult.”

3. There should be an adequate summary of the issue: a concise explanation regarding how the issue originated; any significant changes over time; a list and description of current symptoms, including their frequency, magnitude, and duration; an outward assignment of a specific diagnosis; description of any coexisting diagnosis that compounds the circumstances of the primary diagnosis; description regarding how the circumstances can be expected to change over time. A multi-axial assessment is encouraged using the format described in the most recent DSM.

4. There’s an explanation regarding how the diagnosed condition will substantially limit the student’s functioning in relation to important aspects of college. For academic accommodations it could be limits to: class attendance, listening to lectures, writing notes, completing reading assignments, taking tests, writing assignments, working on projects in a peer group; participating in class discussions, etc. For accommodation to living in a residential hall it could be limitations related to sharing a relatively small living area with a roommate, many peers living nearby, use of communal bathrooms, etc.

5. There’s a recommendation for the kinds of reasonable accommodation that will be necessary to create equal access and opportunity in a college setting.

**Concise** statements may be sufficient if they adequately address those topics (1-5). Paperwork copied directly from a medical file may not entirely meet these guidelines (i.e., if it doesn’t discuss the topic of limitations in relation to college, doesn’t recommend how to accommodate the student). Similarly, documentation may not meet these guidelines if it doesn’t adequately delineate the nature of the student’s issue or only recommends a student should have “support.” The best form of documentation may be both the summary of a relatively recent evaluation and a concise letter explaining why specific types of accommodations are necessary.