

# Disability Services Policies and Procedures

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## Disability Services Policies and Procedures

### **POLICY STATEMENT: PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES**

Macon State College is committed to achieving equal educational opportunity and full participation for persons with disabilities. It is the policy that no qualified person be excluded from participating in any College program or activity, be denied the benefits of any College program or activity, or otherwise be subjected to discrimination with regard to any College program or activity. This policy derives from the commitment to non-discrimination for all persons in employment, access to facilities, student programs, activities, and services.

A person with a disability must be ensured the same access to programs, opportunities, and activities at the College as all others. Existing barriers, whether physical, programmatic or attitudinal must be removed. There must be ongoing vigilance to ensure that new barriers are not erected.

The efforts to accommodate people with disabilities must be measured against the goal of full participation and integration. Services and programs to promote these benefits for people with disabilities shall complement and support, but not duplicate, the regular services and programs.

Achieving full participation and integration of people with disabilities requires the cooperative efforts of all of the departments, offices, and personnel. To this end, the College will continue to strive to achieve excellence in its services and to assure that its services are delivered equitably and efficiently to all of its members.

*Adopted June, 1993*

### **ACCESSIBILITY: THE KEY TO EQUAL OPPORTUNITY**

Assurance of equal educational opportunity rests upon legal foundations established by federal law, specifically the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, including Section 504, Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 as well as ADA Amendment Acts of 2009, 2010 and 2011. By federal law, a person with a disability is any person who: 1) has a physical or mental impairment; 2) has a record of such impairment; or 3) is regarded as having such an impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities such as self-care, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, or learning.

Policies regarding access for persons with disabilities apply to the Macon, Warner Robins, and Robins Resident Center campuses. Individuals seeking services should contact the Counseling Center in the Mathematics – 110 on the Macon campus.

### **Student Rights and Responsibilities**

**Every student with a documented disability has the following rights:**

1. Equal access to courses, programs, services, jobs, activities, and facilities available through the College.
2. Reasonable and appropriate accommodations, academic adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids determined on a case-by-case basis.
3. Appropriate confidentiality of all information pertaining to his/her disability with the choice of whom to disclose his/her disability to except as required by law.
4. Information reasonably available in accessible formats.

**Every student with a disability has the responsibility to:**

1. Meet the College's qualifications and essential technical, academic, and institutional standards.
2. Identify themselves in a **timely** manner as an individual with a disability when seeking an accommodation.
3. Provide documentation from an appropriate professional source that verifies the nature of the disability, functional limitations, and the need for specific accommodations.
4. Follow specific procedures for obtaining reasonable and appropriate accommodations, academic adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids.

**Institutional Rights and Responsibilities**

**Macon State College, through its Disability Contact Person, has the right to:**

1. Maintain the College's academic standards.
2. Request current documentation from a student completed by an appropriate professional source to verify the need for reasonable accommodations, academic adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids.
3. Discuss a student's need for reasonable accommodations, academic adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids with the professional source of his/her documentation with the student's signed consent authorizing such discussion.
4. Select among equally effective and appropriate accommodations, adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids in consultation with students with disabilities.
5. Deny a request for accommodations, academic adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids if the documentation does not identify a specific disability, the documentation fails to verify the need for the requested services, or the documentation is not provided in a timely manner.
6. Refuse to provide an accommodation, adjustment, and/or auxiliary aids that is inappropriate or unreasonable including any that:
  - pose a direct threat to the health and safety of others;
  - constitute a substantial change or alteration to an essential element of a course or program

**Macon State College through its Disability Contact Person has the responsibility to:**

1. Ensure that College's courses, programs, services, jobs, activities, and facilities, when viewed in their entirety, are offered in the most integrated and appropriate settings.
2. Provide information regarding policies and procedures to students with disabilities and assure its availability in accessible formats upon request.
3. Evaluate students on their abilities, not their disabilities.
4. Provide reasonable and appropriate accommodations, academic adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids for students with disabilities upon a timely request by a student.
5. Maintain appropriate confidentiality of records and communication concerning students with disabilities except where disclosure is required by law or authorized by the student.

**More specifically, the College's Disability Contact Person has the responsibility to:**

1. Assist students with disabilities who self-identify and meet College criteria for eligibility to receive reasonable and appropriate accommodations, academic adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids determined on a case-by-case basis.
2. Assure confidentiality of all information pertaining to a student's disability.
3. Inform students with disabilities of College policies and procedures for filing a formal grievance.

**ACCOMMODATIONS PROCESS**

**Responsibilities of the Disability Contact Person Include:**

- Determining eligibility for participation of students with disabilities in the academic accommodations process based upon a review of appropriate documentation.
- Determining appropriate accommodations for each student based on the individual's need.
- Assuring the student receives appropriate accommodations.
- Interacting with faculty when appropriate.

**Responsibilities of the Student Include:**

- Contacting the Disability Contact Person **at the beginning of each semester** so that appropriate accommodations can be requested in a timely manner. Students are strongly encouraged to make this contact **within the first week** of each semester. This includes filling out the required paperwork, which indicates the student's need (e.g., extended time to complete exams, note taker, sign language interpreter, laboratory assistant, etc.).
- Providing the Disability Contact Person with appropriate medical, psychological, psycho-educational, or neuropsychological documentation indicating the student's disability, resultant functional limitations, impact of the disability in a postsecondary environment and any recommended or suggested accommodations.
- Providing signed consent authorizing the Disability Contact Person to discuss his/her need for reasonable accommodations, academic adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids with the professional source of his/her documentation.
- Informing the faculty member or professor at the beginning of each semester about his/her disability, how performance may be affected, and necessary and reasonable accommodation(s).
- Meeting the timelines and procedural requirements established by the Disability Contact Person for scheduling exams, requesting assistance, arranging with a faculty member, and/or the Disability Contact Person for getting the exam to the location of testing. If the student fails to provide adequate notice of the need for space and/or assistance, he/she is still entitled to the accommodation, but there is no guarantee that it can be provided in the fullest measure.
- If the student fails to comply with these requirements, he/she will receive a written reminder of responsibilities in order to stress the importance of these requirements.

### **Responsibilities of the Faculty Member Include:**

- Discussing with the Disability Contact Person any concerns related to the accommodation(s) or arrangements that have been requested by the student during their initial contacts.
- Determining the conditions under which the exam is to be administered (e.g., open book, use of notes, computer with word processing including spell check, formula sheet, calculator, scrap paper, dictionary).
- Providing appropriate accommodations, either personally or by making arrangements with the Counseling Center.
- Assuring the timely delivery of the exam, along with all necessary instructions and materials for proper administration, if a student's exam is to be administered outside of class. The faculty member may also make arrangements for the delivery and return of the exam.
- Assuring the confidentiality of information regarding students with disabilities.

### **PROCEDURES FOR ACCESSING SERVICES**

#### **Counseling Center**

##### ***Contact Information:***

Ann E. Loyd, Director  
Ruth Hagemann, Counselor  
Christine Elliott, Administrative Assistant

Mathematics Building, Room 110 (478)  
471-2985 (VOICE)  
(478) 471-5730 (FAX)

Any student with a documented disability may be eligible to receive services from Disability Services of the Counseling Center. The purpose of accommodations and modifications is to reduce or eliminate any disadvantages that may exist because of an individual's disability. The law does not require institutions to waive specific courses or academic requirements considered essential to a particular program or degree. Rather, they are mandated to modify existing requirements on a case-by-case basis in order to ensure that individuals are not discriminated against on the basis of their disability. Students wanting to access services must self-identify and provide appropriate verification of their disability. Eligibility for reasonable and appropriate accommodations will be determined on an individual basis.

Appropriate documentation will assist the student and the College in determining reasonable accommodations as stipulated under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, ADA Amendments Acts of 2009, 2010 and 2011, and other pertinent state and federal regulations. Students requesting accommodations of either an academic or personal nature must meet with the appropriate disability contact person and present appropriate documentation prior to receiving services.

Documentation must be current, in most cases within three years of the current date, and must be submitted by a qualified practitioner. This documentation must be a comprehensive assessment including recommendations for accommodations as well as recommendations for treatment. The diagnostician must be an impartial individual who is not a family member of the student.

The following documentation guidelines are available on the Counseling Center website at <http://www.maconstate.edu/counseling>

- Deaf or hard of hearing
- Head injuries or traumatic brain injuries
- Learning disabilities
- Physical and systemic disorders
- Psychological Disabilities, Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- Blind or low vision
- Visual disorders – such as ocular motility dysfunction/eye movement disorders, vergence dysfunction/inefficiency in using both eyes together, strabismus/misalignment of the eyes, etc.

Reasonable accommodations depend upon the nature and degree of severity of the documented disability. While the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and ADA Amendment Act of 2010 requires that priority consideration be given to the specific methods requested by the student, it does not imply that a particular accommodation must be granted if it is deemed not reasonable and other suitable techniques are available.

#### **PROCEDURES FOR ACCESSING SERVICES AT OTHER CAMPUSES**

The Counseling Center is the College agent charged with the responsibility for collecting and maintaining disability documentation. Academic accommodations are provided in consultation between Macon campus and a regional campus disability contact personnel.

#### **POLICY ON CONFIDENTIALITY**

##### **Student Records**

The Counseling Center is the College agent charged with the responsibility for collecting and maintaining disability documentation. This information is kept in a secure file with limited access and is only shared with others with the expressed written permission of the student. Information will only be shared on a limited basis within the institutional community if there is a compelling reason, such as a threat to an individual's safety and/or emergency situation. Consent of the student will be requested prior to releasing medical/psychological documentation to a third party. Confidentiality is not maintained in the case of child abuse, suicidal or homicidal intent.

##### **Maintenance of Records**

A confidential file is maintained on each student that includes demographics, documentation of the disability, a record of each contact and action taken. An electronic database is utilized for caseload management purposes with limited access. Student records will be shredded **seven** years after the last contact.

##### **Eligibility for Financial Aid**

Students with documented disabilities may enroll in a less than full-time course load as an academic accommodation. Students are encouraged to discuss full-time course load requirements with an academic advisor. A financial aid advisor can determine how their aid will be affected by a reduced course load.

Students should be aware that Federal law requires that federal Pell Grant funds be prorated based on the number of credits taken, and that the student financial aid budget will also be reduced accordingly. To borrow under the federal Stafford Loan Program, or to have a previous loan deferred, the student must be enrolled for at least six credits. Students should keep in mind that, with the exception of the Pell Grant, it is the College's policy that students must be enrolled half time in order to receive financial aid.

Students whose disabilities warrant the adjustment of carrying less than a full-time load per semester can be determined eligible for student financial aid status. In such a case, these procedures must be followed:

1. Students must provide appropriate documentation regarding their disability that substantially limits one or more major life functions to the Disability Contact Person.
2. If a student is registered at the beginning of a semester for less than a full-time credit load as an accommodation for a disability, this must be verified by the Disability Contact Person. Students must contact the Disability Contact Person for this verification **NO LATER THAN** the last day of the College's ADD/DROP period.
3. If a student is registered at the beginning of a semester for a full-time course load but to accommodate his/her disability withdraws from a course within the approved drop period for the respective program and according to the procedures for dropping a course, he/she must discuss this with the Disability Contact Person **NO LATER THAN** the last day of the drop period for classes.

**Students should be aware that, as always, eligibility for Financial Aid depends upon satisfactory academic progress.**

#### **SERVICE ANIMAL POLICY**

Service animals are individually trained to effectively perform tasks for peoples with disabilities. Macon State College complies with federal and state disability civil rights laws and permits service animals that assist persons with physical, mental and/or sensory disabilities on all Macon State College campuses where participants and members of the public are normally allowed, including food service areas.

The Counseling Center will determine the appropriateness of the presence of a service animal for programs, services and activities based upon the following:

- Whether or not the student has a disability;
- Whether or not the animal is a service animal;
- Determining the tasks performed by the animal.

A service animal may be excluded only when one of the following conditions below exist:

- The animal is disruptive and the student is not effectively controlling it, for example, a dog that barks repeatedly during a lecture (consideration should be made to see if the service animal was distracted or scared by another person or animal or if barking is a required task);
- The presence of the service animal would fundamentally change the nature of the job, program, service or activity;
- The service animals' presence, behavior or actions pose an unreasonable or direct threat to property of the health or safety of others. Risk may not be remote or speculative, such as thinking an animal might bite someone or will annoy others. Allergies and fear of animals are generally no valid reasons to exclude a service animal.

Exclusions are determined on an individualized basis and based on whether or not another reasonable accommodation can be provided. If the service animal is to be excluded, the student should be given the option of participating in an activity or receiving services without the service animal on the premises. If the student decides to participate without the service animal, efforts to reasonably accommodate the student should be made. In addition, the student must be allowed to participate in the activity when the animal's behavior is under control.

Questions regarding a service animal should be directed to the Counseling Center at (478) 471-2985 or [ann.loyd@maconstate.edu](mailto:ann.loyd@maconstate.edu).

### **POLICY ON PROVIDING INFORMATION IN ALTERNATIVE FORMATS**

Macon State College is committed to ensuring effective communication to all individuals, including people with disabilities. In keeping with this standard, the College requires that:

- printed materials will be made available in alternative formats upon request. Printed materials include, but are not limited to, departmental/program brochures, announcements of events and activities, newsletters, exams, applications, forms, and any other printed information made available to the general public;
- films and video tapes promoting departmental and program information, or related items acquired by a department or program, be closed captioned;
- departments and programs that sponsor public speakers, information sessions, or public performances provide qualified interpreters for people with hearing disabilities upon request;
- departments and programs establish procedures to respond to requests in a timely fashion.

The College maintains a variety of assistive technology. Please refer to the Disability Services web site at [www.maconstate.edu/counseling](http://www.maconstate.edu/counseling) or call the Center at (478) 471-2985 for the list of available assistive technology.

Further, printed information placed on the Internet can be readily accessed by all individuals. Departments and programs are encouraged to put departmental information, announcements, newsletters, etc. on their web sites.

The needs of individuals with disabilities should be taken into consideration during the design and construction of all web sites.

Providing alternative formats is a departmental and/or program responsibility. Normal budgetary channels should be accessed in order to fulfill requests. Should you require assistance or advice regarding an alternative format request, you may call David Sims, ADA Coordinator, at (478) 471-2780.

### **DISCRIMINATION GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES**

#### **Summary**

Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act states, in Part 5, "that no otherwise qualified disabled individual shall solely by reason of such disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination in programs or activities sponsored by a public entity." The purpose of this procedure is to attempt to resolve all types of complaints at the level where they can occur in a timely manner.

Any employee, student, or other member of the College community injured by the discriminatory behavior of an employee may file a complaint under the College's *Discrimination Complaint Procedures*. Similar complaints against students should be filed with the Office of the Dean of Students

under *The Student Conduct Code*.

College policy prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, sex (gender, sexual harassment), age, national origin, ethnicity, physical or mental disabilities, sexual orientation, marital status, religion, status as a disabled veteran, and any other group protected by civil rights laws. Discrimination means unequal treatment or harassment based upon any of these group characteristics. Retaliation against a complainant for filing a complaint, or against witnesses for providing testimony during an investigation, is also prohibited and can be filed as a separate charge under these procedures.

1. Complaints may be filed with David Sims, Director of Plant Operations and ADA Coordinator, within 30 days after the discriminatory act by calling (860) 486-2943 or writing to the ADA Coordinator at the Macon State College, 100 College Station Drive, Macon, GA 31206. Alternatively, a complaint may be filed with the line administrator in the college, school, unit, or department in which the incident occurred.
2. The ADA Coordinator interviews complainants to obtain complete accounts of their allegations, and advises them of their right to file complaints through the internal administrative systems and with civil rights agencies. They may also counsel complainants on self-resolution techniques or refer them to additional sources of support. Line administrators may enlist the ADA Coordinator's advice or support in this phase.
3. Cases filed directly with the ADA Coordinator (a) if the accused is a staff member of Macon State College the ADA Coordinator will immediately involve the Office of Human Resources and the line administrator responsible for resolving the problem. Throughout the complaint process, the ADA Coordinator and Office of Human Resources will advise line administrators from the perspective of civil rights and contractual obligations, respectively. (b) If the accused employee is a faculty member, the ADA Coordinator may either conduct the investigation or have the line administrator handle the complaint. In the former case, the ADA Coordinator's finding and recommendations are referred to the appropriate line administrator for action.
4. Cases filed directly with line administrators. In all cases, line administrators receiving complaints must consult with the ADA Coordinator who may advise them on the appropriate handling of the case. If the accused employee is covered by a collective bargaining agreement, then both the ADA Coordinator and Office of Human Resources should be consulted. If not, the ADA Coordinator will work with the line administrator to determine whether the ADA Coordinator, the administrator, or another College official should be the appropriate action party.
5. Although the student is encouraged to attempt to resolve a complaint within the campus process, he or she has the right to file any complaint directly to the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) at any time. The Statute of Limitations for filing a complaint with OCR is 180 days from the time the incident occurred.

#### **ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION ADVISORY PANEL**

If a disagreement arises concerning specific accommodation requests, the Counseling Center is the official College agent in such matters if a process of conflict resolution is desired. Students must provide relevant documentation of their disability from an appropriate professional source in order to verify their eligibility for accommodations. This documentation is confidential and shared with College personnel on a need-to-know basis only.

Macon State College has established an Academic Accommodations Advisory Panel under the jurisdiction of the Vice President and/or Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs, the College's chief academic officers. The purpose of this Panel is to assist the Vice Presidents, on a case-by-case basis, in resolving any disagreements that arise concerning specific requests for academic accommodations. The Panel serves as a resource for all College entities including faculty, academic administrators, and College students for a final review of disagreements concerning specific academic

accommodation requests.

Members of **Academic Accommodations Advisory Panel** *may* include the following:

- Faculty chairperson or designated representative of the Department offering the course(s) in which the accommodation is requested.
- Representative from the School or College.
- Director of the Counseling Center. The staff member who determined an accommodation for the student requesting a review will not participate in the Panel's review of that accommodation request.
- Representative appointed by the Dean of Students.
- Faculty representative from the Education Program of the School of Education, Nursing and Health Services, or another department or program with specific expertise, to be determined by the ADA Coordinator depending upon the nature of the disability.

### **Procedures**

1. The student requests accommodation(s) and provides supporting documentation according to College guidelines to the Disability Contact Person.
2. In instances where there is disagreement concerning the appropriateness of the requested accommodation, the student, faculty member teaching the course for which the accommodation has been requested, and the Disability Contact Person will make every effort to resolve the disagreement in a timely manner.
3. If agreement cannot be reached, the student, faculty member, or College administrative staff may file a petition with the ADA Coordinator, David Sims, who would have responsibility for convening the Academic Accommodations Advisory Panel.
4. The Panel then reviews the petition and any additional relevant information from College personnel in order to render a decision within ten (10) days from the date of the petition. This decision is subject to the approval of the Vice President for Academic Affairs.
5. While a petition is under review by the Academic Accommodations Advisory Panel or the Vice President of Academic Affairs, a reasonable accommodation should be provided by the faculty member.
6. The decision of the Vice President for Academic Affairs is not appealable; however, a student may pursue standard administrative channels by contacting David Sims, Director of the Plant Operations and ADA Coordinator and/or through external agencies (e.g., Office for Civil Rights) for filing a formal grievance.

### **DISABILITY-RELATED EXCEPTION TO ATTENDANCE POLICIES**

1. In most cases, class attendance is critical to a student's mastery of the knowledge and/or skills that are taught in a specific course.
2. Students are expected to follow the attendance policy established by the instructor in each class.
3. Macon State recognizes, however, that there may be times when a qualified student with a disability cannot attend class because of disability-related reasons.
4. If such a student believes it may not be possible to abide by the attendance policy because of medical issues related to a disability, the student should contact the Disability Service Provider prior to the beginning of the semester, or as soon as possible after the need for an exception arises, to discuss the matter of a possible accommodation. Determination of

eligibility for a disability-related exception to the policy is made by the Disability Service Provider in consultation with the instructor of the course for which the exception is sought and, if necessary, with the department chair or other appropriate administrator. The Disability Service Provider will consult with the Regents Center of Learning Disorders at the University of Georgia for this request.

5. Essential Course Requirements: Macon State College will make every effort to reasonably accommodate a student's disability related academic needs. Please note, however, that neither Macon State nor an individual faculty member may be required to waive an essential or fundamental academic requirement of a course, regardless of the nature of the student's disability. The academic department identifies and defines the essential or fundamental academic requirements for its courses and instructors may establish an acceptable number of excused absences in light of these essential requirements. Attendance requirements for each course are usually stated on the course syllabus.

The following questions will be considered when determining the extent to which attendance is an essential requirement of a course and whether an exception to the attendance policy may be appropriate:

- a. Is there classroom interaction between the instructor and students and among the students themselves?
  - b. Do student contributions in class constitute a significant component of the learning process?
  - c. Does the fundamental nature of the course rely on student participation as an essential method of learning?
  - d. To what degree does a student's failure to attend class constitute a significant loss to the educational experience of other students in the class?
  - e. What does the course description and syllabus say regarding attendance? Each instructor may have different requirements regarding attendance.
  - f. By what method is the final grade calculated?
6. As with all disability accommodations, exceptions to the attendance policy will be determined on an individual, case-by-case basis depending on:
    - a. the extent to which the supporting medical or psychological documentation from a licensed professional qualified to diagnose and treat the disability in question supports the need for an exception to an attendance policy, and
    - b. the reasonableness of this accommodation in each requested class as determined by discussions between the Student Disability Services Office and the course instructor based upon the above criteria. In questionable cases, the academic department head and/or other appropriate academic administrator will be included in these discussions. Consultation with the Regents Center for Learning Disorders/University of Georgia may be accessed.
  7. Students who are approved for an exception to the attendance policy based on disability are required to provide a memo from the Disability Service Provider to each instructor confirming the accommodation.
  8. Accommodations are **not** retroactive. All accommodations, including an exception to the attendance policy, become effective when the student delivers the notification memo from the Disability Service Provider to the instructor.
  9. An exception to the attendance policy does **not** mean that unlimited absences will be permitted. The number of additional absences a student may receive as a reasonable accommodation will be determined on a case-by-case basis for each class, depending on the student's individual disability, the nature of the course and the degree to which class attendance is an essential requirement of the specific course as provided in Paragraphs 5 and 6 (a) & (b) of this Policy.
  10. Exception to the attendance policy does **not** mean exception to any of the other academic

requirements of the course. Students are required to fulfill all course requirements and will be held to the same evaluation standards as specified in the course syllabus.

11. Students who are approved for an exception to the attendance policy are expected to contact instructors in advance of an anticipated absence. This is particularly important if the anticipated absence will result in the student missing a quiz or exam or a deadline for turning in an assignment. For emergencies or unexpected disability-related absences, contact should be made as soon as possible to verify the reason for the absence and to discuss make-up work. The student and instructor should come to a clear agreement about the nature of the make-up work and deadlines for completing it. This agreement should be put into writing and signed by both the student and the instructor. The instructor should forward a copy of the signed agreement to Ann E. Loyd, Director of Counseling Center.
12. **It is the individual student's responsibility to obtain copies of lecture notes and/or materials from missed classes.** Students who are likely to be absent from class should plan responsibly ahead of time to get lecture notes from a classmate or "study buddy." Phone numbers should be exchanged in advance. The Disability Service Provider cannot provide note takers for students who are absent from class.
13. Students should understand that even though an exception to the attendance policy has been made for them, absences are likely to have a negative impact on their academic performance simply because of the content and experiential learning they may have missed by not being in class. For this reason, they should make every attempt to attend class. Students should make special effort to attend class for quizzes and exams and to observe deadlines for submission of assignments.
14. Students should be aware that exception to the attendance policy will not be possible in all courses because class attendance is an essential, integral part of some courses, as discussed in paragraph 4 of this policy. Some academic programs or majors may not be amenable to exceptions to the attendance policy. Students who know that attendance may be an on-going issue for them should consult with the academic department regarding the feasibility of attendance exceptions in the specific program of their interest.
15. All students who request an exception to the attendance policy for disability reasons will be given a copy of these policies and procedures by the Disability Service Provider/staff. Students will be required to sign a statement for their Disability Services file that they have read and understand the policies and procedures and that they agree to abide by them.

### **DOCUMENTATION GUIDELINES**

The Center for Students with Disabilities has developed the following documentation guidelines to assist students in providing appropriate documentation regarding their disabilities. Students are encouraged to share these guidelines with their appropriate medical professionals.

- Learning Disabilities
- ADHD
- Pervasive Developmental Disorders
- Aspergers' Syndrome
- Autism
- Acquired Brain Injury
- Psychological
- Deaf and Hard of Hearing
- Visual

- Mobility Impairments
- Systemic Disorders

## **Disability Documentation**

### Definition

- An individual must demonstrate that his/her condition meets the definition of a disability under the *Rehabilitation Act, 1973* and / or the *Americans with Disability Act (ADA), 1990*. The ADA defines a disability as a physical or mental impairment that *substantially limits* one or more major life activities.
- *Substantially limits* under ADA refer to significant restrictions as to the *condition, manner, or duration* under which an individual can perform a particular major life activity as compared to most people.
- *Whether a condition is substantially limiting* to support an accommodation requests is a decision made by qualified professional (s) based upon multiple sources of information.
- A clinical diagnosis is not synonymous with a disability. The specific symptoms that are present should be stated in the documentation. Evidence that these symptoms are associated with substantial impairment in a major life activity is required for provision of accommodations. A detailed description of current substantial limitation in the academic environment is essential to identify appropriate academic accommodations, auxiliary aids, and services. Specific requests for accommodations need to be linked to the student's current functional limitations, and the rationale for each recommendation clearly stated.

### General Documentation Guidelines

- Macon State College as well as all colleges and universities in the University System of Georgia are required to have written policies and procedures for review of documentation submitted by students with disabilities. Decision-making for the provision of institutional-level accommodation is provided by the Disability Services of the Counseling Center.
- Secondary education eligibility reports, Individualized Educational Plans, Summary of Progress reports, or previous provision of special education services may not be sufficient documentation for college-level accommodations.
- Documentation should provide a diagnostic statement identifying the disability, describe the diagnostic criteria and methodology used to diagnose the condition, and detail the progression of the condition if its impact on the student's functioning is expected to change over time.
- Documentation should provide an adequate representation of the student's current functional abilities. In most situations, documentation should be within three years of the student's application for services. Professional judgment, however, must be used in accepting older documentation of conditions that are permanent or non-varying, or in requiring more recent documentation for conditions which the functional impact may change over time.
- Documentation must include the names, signatures, titles, and license numbers of the appropriate evaluators, as well as the dates of testing and contact information. Evaluators must be licensed professional whose training and licensure status is consistent with expertise in the disability for which they provide documentation.

## **Learning Disabilities**

All units of the University System of Georgia shall employ the same definition of learning disabilities in order to promote evenness in the way learning disabled students are accommodated. A definition that was originally published by the Interagency Committee on Learning Disabilities (1987) has been adopted as being in keeping with current practices of most state and federal guidelines.

Learning disabilities is a general term that refers to a heterogeneous group of disorders manifested by significant difficulties in the acquisition and use of listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning, or

mathematical skills, These disorders are intrinsic to the individual, presumed to be due to central nervous system dysfunctions, and may occur across the life span. Problems in self-regulatory behaviors, social perception, and social interaction may exist with learning disabilities but do not, by themselves, constitute a learning disability. Although learning disabilities may occur concomitantly with other disabilities (e.g., sensory impairment, mental retardation, serious emotional disturbance), or with extrinsic influences (such as cultural differences, insufficient or inappropriate instruction), they are not the result of those conditions or influences (NJCLD, Learning Disabilities: Issues on Definition, January, 1990).

- Clear and specific identification of a learning disability must be stated in the documentation. For example, the terms “Learning styles” or Learning differences” are not synonymous with a learning disability.
- Documentation of a developmental or educational history consistent with a learning disability.
- Since the manifestations of a learning disability may change over the period of childhood and adolescence, documentation must reflect either data collected within the past three years or after the age of 18.
- Information gained from standardized assessment instruments is one essential piece of the methodology used to diagnose learning disabilities. Therefore, documentation of learning disabilities must include standardized measures of academic achievement and cognitive processing abilities that have age-traditional students. All standardized measures must be represented by standard scores and percentile ranks based on published norms.
- Documentation of a functional limitation (s) in one or more of the following areas of academic achievement:
  1. Reading (decoding, fluency, and comprehension)
  2. Mathematics (calculations, math fluency, and applied reasoning)
  3. Written Language (spelling, fluency, and written expression)
- Documentation of relative strength(s) in academic achievement in order to establish the presence of a significant discrepancy between academic domains. The presence of a significant discrepancy will typically require a difference of one standard deviation between scores. However, qualified professional may use other widely accepted metrics for documenting a significant difference between two scores (e.g., standard error of measurement).
- Documentation that alternative explanations for the academic limitation(s) have been considered and ruled out (e.g., low cognitive ability, lack of adequate instruction, emotional factors such as anxiety or depression).
- Documentation of a pattern of cognitive processing weaknesses and strengths that is associated in a meaningful way with the identified area(s) of academic limitation.
- Both processing weaknesses and processing strengths must be identified and must represent a significant discrepancy between cognitive domains. The presence of a significant discrepancy will typically require a difference of one standard deviation between scores. However, qualified professionals may document a significant difference between two score using other widely accepted metrics (e.g., standard error of measurement).
- Processing weaknesses and strengths must be evident on multiple measures and not based on a single discrepant score on an individual test or subtest.
- Cognitive Processing Skills (selection dependent upon case)
  - Attention
  - Executive Functions
  - Fluency / Automaticity
  - Memory / Learning
  - Oral Language
  - Phonological / Orthographic Processing
  - Visual-Motor
  - Visual-Perceptual/Visual-Spatial

- Documentation that alternative explanations for the cognitive limitations(s) have been considered and ruled out (e.g., low cognitive ability, lack of adequate instruction, emotional factors such as anxiety or depression).
- These guidelines that alternative explanations for the cognitive limitations(s) have been considered and ruled out (e.g., low cognitive ability, lack of adequate instruction, emotional factors such as anxiety or depression).
- These guidelines are intended to guide the review of documentation and cannot substitute for the expertise and clinical judgment of a qualified professional. Failure to fully meet each of the above criteria does not automatically preclude a diagnosis of learning disabilities. In some circumstances, this diagnosis may be justified, based on an expert's integration of a student's history, test performance, and current functioning.

*Source: Regents Center for Learning Disorders/University System of Georgia, 2009*

### **Attention Deficit / Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD)**

AD/HD is a persistent pattern of inattention and/or hyperactivity-impulsivity that is more frequently displayed and more severe than is typically observed in individuals at a comparable level of development. The manifestations of AD/HD result in functional impairment in at least two settings (e.g., academic, occupational, social). The diagnosis of AD/HD is based on the specific criteria included in the current version of the DSM of the American Psychiatric Association.

- Diagnosis and corresponding code from the most recent DSM must be included.
- Assessment of the following diagnostic criteria is required and evaluation results must be included in the documentation:
  1. Developmental history of either inattention and/or hyperactivity impulsivity symptoms during childhood. The specific symptoms that were present in childhood should be stated in the documentation. Corroboration of childhood symptoms should be included, and may need to be gathered from a variety of sources (e.g., parent/guardian report, school records, past evaluations). Evidence that these symptoms were associated with some functional impairment in home and/or school settings also must be included.
  2. Current symptoms of either inattention and/or hyperactivity-impulsivity must be present. The specific symptoms that are present should be stated in the documentation. Self-reported current symptoms should be corroborated by an independent informant who has been able to observe the student's recent functioning with adequate regularity to provide this type of information. Evidence that these symptoms are associated with functional impairment in academic, occupational, and/or social settings also must be included.
  3. The frequency/severity of both childhood and current AD/HD symptoms should be documented by comparison to individuals at a similar level of development. Documentation must include the results of standardized rating scales that provide comparison to age-based normative data.

*Source: Regents Center for Learning Disorders/University System of Georgia, 2009*

### **Pervasive Developmental Disorders**

Pervasive developmental disorders are characterized by severe and pervasive impairment in several areas of development including reciprocal social interaction skills, communication skills, or the presence of stereotyped behavior, interests, and activities. Several different disorders fall within this category including Asperger's Disorder and Autistic Disorder.

## **Asperger's Disorder**

Asperger's Disorder is a pervasive developmental disorder characterized by qualitative impairment in social interactions and the presence of repetitive and stereotyped behaviors, interests, and activities.

- Diagnosis and corresponding code from the most recent DSM must be included.
- Assessment of the following diagnostic criteria is required and evaluation results must be included in the documentation:
  1. Developmental history that includes evidence of Asperger's Disorder symptoms in childhood and documents the absence of clinically-significant general delay in early cognitive or language development.
  2. Documentation of current qualitative impairment in social interaction.
  3. Documentation of current restricted, repetitive, and stereotyped patterns of behavior, interests, and activities.
  4. Assessment of broad cognitive ability and language function using standardized assessment measures with age-appropriate norms.

## **Autistic Disorder**

Autistic Disorder is a pervasive developmental disorder characterized by qualitative impairment in social interactions, qualitative impairment in communication affecting both verbal and nonverbal communication skills, and the presence of repetitive stereotyped behaviors, interests, and activities.

- Diagnosis and corresponding code from the most recent DSM must be included.
- Assessment and corresponding code from the most recent DSM and evaluation results must be included in the documentation:
  1. Developmental history that includes evidence of Autistic Disorder symptoms in childhood.
  2. Documentation of qualitative impairment in social interaction.
  3. Documentation of qualitative impairment in communication.
  4. Documentation of restricted, repetitive, and stereotyped patterns of behavior, interests, and activities.
  5. Assessment of broad cognitive ability and language function using standardized assessment measures with age-appropriate norms.

## **Acquired Brain Injury**

Brain injury can result from external trauma, such as a closed head or an object penetration injury, or internal trauma, such as a cerebral vascular accident or tumor. ABI can cause physical, cognitive, emotional, social, and vocational changes that can affect an individual for a short period of time or permanently. Depending on the location and extent of the injury, symptoms can vary widely. Understanding functional changes after an injury and resulting implications for education are more important than only knowing the cause or type of injury.

- Documentation of date of occurrence/diagnosis and the nature of the neurological illness or traumatic event that resulted in brain injury.
- Depending upon the functional domains impacted by the injury, assessments of cognitive and academic deficits and strengths, psychosocial-emotional functioning, and/or motor/sensory abilities relevant to academic functioning may be essential components of documentation of the impact of an acquired brain injury for an individual student.
- Impairments following an acquired brain injury may change rapidly in the weeks and months after the injury, and a more stable picture of residual weaknesses may not be apparent for 1-2 years after an injury. More recent document may be necessary to adequately assess the student's current accommodation needs.

- Cognitive and academic processing weaknesses and strengths must be evident on multiple measures and not based on a single discrepant score:
- Academic Achievement
  1. Reading (decoding, fluency, and comprehension)
  2. Mathematics (calculations, math fluency, applied reasoning)
  3. Written Language (spelling, fluency written expression)
- Cognitive Processing Skills
  1. Attention
  2. Executive Functions
  3. Fluency/Automaticity
  4. Memory/Learning
  5. Oral Language
  6. Phonological/Orthographic Processing
  7. Visual-Motor
  8. Visual-Perceptual/Visual-Spatial

*Source: Regents Center for Learning Disorders/University System of Georgia, 2009*

### **Psychological Disorders**

Some individuals experience significant disruptions in mood, thinking, and behavioral regulation that are secondary to a psychological disorder. Many different psychological disorders can interfere with cognitive, emotional, and social functioning and may negatively impact a student's ability to function in an academic environment. The symptoms and associated impairment may be either chronic or episodic. Test anxiety by itself is not considered a psychological disorder. Complete descriptions and diagnostic criteria for a psychological disorder are available in the current version of the DSM:

- DSM diagnosis and corresponding DSM code.
  - Description of the history, current symptoms, and severity of the disorder.
  - Description of the expected progression or stability of the disorder.
  - Description of the current functional limitations impacting academic performance resulting from the disorder.
1. Documentation must include a medical or clinical diagnosis of a psychiatric disability based on DSM-IV criteria and a rationale for the diagnosis.
  2. The evaluation must be performed by an appropriate professional: psychiatrist, clinical psychologist, or clinical social worker. The evaluator's name, title, and professional credentials and affiliation should be provided.
  3. The documentation should include the following:
    - Information regarding the severity of the disability and the specific academic functions by the disability and/or medication (e.g. ability to concentrate, ability to attend class regularly, ability to interact in small/large groups);
    - Recommendations for and compliance to prescriptive treatment, including medication
    - Recommendations for academic accommodations based on specific features/symptoms of disability.
  4. Documentation must reflect the current array of features/symptoms and level of functioning; if the documentation does not, students may be required to submit up-dated information and/or documentation.
  5. Comprehensive documentation should include:
    - Letterhead of diagnostician
    - Date of last visit
    - DSM-IV Diagnosis/date of diagnosis
    - Assessment procedures used to make the diagnosis
    - Historical data taken into account in making the diagnosis

- Major symptoms currently being manifested
- Level of symptom severity (Global Assessment of Functioning)
- A mental impairment rises to the level of a disability when it substantially limits one or more major life activities of the individual. Please indicate what major life activity is currently impacted and how/to what degree it is limited. Please attach any test results, etc. used to measure these limitations.
- Please discuss any current medications this individual is taking and the impact it has on the limitations described above
- What is the treatment plan and prognosis (expected duration)
- Signature of individual with credentials to make the above diagnosis

*Source: Regents Center for Learning Disorders/University System of Georgia, 2009*

## **Sensory Disorders**

### **Deaf and Hard of Hearing**

Individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing experience a reduction in sensitivity to sound. Amplification may not assist the individual in interpreting auditory stimuli. Individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing from birth may experience lags in the development of speech and most often have language-based deficiencies.

- Description of the history, current symptoms, and severity of the disorder.
- Description of the expected progression or stability of the disorder.
- Description of the current functional limitations impacting academic performance resulting from the disorder.

Documentation of a disability is the basis for providing accommodations. Understanding what the disability is, and determining how to work around it in the postsecondary setting, is the main focus of providing support services. Documentation of a hearing impairment is most often an audiological evaluation. This hearing examination will indicate the presence of a hearing loss and its scope. Being able to interpret an audiogram will provide essential information in understanding the particular hearing loss and what it may mean for that particular student. Obviously, it needs to be clear that a student has a disability that requires accommodation. Realizing that it is perhaps obvious when someone is deaf or hard of hearing, documentation is still a requirement as mandated by the ADA.

### **Visual Disorders**

Visual impairments are disorders in the function of the eyes that cannot be adequately corrected by medical or surgical intervention, therapy, or conventional eyewear. Individuals with visual disorders may not have any useable vision or the vision may be extremely limited (light, color or shadow perception only).

- Description of the history, current symptoms, and severity of the disorder.
- Description of the expected progression or stability of the disorder.
- Description of the current functional limitations impacting academic performance resulting from the disorder.

*Source: Macon State College Student Disability Handbook, 2010*

## **Mobility Disorders**

Mobility impairments refer to conditions that limit a person's coordination or ability to move. Some mobility impairments are congenital while others are the result of illness or physical injury. The functional abilities and limitations resulting from the impairment will vary from individual to individual.

- Description of the history, current symptoms, and severity of the disorder.
- Description of the expected progression or stability of the disorder.
- Description of the current functional limitations impacting academic performance resulting from the disorder.

*Source: Macon State College Student Disability Handbook, 2010*

## **Systemic Disorders**

Systemic disabilities are conditions affecting one or more of the body's systems, including the respiratory, immunological, neurological, circulatory, or digestive systems. Systemic disabilities are often unstable. This causes a person's condition to vary; therefore, the need for and type of reasonable accommodations may change over time.

- Description of the history, current symptoms, and severity of the disorder.
- Description of the expected progression or stability of the disorder.
- Description of the current functional limitations impacting academic performance resulting from the disorder.

1. Documentation must include a medical diagnosis.
2. Diagnosis and evaluation should be made by a medical doctor or appropriate specialist licensed in the specific field of disability. The evaluator's name, title, and professional credentials and affiliations should be provided.
3. Documentation should include the following:
  - Stability of the disability (Is the disability stable, progressive, fluctuating?)
  - Information regarding the specific academic functions affected by and the severity of the disability (e.g. ability to concentrate, ability to attend class regularly)
  - Recommendations for academic accommodations based on specific features/symptoms of disability (e.g. assistive technology/equipment).
4. Recency of the documentation is dependent on the nature/stability of the disability
5. Documentation must reflect the current array of symptoms/features and level of functioning; if the documentation does not, students may be required to submit up-dated information and/or documentation.
6. Documentation must include the following:
  - Be written on letterhead
  - Be signed by an individual with the credentials to make diagnosis
  - Specific diagnosis
  - A physical or mental impairment rises to the level of a disability when it substantially limits one or more of the major life activities of the individual. Please specify which major life activities are impacted and how/to what degree they are limited. Please attach any test results, etc. which measure these limitations.
  - Should include information related to current medications or aids used by student, including effects these have on the limitations described above.
  - Can include suggestions on how Macon State College can best accommodate this student.

*Source: Macon State College Student Disability Handbook, 2010*

## **Other Disabilities**

Disabilities as defined by the ADA that are not covered by the guidelines described above may be eligible for the accommodations to University System policies (additional semesters in Learning Support, substitution of CPC foreign language requirement, or System testing accommodations) only upon approval of a Regents Center for Learning Disorders.

All documentation should be submitted to:

Counseling Center  
Macon State College  
100 College Station Drive  
Macon, GA 31206 (478)  
471-2985

## **Building Accessibility**

- F1 = Fully Accessible: At least one accessible entrance with an automatic door opener; accessible restrooms; elevator(s) if applicable
- F2 = Accessible: At least one accessible entrance; no automatic door openers; accessible restrooms; elevator(s) if applicable.
- L = Limited Access: At least one accessible entrance; only some classrooms and facilities accessible.
- N = Not Accessible: Building is not accessible.

Building	Code	Comments
Education	F1	
Mathematics	F1	
Professional Sciences Building	F1	
H/SS	F1	
Library	F1	
Jones	F1	
Wellness	F2	
Student Life Center	F1	
Science Annex	L	No classrooms available.
Plant	L	No classrooms available.

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