

Texas Christian University

Documentation Guidelines for TCU Students with Disabilities

Autism Spectrum Disorder*

In accordance with the DSM-5, the essential features of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) are persistent impairment in reciprocal social communication and social interaction and restricted, repetitive patterns of behavior, interests, or activities. These symptoms are present from early childhood and limit or impair everyday functioning. The stage at which functional impairment becomes obvious will vary according to characteristics of the individual and his or her environment. Core diagnostic features are evident in the developmental period, but intervention, compensation, and current supports may mask difficulties in at least some contexts. Manifestations of the disorder also vary greatly depending on the severity of the autistic condition, developmental level, and chronological age; hence, the term *spectrum*.

The University requires comprehensive documentation of the student's disability in order to fully evaluate requests for accommodations and to determine eligibility for services. Documentation should be presented to the Student Disability Services Office. Information concerning a student's disability is treated in a confidential manner in accordance with University policies as well as applicable state and federal laws. Appropriate University professional(s) shall review documentation to verify the existence of a disability and to determine appropriate accommodations. Should accommodations be approved, they are not retroactive. They take effect upon delivery to and after conferencing with the student's professor(s). Student Disability Services will make the final determination as to whether appropriate and reasonable accommodations are warranted and can be provided to the individual.

A diagnosis of a disability alone does not automatically qualify an individual for accommodations under the ADA. To establish the need for reasonable accommodations and services, **the documentation must indicate that the disability substantially limits one or more major life activities and must support the request for services, accommodations, academic adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids that are appropriate in a postsecondary residential environment.**

I. A qualified professional must conduct the evaluation:

Professionals conducting assessments and rendering diagnoses of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) must be qualified to do so. A professional who has comprehensive training in the field of ASD and direct experience working with adolescents and adults diagnosed with ASD such as a neuropsychologist, psychiatrist, clinical psychologist, or neurodevelopmental physician must perform the evaluation.

___*Autism Spectrum Disorder encompasses disorders previously referred to as early infantile autism, childhood autism, Kanner's autism, high-functioning autism, atypical autism, pervasive developmental disorder not otherwise specified, childhood disintegrative disorder, Asperger's Syndrome and Autism Spectrum Disorder.

II. The evaluation must be current:

The determination of whether an individual is significantly limited in functioning at the post-secondary level is based on an assessment of the current impact of the impairment. For an evaluation to be considered current, the evaluation procedures should be administered within the last 3 years. However, since developmental disorders such as ASD originate in childhood, information demonstrating a history of impaired functioning **beginning in childhood should also be provided**. The University reserves the right to request updated or augmented documentation in order to have a more accurate picture of the current level of **functioning**. Therefore, students may be asked to provide updated comprehensive information if their condition is subject to change and/or previous documentation does not include sufficient relevant information.

III. The documentation must be comprehensive:

- A. Because Autism Spectrum Disorders often manifest during childhood (though are not always diagnosed), comprehensive historical information regarding the individual's communication, social and academic history in elementary, secondary, and post-secondary education should be documented and provided. Self/parent-reports alone, without any supporting historical documents that validate communication, social, and academic problems, are not sufficient to establish a disability.
- B. Within the submitted documentation, the evaluator must state a diagnosis based on the most current version of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual*.
- C. In addition, the documentation should include any specific objective measures/evaluations used to help substantiate the diagnosis.
- D. A detailed description of the student's current functioning including:
 - social communication and social interactions across multiple contexts;
 - patterns of behavior, activities and sensory functioning;
 - sensitivity to environmental conditions;
 - motor planning;
 - executive functioning ability;
 - coping skills and adaptive behavior;
 - independent living skills.
- E. For students who wish to receive consideration for academic accommodations, the evaluator must provide relevant academic performance data including results of aptitude and achievement standardized tests, 2) standardized tests of language skills, 3) standardized scales of symptoms related to ASD, as well as 4) clinical observations, including level of severity.
- F. Please include relevant information regarding current, multi-modal therapeutic/ counseling treatment, prognosis, and goals relative to our residential postsecondary environment.
- G. Relevant medical information relating to the student's Autism Spectrum Disorder including, but not limited to, a description of the impact any prescribed medications or medication side effects have on the student's ability to meet the demands of the post-secondary environment.

- H. For students who request housing accommodations, the evaluator should provide functional limitations applicable to a residential setting. If a food-related disability is present, please refer to the Food-related Disability Documentation Guidelines available on the CAS website: www.acs.tcu.edu. The student may work with TCU's Dietitian Nutritionist, the Sodexo Executive Chefs, and the Disability Specialists as needed to address nutrition concerns. If housing accommodations are requested to address a mental health disability, please refer to the Mental Health Disability Documentation Guidelines available on the CAS website: www.acs.tcu.edu.

IV. Diagnostic Interview:

An evaluation report should include the descriptive summary of a comprehensive diagnostic interview by a qualified evaluator. It should include a summary and description of the presenting problem(s); including the absence of a medical basis for the present symptoms; relevant developmental history; relevant family history; relevant psychosocial history; and, if applicable, a discussion of dual diagnosis, alternative or co-existing mood, behavioral, neurological, and/or personality disorder(s) along with any history of relevant medication use that may affect the individual's ability to perform within a higher education setting. In addition, an evaluative report should address history of any interventions (i.e. psychological, behavioral, or psychiatric). The evaluator must investigate and rule out the possibility of other potential diagnoses involving developmental and neurological conditions, as well as educational factors that may result in symptoms mimicking the Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Please note that in reviewing the specific accommodation requested by the student, the University may find that while an accommodation is clinically supported, it is not the most appropriate accommodation given the requirements of a particular student's academic program. Some accommodations may not be feasible, reasonable, or appropriate, or the accommodation may alter the fundamental and/or technical standards of a course, a major or minor, or a University program.

VI. Specific assessments for evaluator to consider:

Aptitude Measures:

- Woodcock-Johnson Test of Cognitive Abilities – Fourth Edition (WJ-C-IV)
 - Weschler Adult Intelligence Scale- Fourth Edition (WAIS-IV)
 - Kaufman Adolescent and Adult Intelligence Test
 - Stanford Binet Intelligence Scales, 5th edition
- **Please note that abbreviated scales like KBIT are not accepted.

Educational Achievement Measures:

- Woodcock-Johnson Tests of Achievement – Fourth Edition (WJ-A IV)
- Weschler Individual Achievement Test: Third Edition III (WIAT-III)
- Kaufman Test of Education Achievement - Third Edition (KTEA-III)
- **Nelson-Denny Reading Test (NDRT) is a supplemental test only.

Measures of Information Processing:

- Wechsler Memory Scale-Fourth Edition (WMS-IV)
- Continuous Performance Tests- Edition, version 5 (CPT-II version 5)
- Rey-Osterieth Complex Figure Test

Adaptive Behavior:

- Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scale
- Adaptive Behavior Assessment System – Third Edition (ABAS-III)

○ **Neuropsychological measures:**

- Bender Visual Motor Gestalt Test-II
- Wisconsin Card Sort Test (WCST)
- Trail Making Test
- Repeatable Battery for Neuropsychological Status (RBANS)

Autism and Asperger's specific assessments:

- Gilliam Autism Rating Scale, Second Edition (GARS-II)
- Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule (ADOS-II)(Module 4)
- Autism Spectrum Quotient (AQ)
- Autism Diagnostic Interview-Revised (ADI-R)
- Gilliam Autism Spectrum Disorder Scale-Third Edition (GADS-3)