

PROCESS FOR REQUESTING ACADEMIC ADJUSTMENTS (ACCOMMODATIONS) FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

In accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Learning & Disability Resources (LADR) supports ATSU students with disabilities by determining eligibility and providing reasonable and appropriate academic adjustments (accommodations), while maintaining the standards of the University. This document outlines the process used in determining a student's eligibility for disability-related academic adjustments.

Requests for Academic Adjustments are processed on a case-by-case basis pursuant to an interactive process between ATSU and the student. While requests can be made at any time, the review process may take up to three (3) weeks, so requesting well in advance of anticipated need is recommended. As every request for academic adjustments is unique, students are encouraged to contact LADR with any questions or concerns at any point in the process.

Learning & Disability Resources (LADR)
disabilityresources@atsu.edu
Director – Learning & Disability Resources (MO): 660.626.2774
Disability Resources Advisor (AZ): 480.245.6248

The general process is as follows.

1. Student contacts LADR, self-identifying as a student with a disability requesting academic adjustment(s). ATSU faculty will not provide disability-related academic adjustments without referral to, and notice from, LADR.
2. Required documentation is submitted by the student:
 - a. Academic Adjustment Request Form (information about the disability, history of academic adjustment(s), and specific academic adjustment(s) requested). This form includes an acknowledgement of our Confidentiality Policy.
 - b. Documentation of the disability. Please see the Documentation Guidelines for Verification of Disability section for information on disability documentation requirements.
3. An interactive process between LADR, the student, and the college/program Accessibility Liaison, if needed, begins, and may take up to three (3) weeks to determine:
 - a. Whether the documentation and assessment of impact indicate a disability as protected by federal law; and,
 - b. If appropriate academic adjustments can be made without altering the fundamental nature of the academic program.
4. Based on the outcome of the above determination, the student and appropriate faculty/staff (only those with a need to know) will receive notification that:
 - a. Academic adjustments have been approved, with instructions for the student on how to follow up to receive academic adjustments; or,

- b. Academic adjustments have been denied, with instructions to the student on follow up or additional action.
5. Student is responsible for notifying the appropriate staff/faculty of the approved academic adjustments to be implemented. LADR staff will counsel students on their responsibilities.
6. Student may request additional adjustments and/or modifications to their already-granted adjustments at any time, following this same process.

Additional Important Points

Academic adjustments that fundamentally alter the nature of an ATSU service, program, or activity, or that lower or substantially modify essential program requirements, will not be approved. LADR works with each student and relevant faculty/staff through an interactive process designed to identify adjustments that meet the needs of all parties, which may or may not be the specific adjustments requested by the student. A student may be granted an alternative adjustment when a particular adjustment request has been denied.

Provisional academic adjustments may be available while ATSU engages in the interactive process to determine whether ongoing academic adjustments are appropriate and, if so, which adjustments are necessary. Provisional adjustments do not reflect a determination that ongoing adjustments will be approved and/or which adjustments are appropriate, and do not create an obligation for ATSU to continue academic adjustments.

Approved academic adjustments, whether provisional or standard, are not effective retroactively.

Appeal Process

Students who are denied eligibility or who are dissatisfied with an academic adjustment may request that the Director – LADR reconsider the decision. The Director – LADR will review the request and any additional documentation provided, meet with the student if needed, and will issue a reconsideration decision in writing.

Students may appeal reconsideration decisions within ten (10) days of notification. Appeals are to be made in writing to the student's school/college dean.

Grievance Policy for Students with Disabilities

Students who think they have been denied equal access to the University's academic programs, resources, or other services because of a disability may file a detailed written grievance as soon as possible after the alleged discrimination occurred, but in no event more than 60 days thereafter. In order to establish the basis for such a grievance, students must have filed an Academic Adjustment Request Form and supporting documentation with LADR and discussed their request with either the Disability Resources Advisor or the Director - LADR.

The University encourages students to speak first with the Director - LADR in order to resolve their complaints informally. If informal steps do not satisfactorily address the complaints or there is a

complaint about the Director - LADR, students may file the written grievance described above to one of the two individuals listed below.

Arizona Campus

Michael Zajac, MA
Associate Vice President for Student Affairs
5850 East Still Circle
Mesa, AZ 85206-3618
480.219.6026
michaelzajac@atsu.edu

Missouri Campus

Lori Haxton, MA
Vice President for Student Affairs
800 West Jefferson Street
Kirksville, Missouri 63501
660.626.2236
lhaxton@atsu.edu

Documentation Guidelines for Verification of Disability

ATSU requires current and comprehensive documentation to verify a student's disability status and need for academic adjustments to equally access educational programs and activities. A clinical diagnosis, in and of itself, does not establish eligibility for disability-related academic adjustments. To be eligible, a student must have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. Whether a student's impairment is substantially limiting is determined by assessment of the current impact of the identified impairment, as compared to most people in the general population, not compared only to a student's academic peers or personal potential. Objective evidence obtained from up-to-date age-normed measures are most helpful.

To be deemed sufficient, documentation verifying disability shall:

- Be on letterhead from a licensed/certified clinical professional, who is not related by blood or marriage to the student, and who is qualified to render a diagnosis and to recommend relevant academic adjustments;
- Identify a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits (as compared to most people in the general population) one or more major life activities;
- Demonstrate how the impairment affects the student's functioning at the current time in the educational setting;
- Include recommendations for academic adjustments that are directly related to the student's functional limitations; and,
- Provide rationale explaining why each recommendation is appropriate and necessary.

Evidence of prior academic adjustments/accommodations received is helpful and encouraged. However, prior receipt of academic adjustments for a particular activity does not guarantee that identical adjustments are indicated or will be available in all future settings and circumstances.

Because each student's situation is unique, documentation requirements vary. Guidelines pertinent to all disabilities, and additional guidelines for specific disability categories, follow. Students are encouraged to share these guidelines with their clinicians. In all cases, LADR reserves the right to request additional or updated information.

For all disabilities, the following information should be included:

- Student's full name, date of birth, and ATSU program of study
- Evaluating clinician's name, title, license/certification # and state, address, and phone number
- Date of document, date of evaluation/assessment, first and latest dates of contact with student
- Diagnosis(es), and date(s) of same
- Description of how each diagnosis was made (list assessments, tests, measures used)
- Expected duration of impairment(s)
- Symptoms or functional limitations associated with the impairment(s), and severity of each with and without mitigating measures, if applicable (e.g., medication, other treatment)
- Current medications and possible side effects, if applicable
- Recommended academic adjustments (accommodations), based on functional limitations, and rationale as to why each is necessary

ADHD (Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder)

A neuropsychological or psychoeducational assessment is needed to determine the current impact of the condition on the student's functioning. Due to the challenge of distinguishing normal behaviors and developmental patterns of adolescents and adults from clinically significant impairment, a multifaceted evaluation should address the intensity and frequency of symptoms, and whether these behaviors constitute an impairment that substantially limits a major life activity as compared to most people in the general population.

A qualified professional must conduct the evaluation

A licensed professional who has had training in the diagnosis of ADHD, and direct experience with adolescents and/or adults with ADHD (such as a clinical or educational psychologist, a neuropsychologist, or a physician known to specialize in ADHD diagnosis/treatment) should conduct the evaluation and write the report.

Documentation must be current

Documentation needs to describe the current impact of the student's impairment(s) in the educational setting. Generally, evaluations conducted within the last five years will be considered timely. Please note that many testing agencies do not accept documentation older than three years.

Documentation must be comprehensive

Documentation should include a relevant history of the student (developmental, medical, academic, familial), and indicate any evidence of early impairment, even if not formally diagnosed in childhood or early adolescence. Documentation should indicate evidence of current impairment, including the results of a diagnostic interview and relevant testing designed to identify an attention disorder. The following areas should be addressed using standardized instruments: aptitude, achievement, and cognitive and information processing, especially attention (visual and auditory spans of attention, scanning tasks, vigilance assessment, including continuous performance tasks). Documentation should offer evidence of the student's performance in relation to an average person in the general population. A specific diagnosis must be included, if indicated. All test scores should be included, along with an interpretation of each, and a summary. Documentation should

address any coexisting disorders or suspected coexisting disorders. Documentation should indicate whether the student was taking medication at the time of the evaluation, and should include a discussion of the student's use of medication and its ameliorative effects. Documentation should link recommended academic adjustments to specific test results, and should include a rationale for each.

Learning Disabilities

A neuropsychological or psychoeducational assessment is needed to determine the current impact of the condition on the student's functioning.

A qualified professional must conduct the evaluation

A licensed professional with expertise in learning disabilities, trained in administering and interpreting the assessments used, and experience working with adults or at least adolescents, such as a clinical psychologist, a neuropsychologist, or an educational/school psychologist should conduct the evaluation and write the report.

Documentation must be current

Documentation needs to describe the current impact of the student's impairment(s) in the educational setting. Generally, evaluations conducted within the last five years will be considered timely. Please note that many testing agencies do not accept documentation older than three years.

Documentation must be comprehensive

Documentation should include a relevant history of the student (developmental, medical, academic, familial), and indicate any evidence of early impairment, even if not formally diagnosed in childhood or early adolescence. Documentation should indicate evidence of current impairment, including the results of a diagnostic interview and a battery of psychoeducational tests designed to identify learning disabilities. The following areas should be addressed using standardized instruments: aptitude, achievement, and cognitive and information processing. Documentation should offer evidence of the student's performance in relation to an average person in the general population. A specific diagnosis must be included, if indicated. All test scores should be included, along with an interpretation of each, and a summary. Documentation should address any coexisting disorders or suspected coexisting disorders. Documentation should relate recommended academic adjustments directly to the student's functional limitations, and rationale (explaining why each academic adjustment is necessary) should be given.

Psychological Disabilities

ATSU Counselors cannot provide primary documentation for verifying disability, but can (with a student's written authorization) provide secondary opinion on a student's functional limitations due to mental impairment.

A qualified professional must conduct the evaluation

A licensed/certified professional trained specifically in mental health care should conduct the evaluation and write the report. Professionals conducting evaluations and rendering diagnoses of

psychological disorders must have training in, and experience with, the differential diagnosis of psychological disorders in adolescents and/or adults. The following professionals are generally considered qualified: clinical psychologists, psychiatrists, psychiatric nurse practitioners, licensed clinical social workers, and licensed professional counselors.

Documentation must be current

Documentation needs to describe the current impact of the student's impairment(s) in the educational setting. Evaluations should be dated within 6 months of the request for academic adjustments. Older evaluations will be considered if submitted with more recent supplemental documentation. In addition, documentation will need to be updated yearly in order to assess current impact. LADR reserves the right to set the documentation recency requirement based on the nature of the student's disorder and requested academic adjustments.

Documentation must be comprehensive

Documentation should include a specific diagnosis(es), with identification of the diagnostic criteria met. A clinical summary should include a history of presenting symptoms, the current severity and expected duration of symptoms, a description of the student's functional limitations in the educational environment and across other domains. Documentation should indicate any treatments/medications and their side effects that would compromise academic functioning, as well as the ameliorative effects of such treatments/medications. Documentation should relate recommended academic adjustments directly to the student's functional limitations, and rationale (explaining why each academic adjustment is necessary) should be given.

Sensory/Medical/Physical Disabilities

A qualified professional must conduct the evaluation

A licensed/certified professional who has training and experience in diagnosis of like/similar conditions in adults should conduct the evaluation and write the report.

Documentation must be current

Documentation needs to describe the current impact of the student's impairment(s) in the educational setting. Documentation should be based on an evaluation performed within a reasonable timeframe, depending on the degree of change associated with the diagnosed condition(s). Generally, a reasonable recency timeframe is not more than three years, but it may be much shorter in many instances. LADR reserves the right to set the documentation recency requirement based on the nature of the student's disorder and requested academic adjustments.

Documentation must be comprehensive

Documentation should include both a description of and evidence of a sensory/medical/physical impairment. A specific diagnosis(es) should be identified. A clinical summary should describe the current severity and expected duration of the impairment, and a description of the student's functional limitations in the educational environment. Documentation should indicate any treatments/medications and their side effects that would compromise academic functioning, as well as the ameliorative effects of such treatments/medications. Documentation should relate recommended academic adjustments directly to the student's functional limitations, and rationale (explaining why each academic adjustment is necessary) should be given.

Licensing, Certification, and Board Exams (e.g., COMLEX, USMLE, INBDE, PANCE, etc.)

Third-party exam agencies and boards all have their own requirements for requesting testing accommodations. Thus, receipt of academic adjustments at ATSU does not guarantee approval for test accommodations on any licensing, certification, or board exam. The request process is usually outlined on each exam administrator's website. Documentation requirements and application timelines vary, so it is important to review these requirements well in advance (one year prior to exam), and apply early (in accordance with that agency's deadlines, often three to six months prior to exam). Students may need updated documentation to meet the requirements of the agency/board.

ATSU LADR assists students in verifying academic adjustments received while at ATSU and/or completes a form needed by the testing agency. Please contact disabilityresources@atsu.edu for assistance or with questions.

Special note to DO students (KCOM and SOMA): Extended time to take required COMLEX practice assessments for students with disabilities will be provided only if NBOME has approved extended time for a student's COMLEX exam. Proof of NBOME's approval must be submitted to ATSU Disability Resources (disabilityresources@atsu.edu) by May 1st of the COMLEX testing year. Otherwise, all required COMLEX practice assessments will be taken with standard timing.

CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

Learning & Disability Resources (LADR) views all materials pertaining to a student's disability as confidential. Federal regulations, including Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA), all support this policy in their encouragement of the protection of privacy.

Written Materials

All written materials obtained by LADR are:

- used only to verify disability and plan appropriate academic adjustments and/or reasonable accommodations
- maintained digitally (hard copies are shredded) in a secure location available only to LADR staff

Academic Adjustment/Accommodation Notices

Academic Adjustment/Accommodation Notices are prepared by LADR and issued to a student, in order to be shared with ATSU staff as needed for implementation purposes. Notices do not identify a student's disability, but indicate the student has a disability-related need for the specified academic adjustment and/or accommodation.

Release of Information

Disability-related information may be released on a legitimate need-to-know basis within the University community only when there is a compelling reason for disclosure of a specific aspect of the confidential information, such as providing an appropriate academic adjustment/accommodation. This determination is made by the Director-LADR or the Disability Resources Advisor.

Release of Records

LADR does not release disability-related documentation or records other than to the student directly, available upon written request (disabilityresources@atsu.edu). LADR retains student disability-related records for five (5) years post-graduation or from last date of attendance.