

Williams College
Office of the Dean of the College
Director of Academic Resources

Policies and Procedures Regarding Students with Disabilities

The Williams College community includes students with documented disabilities who may require accommodations. Although Williams operates no specially structured academic programs for individuals with disabilities, the College is committed to providing support services and reasonable accommodations to any students who need them.

Williams endeavors to provide equal access to campus programs and activities for all members of the college community. The Director of Academic Resources through the Dean's Office, coordinates the various accommodations required to make students' educational experiences successful. The Disabilities and Accommodations Advisory Group (DAAG), which includes faculty and administrative staff, provides policy guidance to the Director, deans, and other governing bodies.

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 including Section 504 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 identify a person with a disability as 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 activity such as walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, self-care or learning.

Williams College students with disabilities that affect their participation in college life should contact the following individuals for assistance:

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Rights and Responsibilities

Students

Williams College students with documented disabilities have the right to the following:

- equal access to courses, services, facilities, activities and programs available through the College;
- reasonable, appropriate and effective accommodations and/or auxiliary aids determined on a case-by-case basis;
- confidentiality of all information regarding the disability and accommodations; readily available alternative formats of information.

Williams College students with disabilities have the responsibility to:

- meet the College's qualifications and academic requirements;
- identify themselves in advance as individuals with disabilities when seeking an accommodation;
- provide a recent professional evaluation which identifies the disability, describes the challenges faced due to this condition, and recommends accommodations to be provided;
- follow specific procedures, comply with deadlines and agreements and communicate with the Director of Academic Resources and/or the Dean's Office regarding any problems which may arise concerning the accommodation process.

The College

Williams College, through the administrators providing support for students with disabilities, has the right to do the following:

- uphold academic standards;
- request recent documentation from a student completed by an appropriate professional source which identifies the disability, describes the challenges faced due to this condition, and recommends accommodations to be provided;
- discuss a student's need for reasonable accommodations and/or auxiliary aids with the professional source of his/her documentation with the student's signed consent authorizing such discussion;
- determine appropriate accommodations and/or auxiliary aids in consultation with students with disabilities;

- deny a request for accommodations and/or auxiliary aids if the documentation does not identify a specific disability, fails to verify the need for the requested services, or is not provided in a timely manner. The College may provide accommodations for a reasonable, temporary period of time in order to enable the student to obtain the necessary/additional documentation;
- refuse to provide an accommodation and/or auxiliary aid that is inappropriate or unreasonable including any that:
 - pose a direct threat to the health and safety of others
 - fundamentally alter the essential nature of a course or program
 - pose undue financial or administrative burden on the College.

Williams College, through the administrators providing support to students with disabilities, has the responsibility to:

- provide information regarding policies and procedures to students with disabilities and assure its availability in alternative formats;
- provide reasonable and appropriate accommodations and/or auxiliary aids for students with disabilities upon timely requests by students, eligibility for accommodations determined on a case-by-case basis;
- maintain confidentiality of records and communication concerning students with disabilities;
- inform students with disabilities of College policies and procedures for filing a grievance.

Specific Policies

Academic Accommodations Policy

The Director or Dean working with the student has the responsibility to:

- request that the student discuss the need for accommodations at the beginning of each semester (during the first seven days of classes);
- review the documentation provided by students with disabilities in order to determine eligibility for academic accommodations;
- determine the appropriate accommodation for each student based on the individual's expressed need and the documentation provided;
- communicate the need for the accommodation in writing to the faculty and interact with faculty when appropriate;
- emphasize to the student the importance of remaining in contact regarding any problems which may arise.

The student has the responsibility to:

- contact the Director at the beginning of **each** semester for the purpose of determining appropriate accommodations in a timely manner. Students are strongly encouraged to make this contact within the first seven class days (drop/add period) of each semester;
- provide the Director with appropriate medical, psychological, or neuropsychological documentation indicating the student's disability and suggested accommodations;
- follow-up with the individual faculty members once the written notification has been provided to the student to hand-deliver or sent directly from the Dean's Office;
- communicate with the Director or Dean's Office in the event of any difficulties or problems with regard to the academic accommodations process or any changes in accommodation needs.

The Role of the Faculty Member

- Discuss with the Director any concerns related to the accommodations or arrangements which they have been requested to implement.
- Provide appropriate accommodations, as requested; assure confidentiality of information regarding students with disabilities.
- Faculty members have the right to deny a request for any accommodation which fundamentally alters the nature of their course or program. Accommodations which, according to the faculty member, undermine the purpose of an exam or course, or alter the essential nature of the course, do not have to be implemented by the faculty member. Should a faculty member believe that this situation may be the case, he or she should discuss the matter with the Director.
- Faculty members may want to consider the following syllabus statement: "Students with disabilities who may need accommodations for this course are encouraged to contact the Director of Academic Resources at ext. 4672 as soon as possible to ensure that accommodations are provided in a timely manner."

Guidelines for Documentation of a Learning Disability

Students with documented learning disabilities are entitled to reasonable accommodations from the College. To access services, students must contact the Director of Academic Resources or Dean who are responsible for providing services to students with disabilities and submit adequate documentation. The documentation is intended to assist the student and the College in determining reasonable, appropriate and effective accommodations. The following guidelines must be followed in order to insure that the professional assessment is appropriate for verifying accommodation needs and to support requests for reasonable accommodations and/or auxiliary aids on the basis of a learning disability that currently substantially limits one or more major life activity.

1. The professional providing the assessment, rendering the diagnosis and making recommendations for appropriate accommodations must be qualified to do so. The documentation should include the following: the name, title and professional credentials of the evaluator, including information about license or certification; the area of specialization; employment and state/province in which the individual practices. All reports should be on letterhead, typed, dated and signed.
2. Testing must be current. In most cases, this means that testing has been conducted within the past three years. The provision of all reasonable accommodations and services is guided by an assessment of the impact of the student's disabilities on his or her academic performance at a particular time in the student's life. Thus, it is in the student's best interest to provide recent and appropriate documentation relevant to the student's learning environment.
3. Testing must be comprehensive and must address the following domains. Actual test scores must be provided. The assessment must reveal discrepancies that result in substantial functional limitations to learning.
 - a. Aptitude - A complete intellectual assessment with all subtests and standard scores. The Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale – Revised (WAIS-R) with subtest scores is the preferred instrument. Other acceptable tests include: the Woodcock-Johnson Psychoeducational Battery - Revised: Tests of Cognitive Ability or the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale (4th ed.)
 - b. Achievement - A comprehensive academic achievement battery is essential with all subtests and standard scores reported for those subtests administered. The battery should include current levels of functioning in reading (decoding and comprehension), mathematics, and oral and written language. Acceptable instruments include: Scholastic Abilities Test for Adults (SATA); Stanford Test of Academic Skills; Woodcock-Johnson Psychoeducational Battery - Revised: Tests of Achievement and the Wechsler Individual Achievement Test (WIAT). Specific achievement tests such as the Nelson-Denny Reading Skills Test; the Stanford Diagnostic Mathematics Test; the Test of Written Language - 3 (TOWL-3) and the Woodcock Reading Mastery Test are also acceptable.

- c. Information processing - Specific areas of information processing (e.g., short- and long-term memory, sequential memory, auditory and visual perception/processing, processing speed) must be assessed. Acceptable instruments include: subtests on the WAIS-R or clusters on the Woodcock-Johnson Tests of Cognitive Ability as well as others such as the Detroit Tests of Learning Aptitude-III.
 4. The documentation must provide clear and specific evidence of a learning disability. Individual “learning styles” and “learning differences” in and of themselves do not constitute a learning disability.
 5. A written summary of the student’s educational, medical and family histories that relate to the learning disability must be included.
 6. A description of any accommodation and/or auxiliary aid that has been used at the secondary or postsecondary level must be included
 7. The diagnostic report should include specific recommendations for accommodations as well as an explanation as to why each accommodation is recommended.
- Adapted from Guidelines for Documentation of a Learning Disability in Adolescents and Adults, July 1997, Association on Higher Education and Disability.

Physical Accommodations Policy

The Director of Academic Resources who is working with the student has the responsibility to:

- request that the student discuss the need for accommodations during the first seven class days (add/drop period) of each semester;
- review the documentation provided by the student with disabilities in order to determine eligibility for accommodations;
- determine the appropriate accommodation for each student based on the individual's expressed need and the documentation provided;
- communicate the need for the accommodation in writing when appropriate;
- verify that the student receives the appropriate accommodation;
- emphasize to the student the importance of remaining in contact regarding any problems which may arise.

The student has the responsibility to:

- contact the Director of Academic Resources at the beginning of each semester for the purpose of determining appropriate accommodations in a timely manner. Students are strongly encouraged to make this contact within the first seven days of classes (the add/drop period) of the semester;
- provide the Director of Academic Resources with appropriate medical documentation indicating the student's disability and suggested accommodations;
- authorize the Director of Academic Resources to consult with the professional source of the documentation by signing a consent form;
- communicate with the Director or in the absence of the Director, communicate with the Dean's Office in the event of any difficulties or problems with regard to the accommodations process.

Guidelines for Documentation of a Physical Disability

Students with documented physical disabilities are entitled to reasonable accommodations from the College. To access services, students must contact the Director of Academic Resources or Dean of the College who are responsible for providing services to students with disabilities and submit adequate documentation. The documentation is intended to assist the student and the College in determining reasonable, appropriate and effective accommodations. The following guidelines must be followed in order to insure that the professional assessment is appropriate for verifying accommodation needs and to support requests for reasonable accommodations and/or auxiliary aids on the basis of a physical disability that currently substantially limits one or more major life activity.

1. The professional providing the assessment, rendering the diagnosis and making recommendations for appropriate accommodations must be qualified to do so. The documentation must include the following: the name, title and professional credentials of the evaluator, including information about license or certification; the area of specialization; employment and state/province in which the individual practices. All reports should be on letterhead, typed, dated and signed.
2. Test results must be applicable to the current situation. The provision of all reasonable accommodations and services is guided by an assessment of the impact of the student's disabilities on his or her academic performance at a particular time in the student's life. Thus, it is in the student's best interest to provide recent and appropriate documentation relevant to the student's learning environment.
3. The documentation must provide clear and specific evidence of a physical disability.
4. A written summary of the student's educational, medical and family histories that relate to the disability must be included.
5. A description of any accommodation and/or auxiliary aid that has been used at the secondary or postsecondary level must be included.
6. The diagnostic report should include specific recommendations for accommodations as well as an explanation as to why each accommodation is recommended.

Guidelines for Documentation of a Psychological Disability

Students with documented psychological disabilities are entitled to reasonable accommodations from the College. To access services, students must contact the Director of Academic Resources or Dean of the College who are responsible for providing services to students with disabilities and submit adequate documentation. The documentation is intended to assist the student and the College in determining reasonable, appropriate and effective accommodations. The following guidelines must be followed in order to insure that the professional assessment is appropriate for verifying accommodation needs and to support requests for reasonable accommodations and/or auxiliary aids on the basis of a psychological disability that currently substantially limits one or more major life activity.

1. The professional providing the assessment, rendering the diagnosis and making recommendations for appropriate accommodations must be qualified to do so. The documentation must include the following: the name, title and professional credentials of the evaluator, including information about license or certification; the area of specialization; employment and state/province in which the individual practices. All reports should be on letterhead, typed, dated and signed.
2. Test results must be applicable to the current situation. The provision of all reasonable accommodations and services is guided by an assessment of the impact of the student's disabilities on his or her academic performance at a particular time in the student's life. Thus, it is in the student's best interest to provide recent and appropriate documentation relevant to the student's learning environment. The documentation must provide clear and specific evidence of a psychological disability. The following data should be gathered:
3. A written summary of the student's educational, medical and family histories that relate to the disability must be included.
4. A description of any accommodation and/or auxiliary aid that has been used at the secondary or postsecondary level must be included.
5. The diagnostic report should include specific recommendations for accommodations as well as an explanation as to why each accommodation is recommended.

Grievance Procedure

Williams College has a Disabilities and Accommodations Advisory Group (DAAG) which includes faculty and administrative staff and is charged with providing policy guidance and considering requests for atypical accommodations. In addition, this panel, on a case-by-case basis, works to resolve any disagreements which may arise concerning specific requests for accommodations.

If a student is refused an accommodation he or she believes is necessary, he or she may consult with the Director of Academic Resources or Dean of the College. If an agreement cannot be reached, the student may take the grievance to the DAAG for consideration. The student must provide relevant documentation of his or her disability from an appropriate professional source in order to verify eligibility for accommodations. This documentation is confidential and shared with College personnel on a need-to-know basis only.

Members of the Disabilities and Accommodations Advisory Group are:

The Director of Health Services; the Director of Housing; a representative from the psychological services office; the Director of Academic Resources who is responsible for disability support services as Chair; the Chair of the Committee on Academic Standing (CAS), (who is considered the faculty member from his or her division); two faculty members from divisions not represented by the Chair of the CAS, and the Dean of the College.

Procedure

1. The student requests accommodations and provides supporting documentation according to College guidelines to the Director of Academic Resources or Dean of the College.
2. In instances where there is disagreement concerning eligibility for accommodations or the appropriateness of a potential accommodation, the student may contact the Director of Academic Resources and the Dean of the College who will attempt to resolve the problem informally, normally within three to five business days. If the dispute cannot be resolved, the Director of Academic Resources or the Dean of the College would then have responsibility for convening the DAAG
3. In instances where there is disagreement concerning the appropriateness of the requested accommodation, the student, the instructor teaching the course for which the accommodation has been requested (or the individual/body responsible for providing the accommodation, e.g., library, computer center, housing office, etc.) and the Director of Academic Resources or Dean of the College will attempt to resolve the dispute in a timely manner, normally within three to five business days.

4. If agreement cannot be reached, the student may contact the Director of Academic Resources and the Dean of the College who will attempt to resolve the problem informally. If the dispute cannot be resolved, the Director of Academic Resources or the Dean of the College would then have responsibility for convening the DAAG. The student would be responsible for submitting any information in addition to the original request he or she wished the DAAG to consider.
5. The DAAG would review the circumstances surrounding the original request and any additional relevant information in order to make a recommendation within a reasonable period of time, normally within ten days. When necessary, other individuals in the Williams community with specific expertise may be called upon for input.
6. While the case is under review, every effort will be made to secure an interim accommodation.
7. Depending upon the nature of the discrepancy, the Disabilities and Accommodations Advisory Group will make a recommendation to the appropriate governing body or institutional officer. This recommendation will be communicated in writing, with a copy provided to the student. Final decisions rest with the governing body or institutional officer.
8. Should the student be dissatisfied with the outcome, he or she may follow the grievance procedures as outlined in the College's Non-Discrimination Policy, as described in the Student Handbook.