



DOCUMENTATION GUIDELINES FOR STUDENTS WITH BLINDNESS AND LOW VISION

University of Vermont students who seek accommodations based on their disability are responsible for completing an online [Getting Started with SAS Form](https://myaccess.uvm.edu/ClockWork/user/intake/default.aspx) (<https://myaccess.uvm.edu/ClockWork/user/intake/default.aspx>) and for providing appropriate supporting documentation. A student who seeks academic accommodations on the basis of a disability is responsible for obtaining the needed evaluation and resulting documentation, and for initiating contact with the Student Accessibility Services (SAS). University of Vermont approaches requests for accommodations with the belief that each student's circumstance is unique and that a flexible approach is the right way to determine appropriate accommodations.

By itself, a medical diagnosis does not establish a need or an entitlement to accommodations under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act or the Americans with Disabilities Act as Amended (ADA-AA). Another way of saying this is that having any disorder or condition does not, by itself, lead to any conclusion under Section 504 or the ADA. Therefore, the documentation required by University of Vermont extends beyond the medical diagnosis and encompasses the four key elements of a person's disability status under Section 504 and the ADA. Those key elements are that:

- the student has a physical or mental impairment
- the impairment limits the student's participation in a major life activity*
- the degree of limitation is substantial and
- there is something that the college can do that would be reasonable, needed, and predictably effective in responding to the impairment.

Documentation that substantiates each of these four areas serves as a foundation that legitimizes a student's request for appropriate accommodations. If a student seeks accommodations on the basis of more than one disability, then more than one professional may need to be involved in developing the diagnoses and other documentation.

SAS will review the documentation and collaborate with the student to determine reasonable and appropriate academic accommodations. Students will be contacted and encouraged to schedule a conversation with as soon as possible after submitting documentation.

The accommodations afforded to each student will be determined on an individual basis and will be based on the documentation provided.

Please see the next page for our disability documentation requirements.

The Disability Documentation Form, list examples of a "major life activity" as defined under the ADA Amendments Act of 2008. According to the ADA, "A major life activity also includes the operating of a major bodily function, including, but not limited to, functions of the immune system, normal cell growth, digestive, bowel, bladder, neurological, brain, respiratory, circulatory, endocrine, and reproductive functions."

Acceptable documentation for blindness or low vision disability must meet the following requirements:

- **The diagnosis must be substantiated and be made by a qualified professional.**

The diagnosis must be made by a licensed physician or other qualified health care provider with experience and expertise in the area for which accommodations are being requested, and should specify the corresponding diagnostic code for the diagnosis using the International Classification of Diseases Manual, Ninth or Tenth Revision (ICD-9 or 10). The diagnostician must be an impartial individual who is not a family member of the student

- **Include relevant educational, developmental, historical, and familial data.**

- **Reflect and describe the current functional limitation the disability has on the student's learning or other major life activity and the degree to which it impacts the individual in the academic context.**

The age of acceptable documentation is dependent upon the disabling condition, the current status of the student, and the student's request for accommodations. For a low vision diagnosis, it is recommended that documentation have been conducted within the last three (3) years.

- **The diagnosis must be supported by appropriate assessments and presents current symptoms.**

Include a summary of assessment procedures and evaluation instruments used to make the diagnosis, including evaluation results. Present medical information relating to the student's needs, the status of the individual's blindness or sight impairment (static or changing and its impact on the student's ability to meet the demands of the postsecondary environment. Include a narrative or descriptive text providing both quantitative and qualitative information about the student's abilities that might be helpful in understanding the student's profile including functional limitations.

- **Include specific recommendations for accommodations with accompanying rationale.**

A connection must be established between the requested accommodations and the functional limitations on the student in the academic environment.

- **Documentation is to be type-written on official letterhead, and signed and dated by the evaluator.**

SAS uses the Disability Documentation Guidelines recommended by AHEAD (the Association of Higher Education and Disability): https://edgecastcdn.net/006FDC/AU/PDF/AHEAD_Supporting-Accommodation-Requests%5B2%5D.pdf

Disability documentation should be sent to Student Accessibility Services in one of the following ways:

Email: access@uvm.edu

Fax: 802-656-0739

Mail: Student Accessibility Services, UVM, 633 Main Street, A170 Living/Learning, Burlington VT 05405

Questions? Call (802) 656-7753 Our office hours are Monday-Friday 8:30am - 4:30pm