

# Psychological and Psychiatric Disorders

Documentation Guidelines for Evaluators

For Pearson VUE Test Accommodations (Reasonable Adjustments)

## Introduction

Pearson VUE is committed to ensuring access to the test for all individuals with disabilities. Pearson VUE provides reasonable and appropriate accommodations to individuals with documented disabilities who demonstrate a need for accommodations.

## Purpose of Accommodations

The following technical information is provided for the evaluators who prepare documentation for candidates as part of their request for test accommodations. Candidates requesting test accommodations are asked to share these guidelines with their evaluator so that appropriate documentation can be assembled to support the request for test accommodations.

Requests for test accommodations are inherently individualized and need to be considered on a case-by-case basis. Consequently, no single type of accommodation (i.e., extra time) would necessarily be appropriate for all individuals with disabilities or even with the same diagnosis or disability. Moreover, simply demonstrating that an individual meets diagnostic criteria for a particular disorder does not mean that the person needs or is automatically entitled to accommodations.

The purpose of accommodations is to ensure that candidates can take the test in an accessible manner. However, accommodations are not a guarantee of improved performance or test completion.

Recommended accommodations should be related to the identified functional limitations the specific candidate experiences due to the diagnosed disability so that the impairment is mitigated by the requested auxiliary aid or adjustment to the testing format. For example, a functional limitation of social anxiety disorder might be increased anxiety when in groups of people. An appropriate accommodation might be a separate room for taking the exam. **In all events, it is essential that the documentation provide a clear explanation of the current functional limitation(s) and a rationale for the requested accommodation.**

## Detailed Documentation Requirements

Candidates who are requesting accommodations based on a diagnosis of a psychological or psychiatric disorder are generally expected to provide a current, comprehensive psychiatric or psychological evaluation report. The diagnosis of a psychological or psychiatric disorder and recommended accommodations should be based on consideration of the examinee's relevant history, levels of current functioning, clinical judgment, and optionally, objective test results.

**Note that meeting diagnostic criteria for a particular disorder does not necessarily mean that the individual will be found to be disabled for the purpose of needing or being eligible for testing accommodations.**

**The evaluation should:**

1. Be performed by a qualified evaluator (see Note #1 below)
2. Be current (< 1 year; see Note #2 below)

**The detailed letter or report should:**

1. Include identifying information:
  - a. The first page of the detailed letter or report should be printed on the evaluator's letterhead, dated, and should provide relevant identifying information, including the examinee's name, date of birth, the examination dates, age at the time of testing, and grade and school (if applicable).
  - b. The last page of the report should be signed by the evaluator.
2. Include a comprehensive history:
  - a. age that symptoms of the disorder first appeared
  - b. educational history
  - c. psychosocial history
  - d. relevant medical history
  - e. history of the condition
  - f. history of intervention efforts and results
  - g. history of the impact of the condition
  - h. summary of psychological test results (if any)
3. Include information about the current impact of the disorder on academic performance, employment (if relevant), and other relevant activities.
4. Include a diagnosis using globally recognized standards (e.g., DSM, ICD):
  - a. In order to be diagnosed with a psychological or psychiatric disorder, there should be evidence that the symptoms cause clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning.

- b. In order to be diagnosed with a psychological or psychiatric disorder, there should be evidence that the symptoms attributed to the disorder cannot be better accounted for by another disorder or other explanation.
  - c. The evaluator's documentation should include discussion of how the diagnostic criteria have been met.
5. Include specific recommendations for accommodations relating to the candidate's functional limitations (e.g., "Separate Room").
  6. Include a specific rationale for each recommended accommodation.

## Notes:

1. A qualified professional should evaluate the person who is requesting accommodations. In general, an individual is deemed to be qualified to assess an individual for a psychological or psychiatric disability if s/he has had extensive graduate-level training in the area of psychiatric or psychological assessment of adults and is appropriately credentialed. In most cases, the evaluator should have a M.D., Ph.D., or Psy.D. degree. The name, title, and professional credentials of the evaluator should be clearly stated in the documentation. Pearson VUE reserves the right to request evidence from an evaluator of their professional qualifications. Formal assessment by family members, even if otherwise qualified, will not be accepted.

If a graduate-trainee is conducting some or all of the evaluation, for example as part of a university-based assessment practicum, this fact should be noted whenever possible. We will consider the results if both the clinician and the faculty supervisor sign the written report. Pearson VUE reserves the right to contact the faculty supervisor and/or the graduate trainee/clinician to inquire about the level of supervision during the assessment or in connection with any diagnosis that has been made or accommodations that have been recommended.

2. Currency: Psychological or psychiatric disorders are conditions that may change significantly over a short time, both in terms of treatment as well as functional impact. Because the provision of reasonable accommodations is based on assessment of the current impact and current functional limitations caused by the applicant's disability, Pearson VUE requires current documentation. **The documentation provided should be no older than one (1) year prior to the anticipated test date.** In some cases, more recent documentation (i.e., less than one year prior to the anticipated test date) may be needed.

## Additional Notes:

In situations where an individual has two or more disorders, such as a psychiatric disorder and Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), the diagnostic report should clearly describe the unique impact of each disorder, and documentation guidelines should be addressed for each disorder.