

Blind / Low Vision Documentation Guidelines

It is the responsibility of the student to provide the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth's Center for Access & Success the comprehensive documentation outlined below and, when requested, provide any additional information or clarification that conforms to the following guidelines. As stated in the 2009 amendments of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Center for Access & Success may also engage in an interactive process with the professional evaluator to determine how the student's clearly diagnosed disability and limitations to a major life activity (i.e. walking, seeing, hearing, or learning) relate to the higher education classroom.

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 states that in order for a student to demonstrate the need for accommodations in their classrooms he/she must provide documentation that contains a specific diagnosis of a disability and specify how this disability **substantially limits** a major life activity. "Major life activities" include, but are not limited to, seeing, hearing, walking, breathing, and learning. The documentation must also specifically contain the disability's **current impact on academic performance**. All accommodations are determined on a case-by-case basis.

Blindness and Low Vision include, but are not limited to, retinal degeneration, albinism, cataracts, glaucoma, muscular problems that result in visual disturbances, corneal disorders, diabetic retinopathy, congenital disorders, and infection. Limitations should include substantial impairment in the individual's ability to function with respect to the condition, manner, or duration of a required life activity.

1) All documentation must be typed, current, and include the name and credentials of the evaluator, specific diagnosis of the blindness or low vision, and specify the functional limitations related to the disability. If the disability is progressive, or if the student experiences any change in severity that would affect academic accommodations, the students must provide updated documentation that reflects the change in status.

Qualified evaluators are defined as those licensed individuals who are qualified to evaluate and diagnose individuals who are blind or have low vision. These individuals or team members may include physicians, Ophthalmologists, Optometrists, and other relevantly trained healthcare professionals qualified to make such diagnoses.

2) Documentation should include a summary of assessment procedures used to make the evaluation.

3) A diagnostic summary should include suggestions of reasonable accommodations that might be appropriate at the postsecondary level. **Accommodations must be based on significant functional limitations and must be supported by the diagnostic assessment.** Documentation should include a detailed summary of a visual related disability, description of the current symptoms that meet criteria for diagnosis, fluctuating conditions/symptoms, and prognosis. Relevant medical information and/or treatment relating to the individual's vision should be included as well (i.e. corrective lenses, medication side effects, etc).

Once it is determined that a student is eligible to receive services, it is important to note that he/she still must follow the established policies and procedures of the Center for Access & Success as it pertains to the timeliness of requests and the completion of necessary request forms in order to properly coordinate accommodations.

Students must complete accommodation request forms each semester for the specific courses for which they are requesting accommodations. **Accommodations cannot be made retroactively.**