

## **HOW SUPPORT SERVICES ARE DETERMINED**

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Most faculty members are familiar with the types of support services provided by DSP&S, including tape recorders, spellcheckers, and modified exam formats, including extra time on exams. However, many faculty members are unaware of the specific reasons for these accommodations (e.g., diagnoses, psycho-educational profiles) because this type of information is considered confidential. In light of this, the goal of this article is to provide a general framework of how accommodations are determined.

Students must provide verification of their disability from a qualified professional such as a physician, psychiatrist, or psychologist in order to receive DSP&S services. The health professional is required to document the educational limitations related to the student's particular disability, and based on this information, the DSP&S counselor works with the student to determine appropriate support services. For example, a psychiatrist may indicate that a student diagnosed with depression requires extra time on exams to compensate for his difficulty concentrating (a symptom often associated with depression).

Sometimes students are having difficulty in their classes, but have never been evaluated or diagnosed. The DSP&S counselor will then either refer the student to a medical professional to obtain verification of their disability or refer the student to the Learning Disabilities Specialist within the DSP&S Department who will decide if the student should be evaluated for a learning disability that may have gone undiagnosed. The learning disability assessment takes about four to six hours to administer and includes intelligence and achievement measures, along with an extensive review of the student's academic, work, health, and family history. If the student meets the criteria set forth by the California Community College Chancellor's Office, the LD Specialist will use the test data to determine appropriate accommodations.

Support services and accommodations are developed with the goal of helping the student compensate for deficits due to his/her disability, rather than to give the student an advantage over other students. General accommodations are developed to incorporate the student's needs for all courses for that academic year; as such, there may be specific instances where an accommodation is inappropriate for use in a particular course. For example, a spellchecker may be appropriate for an essay exam in US History but not for the weekly spelling test in a Basic Vocabulary and Spelling course. We encourage faculty to contact a DSP&S counselor to discuss any concerns about student accommodations.