

Disability Support Services
Building 43, Room 109

Guidelines for Documentation of a Temporary Disability

Students may contact DSS when seeking support services and/or temporary accommodations on the basis of a diagnosed illness or injury that is anticipated to be resolved within a limited period of time. Students may also contact DSS to seek a recommendation for an incomplete if required by a professor and it is being requested for the above reason. Please note that while DSS can recommend to a professor that a grade of incomplete would be appropriate, the professor has sole authority to grant the request.

Students will be asked to submit documentation that supports their request for temporary accommodations. The director of DSS will review the documentation and use it as the basis for any decisions about how to respond to the request. Examples of conditions that qualify for temporary accommodations include but are not limited to post-op recovery time following major surgery, concussion or traumatic brain injury (TBI), limited mobility due to broken bones or muscle injuries, or an illness or other injury of limited duration with symptoms affecting academic performance. The following guidelines are provided in the interest of ensuring that evaluation reports are appropriate and sufficient to document a temporary disability or need for a grade of incomplete. The Disability Support Services director is available to consult with clinicians concerning any of these guidelines.

1. A qualified professional must conduct the evaluation.

Clinicians conducting assessments and rendering a diagnosis of an illness or injury that is expected to be resolved after a specific period of time must have training in differential diagnosis. The name, title, professional credentials, as well as licensing and certification information should be clearly stated in the evaluation. The following professionals are generally considered to be qualified to evaluate and diagnose a condition: medical doctors, clinical psychologists, neuropsychologists, psychiatrists, and other relevantly trained medical doctors and nurse practitioners. Use of diagnostic terminology by someone whose training and experience are not in these fields is not acceptable. Any hand-written notes or documents that do not include the clinician's signature and professional letterhead will not be accepted.

2. Documentation should be current.

The provision of services and accommodations is based on the current impact of the temporary disability on academic performance. In most cases, documentation should focus on the impact of

the injury or illness based on an evaluation performed at the time signs or symptoms first developed. However, if the impact is not immediately known but arises after a period of time has passed since development of the injury or illness, the fact that delayed symptoms could surface should be addressed in the documentation. Additionally, documentation must be dated within three months prior to the start of the semester for which temporary accommodations are being requested. If documentation is older than three months, new documentation may be required. Documentation should also clearly show the time period for which the temporary accommodations are needed. These accommodations or the leave may be extended for one additional semester if further supporting documentation from a clinician is submitted. After that time, any extension of accommodations is at the discretion of the director of DSS. More comprehensive documentation may be requested.

If documentation is inadequate in scope or content, or does not address an individual's current level of functioning and need for accommodations, reevaluation may be warranted. In cases where a new medication has been prescribed or medication previously taken has been discontinued subsequent to the evaluation, it may be necessary to update the evaluation report.

3. Documentation should be comprehensive.

The impact of an injury or illness may vary between individuals. Therefore, documentation must cover all aspects of how this individual's daily activities have been affected and the barriers to learning that have been created for the individual by the illness or injury. The documentation should include a discussion of how the individual's academic performance could be affected and the anticipated duration of that effect.

4. A change in status or diagnosis may need additional documentation.

If at any point the clinician determines that the illness or injury is likely to become permanent, new documentation may be requested to continue or change any current accommodations. This documentation will be needed to show the long-term effect on the individual's activities of daily living, including academic performance.

5. Documentation must include a specific diagnosis.

The report must include a clear diagnosis and explanation of the illness or injury. Also include a list of any applicable medications, their role in treatment, and the expected duration of their course if known. A positive response to medication or the use of medication does not in and of itself support or negate the need for accommodations.

8. An interpretive summary should be provided.

An interpretive summary based on a comprehensive evaluative process is a necessary component of the documentation. This summary should include indication and discussion of the substantial limitation to learning presented by the temporary disability and the degree and duration (if known) to which this will affect the individual in a learning environment.

9. Each recommended accommodation should include a rationale.

The diagnostic report should include specific recommendations for accommodations that are realistic and that the university can reasonably provide. A detailed explanation should be provided as to why each accommodation is recommended and should be correlated with specific functional limitations determined through interview, observation and/or testing. A prior history of accommodations without clear demonstration of current needs does not warrant the provision of like accommodations. The determination of reasonable accommodations for a disabled student at Embry-Riddle rests with the Disability Support Services director working in collaboration with the individual with the disability.

Documentation should be sent to: Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University
Disability Support Services – Prescott Campus
Email: PRDSS@erau.edu
Fax: 928-777-6803