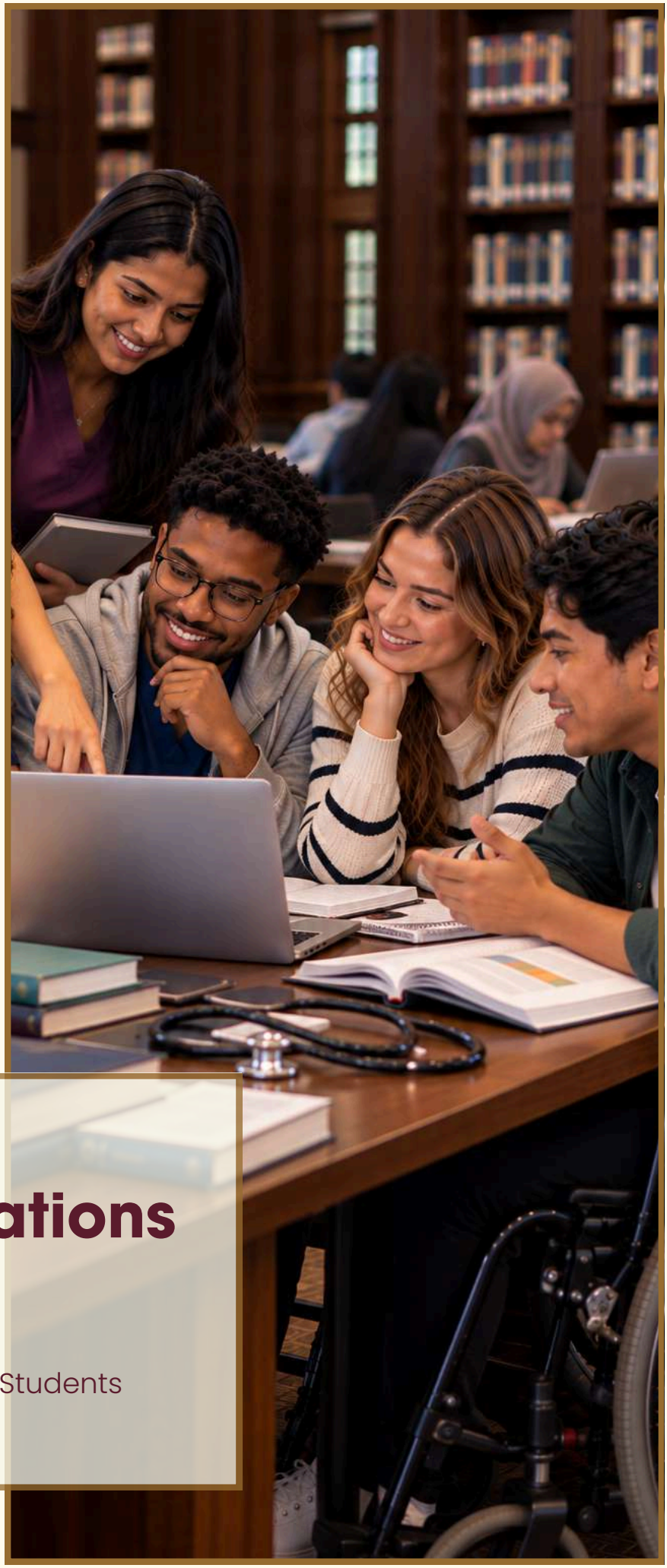
NORTHWEST
SUBURBAN COLLEGE



Reasonable Accommodations Handbook

A Guide for Faculty, Staff, & Students

10.2026

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Introduction and Purpose

Northwest Suburban College (NWSC) is committed to providing qualified students with disabilities equitable access to its educational programs, services, and activities. The College recognizes that students may experience disability-related barriers in classrooms, laboratories, clinical settings, externships, and other learning environments.

This handbook explains how students request accommodations and how faculty and staff implement approved accommodations. Reasonable accommodations are individualized adjustments that provide access while preserving essential academic, professional, technical, and safety requirements. They do not guarantee academic success or waive essential competencies.

Equal Access and Nondiscrimination

Northwest Suburban College (NWSC) is committed to providing an inclusive educational environment in which qualified students with disabilities have equitable access to academic programs, services, and activities.

As a private postsecondary institution, NWSC complies with applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and is committed to meeting all other applicable disability nondiscrimination requirements, including those under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), as applicable.

The College considers requests for reasonable accommodations on an individualized basis, taking into account each student's disability-related needs and the essential academic, technical, professional, and safety requirements of the applicable program.

Students with disabilities have the right to request reasonable accommodations and to have their requests considered fairly and without unlawful discrimination or retaliation.

Understanding Reasonable Accommodations

Reasonable accommodations may include modifications to instructional methods, testing arrangements, access to materials, classroom environments, or other aspects of a student's educational experience. Examples of possible accommodations include the following:

- Extended time for examinations or assessments
- Reduced-distraction testing environments
- Accessible course materials and assistive technology
- Permission to record lectures, subject to appropriate conditions
- Accessible classroom seating or workstation arrangements
- Adjustments to instructional or communication methods

- Reasonable flexibility in attendance or assignment deadlines when consistent with essential course requirements
- Modifications to laboratory or clinical arrangements that preserve required competencies and safety standards

These examples are illustrative. An accommodation appropriate for one student or course may not be appropriate for another.

The College may identify an effective alternative to a student's preferred accommodation following an individualized review.

Student Rights and Responsibilities

Students requesting reasonable accommodations have the right to be treated respectfully, have their requests considered individually, receive information about accommodation decisions, and raise concerns when approved accommodations are not implemented effectively.

Students are responsible for initiating requests, participating in the review process, submitting appropriate documentation, and communicating with the College when circumstances change or accommodations are not working as intended.

Students remain responsible for meeting essential course and program requirements, maintaining academic integrity, following applicable safety procedures, and complying with professional conduct expectations.

Students are encouraged to begin the accommodation process as early as possible, particularly when arrangements may be needed for laboratory activities, clinical placements, externships, or specialized examinations. However, requests may be submitted at any point during enrollment.

Requesting Reasonable Accommodations

NWSC has established a coordinated process to ensure that accommodation requests are reviewed consistently and confidentially.

1. Contact the Accessibility Services Department.
Students should contact Dr. Gayathree Raman, who serves as the designated point of contact and coordinates accommodation requests.

2. Complete the required forms.
NWSC's standard process requires the student to complete the Request for Reasonable Accommodations (SA-F210) and have an appropriately qualified professional complete the Accommodations Documentation (SA-F215).

3. Participate in the individualized review.
Personnel from the Accessibility Services Department coordinate the review of documentation and any necessary discussions with the student, faculty, or Program Director regarding the requested accommodation and essential program requirements.

4. Receive a written determination.
The Dean of Academic & Student Affairs reviews requests and has authority to approve, modify, or deny accommodations. The determination is communicated in writing.

5. Implement and monitor the accommodation.
The Accessibility Services Department personnel coordinate the implementation with the appropriate faculty or program personnel. Students should communicate promptly if an approved accommodation is not working effectively.

Although both forms are part of NWSC's standard process, students who experience difficulty obtaining documentation or completing the forms should contact the Accessibility Services Department. The College will consider individual circumstances and any appropriate interim measures, if applicable.

Discussing Accommodations with Faculty

Once an accommodation is approved, the student and instructor may need to discuss how it will be implemented in a particular course.

These conversations should focus on practical arrangements rather than the student's diagnosis or medical history.

Students are encouraged to:

- Review the approved accommodations and understand how they apply to their courses.
- Communicate with instructors privately when implementation requires coordination.
- Discuss examination arrangements, laboratory activities, or clinical schedules sufficiently in advance whenever possible.
- Notify the Accessibility Services Department personnel when an accommodation is not being implemented or no longer meets their needs.

Sample Student-Faculty Conversation

Student: “I received approval for a reduced-distraction testing environment. Can we discuss how the next exam will be arranged?”

Instructor: “Yes. Let’s confirm the arrangements with Dr. Gayathree Raman so the accommodation is in place before the exam. You do not need to share your medical information with me.”

Faculty should not require students to explain their diagnosis or disclose medical documentation directly to them.

Questions about the nature, appropriateness, or scope of approved accommodations should be directed to the Accessibility Services Department.

Faculty and Staff Responsibilities

Faculty and staff play an important role in ensuring that approved accommodations are implemented effectively while maintaining academic standards.

Faculty and staff are expected to:

1. Respond respectfully to disability disclosures and refer students to the Accessibility Services Department.
2. Review written accommodation notifications issued through the College.
3. Protect confidentiality and discuss arrangements privately.
4. Implement approved accommodations promptly and consistently.
5. Maintain essential academic and professional standards.
6. Contact the Accessibility Services Department personnel when implementation is unclear, difficult, or appears to affect an essential requirement.
7. Do not independently deny, withdraw, or change an approved accommodation.

When A Student First Discloses a Disability

Suggested Response:
"Thank you for sharing that with me. NWSC has a process for reviewing reasonable accommodation requests. Dr. Gayathree Raman can explain the next steps. I can help connect you with the Accessibility Services Department."

Avoid asking for a diagnosis, promising a particular accommodation, or assuming a student cannot complete a program. If an immediate access barrier exists, contact the Accessibility Services Department.

Implementing Accommodations in the Classroom

Effective implementation requires communication, preparation, and attention to individual circumstances.

Possible Accommodation	Practical Implementation
Extended examination time	Arrange an appropriate testing schedule and location while maintaining examination security.
Reduced-distraction testing	Identify a suitable environment that minimizes unnecessary interruptions.
Accessible instructional materials	Provide approved accessible formats sufficiently in advance for meaningful use.
Note-taking or recording assistance	Coordinate the approved method and applicable confidentiality or recording conditions.
Accessible seating	Ensure the student can access and participate in instructional activities.
Flexible deadlines	Clarify the approved scope of flexibility and communicate arrangements for affected assignments.

Faculty should contact the Accessibility Services Department personnel when the approved accommodation requires additional resources or coordination.

> ***Sample Implementation Challenge***
>
> *Scenario:* An instructor believes extended time cannot be provided during a timed laboratory assessment. The instructor should contact Dr. Gayathree Raman before the assessment, identify the competency being measured and explain why timing may be essential. The Dean determines whether the approved arrangement needs modification or an effective alternative. The instructor should not simply refuse the accommodation.

Accommodations in Healthcare Programs, Laboratories, and Clinical Settings

Healthcare education may involve specialized equipment, technical skills, patient interaction, simulations, and supervised clinical experiences. Accommodations are considered individually in relation to essential competencies, patient and student safety, certification or licensure requirements, and clinical-site conditions.

Setting	Potential Adjustment	Essential Consideration
Medical assisting laboratory	Accessible workstation or adjusted equipment positioning	Required skills and safety procedures remain essential
MRI laboratory	Accessible instructional materials or adjusted positioning	MRI safety protocols and technical competencies apply
Pharmacy technician laboratory	Accessible tools or appropriate assessment arrangements	Medication safety, accuracy, and competencies remain required
Clinical/externship placement	Accessibility, communication, or scheduling adjustments	Coordination with the affiliate and applicable site requirements may be necessary
Written or computer-based exams	Extended time or assistive technology	The assessment must measure required knowledge and competencies

A disability does not automatically disqualify a student from a laboratory or clinical placement. Where a proposed adjustment may affect essential requirements or safety, the Accessibility Services Department coordinates individualized review with relevant program personnel and the Dean. An accommodation may be declined or altered only following an appropriate individualized assessment under applicable law, including consideration of effective alternatives and reasonable risk reduction.

Sample Clinical Placement Scenario

Scenario: A student requests a schedule adjustment for a clinical rotation. Dr. Gayathree Raman consults with the student, program director, and clinical affiliate as appropriate to determine whether a workable adjustment preserves required clinical hours, supervision, and competencies. If the requested schedule cannot be supported, the College considers effective alternatives rather than assuming the student is ineligible.

Privacy and Confidentiality

Disability-related documentation is maintained securely and shared only with authorized personnel who need the information. Faculty generally receive implementation instructions rather than diagnoses or full medical records. Records are retained according to the College's Records Retention and Disposition Policy, which specifies seven years after the student's last date of attendance for accommodation records, subject to applicable holds and law.

When an Accommodation Is Not Working

Students should promptly notify the Accessibility Services Department personnel if an accommodation is not provided, proves ineffective, or needs revision. Faculty should likewise report implementation difficulties.

The Accessibility Services Department personnel coordinates review; formal changes to approved accommodations are determined by the Dean of Academic & Student Affairs. Faculty should not unilaterally discontinue an approved arrangement.

Sample Problem-Solving Conversation

Student: "The approved testing room was not available for my last exam."

Instructor: "Thank you for telling me. I will contact Dr. Gayathree Raman so we can resolve the arrangement for the next exam and address what happened."

Appeals and Concerns

A student who disagrees with the Dean of Academic & Student Affairs' accommodation determination may appeal to the Provost. The appeal may identify relevant information not considered, concerns about the determination, or reasons an alternative is ineffective. The Provost reviews the appeal and communicates a determination through the College's established process:

1. **Informal Resolution:** Students are encouraged to first discuss their concerns with the Accessibility Services Department personnel to seek clarification or resolution. Informal resolution is encouraged but is not required before submitting a formal appeal.
2. **Written Appeal:** Students who disagree with an accommodation determination made by the Dean of Academic & Student Affairs may submit a written appeal to the Provost within 10 business days of receiving notification of the decision. The appeal should explain the reason for the disagreement and include any relevant supporting information.
3. **Appeal Review:** The Provost will review the appeal, the original determination, and any relevant documentation. Additional information may be requested as necessary.
4. **Final Determination:** The Provost will issue a written decision within 10 business days of receiving the appeal, whenever practicable. If additional time is needed, the student will be notified. The Provost's determination constitutes the final institutional decision regarding the accommodation appeal.

Concerns regarding the implementation of approved accommodations should be promptly reported to the Accessibility Services Department personnel for resolution. Urgent concerns affecting ongoing coursework, examinations, or clinical experiences will be addressed as promptly as practicable.

All concerns and appeals will be handled fairly and confidentially. Students will not be subjected to retaliation for requesting accommodations or submitting an appeal. Requests for extensions of the appeal deadline will be considered when warranted by disability-related circumstances or other good cause.

Frequently Asked Questions

Do I need to tell my instructor what disability I have?
Generally, no. Students submit disability-related documentation through the designated accommodation process. Faculty receive the information necessary to implement approved accommodations.

Can I request accommodations after classes have started?
Yes. Students may request accommodations at any time. Approved accommodations are generally implemented prospectively, although individual circumstances may require additional consideration.

Are accommodations automatically approved if I received them in high school?
No. An Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Section 504 plan from high school may provide useful supporting information, but accommodations at NWSC are determined through the College's individualized review process.

Will accommodations change the academic standards of my program?
No. Accommodations are intended to provide equitable access while preserving essential learning outcomes, competencies, and professional requirements.

Can I receive accommodations during clinical training or externships?
Potentially, yes. Requests are evaluated individually and may require coordination with the clinical affiliate.

What if my instructor disagrees with an approved accommodation?
Faculty should refer implementation concerns to the Accessibility Services Department. The instructor may not independently deny or withdraw an approved accommodation.

What if my accommodation needs change?
Contact the Accessibility Services Department to request a review or modification.

What if I disagree with the Dean's decision?
Students may appeal the determination to the Provost through the College's established appeal process.

Resources and Forms

Accessibility Services Department Personnel:
Dr. Gayathree Raman
Director of Programs & Student Services
Phone: 847-290-6425, extension 108
accommodations@nwsc.edu

Accommodation Decision-Making Authority:
Dean of Academic & Student Affairs
Dr. Debra Gurney
dgurney@nwsc.edu

Appeals Authority:
Provost
Dr. Jay Shahed
jshahed@nwsc.edu

Forms:
- Request for Reasonable Accommodations (SA-F210)
- Accommodations Documentation (SA-F215)

Students should contact the Accessibility Services Department for the current forms and secure submission instructions.

Appendices

Appendix A: When a Student Discloses a Disability: Faculty Quick Reference Guide
Appendix B: Request for Reasonable Accommodations (SA-F210)
Appendix C: Accommodations Documentation (SA-F215)

"WHEN A STUDENT DISCLOSES A DISABILITY"

A QUICK REFERENCE FOR COLLEGE FACULTY & STAFF

Your role: Respond supportively • Protect privacy • Connect the student to appropriate resources

① LISTEN & ACKNOWLEDGE

You don't need to diagnose, investigate, or solve the situation immediately.

Helpful Responses

- "Thank you for letting me know."
- "I'm glad you told me."
- "Let's talk about what support you may need."
- "Our disability/accessibility office can help."

Avoid

- Asking for unnecessary medical details
- Questioning whether the disability is legitimate
- Making assumptions about the student's abilities
- Promising an accommodation, you are not authorized to provide

② CLARIFY WHAT THE STUDENT NEEDS

A disclosure is not necessarily a request for an accommodation.

Ask: "Are you requesting an accommodation, or are you letting me know so I'm aware?"

If an accommodation is requested, refer the student to the Accessibility Services Department located in Dr. Raman's office in Building 500 and follow campus procedures.

③ IF ACCOMMODATIONS ARE ALREADY APPROVED

DO

- Review the official accommodation notice.
- Implement accommodations as specified.
- Contact the appropriate campus office if you have questions about implementation.
- Protect the student's confidentiality.

DON'T

- Independently deny, modify, or substitute an approved accommodation.
- Ask the student to repeatedly explain or prove their disability.
- Share the student's diagnosis unnecessarily.

④ PROTECT PRIVACY

- Disability information is private.
- Share information only with those who have an appropriate need to know.
- Do not discuss a student's disability in front of classmates.
- Keep disability-related communications and records secure.
- Focus on the access need or accommodation, not the diagnosis.

Think: "What does this student need to access the course?"

Not: "What is the student's medical condition?"

⑤ IF NO FORMAL ACCOMMODATION HAS BEEN REQUESTED

Encourage the student to connect with the Accessibility Services Department.

"If you would like accommodations, I encourage you to contact Dr. Raman in our Accessibility Services Dept. She can explain the process and available support."

You may continue providing ordinary course support available to all students.

Resources	Contact Information
Accessibility Services	Dr. Raman, 847-290-6425, Ext. 108
Dean of Academic & Student Affairs	Dr. Gurney, 847-290-6425, Ext. 106
National Mental Hotline (24-Hour Crisis Line)	988

⚠ **URGENT CONCERNS:** If a student describes an immediate safety, medical, or crisis concern, follow the emergency response procedures. Do not promise absolute confidentiality when safety or institutional obligations require an immediate action.

THE 5-STEP RESPONSE: LISTEN → ACKNOWLEDGE → CLARIFY → CONNECT → PROTECT PRIVACY

WHEN IN DOUBT: You do not have to solve the situation yourself. Respond respectfully, avoid unnecessary medical questions, and consult the Accessibility Services Department.

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REQUEST FOR REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS FORM

Northwest Suburban College (NWSC) provides reasonable accommodations to qualified students with disabilities to ensure equal access to its programs and activities. Accommodations are determined on an individual basis through an interactive process. Submission of this form does not guarantee approval of a specific accommodation. Approved accommodations must be reasonable and may not fundamentally alter essential academic requirements or the nature of a program. Disability-related information will be maintained confidentially and shared only as necessary to evaluate or implement accommodations.

This form should be completed by a student requesting reasonable accommodations.

Last Name _____ First Name _____

Date of Birth (MM/DD/YYYY) _____ Email _____

Program:

- ☐ Healthcare Management
- ☐ Magnetic Resonance Imaging Technologist
- ☐ Medical Assistant
- ☐ Pharmacy Technician
- ☐ Associate of Applied Science in Medical Assisting
- ☐ Bachelor of Health Science

Reasons for Request

Please briefly describe the disability, learning difference, medical condition, or other circumstance for which you are requesting accommodations.

_____

_____

How It Affects Your Learning: Please describe how your condition affects your ability to participate in class, complete assignments, take exams, read, write, concentrate, communicate, or otherwise meet academic requirements.

_____

_____

_____

Accommodations Requested: Please select the accommodation(s) you are requesting:

- ☐ Extended time on exams
- ☐ Reduced-distraction/quiet testing environment
- ☐ Breaks during exams
- ☐ Other: _____
- ☐ Note-taking assistance
- ☐ Permission to record lectures
- ☐ Flexible assignment deadlines when appropriate

Additional Information: Is there anything else you would like the College to know regarding your accommodation request?

Supporting Documentation:
Is documentation from a qualified professional enclosed?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Professional/Provider Name | Date of Documentation

Student Statement

I am requesting reasonable academic accommodations so that I can have equal access to my college education. I understand that accommodations are determined through an interactive process with the College's appropriate offices.

Student Signature | Date

For NWSC Administrator Use Only:

Determination:

☐ Approved
☐ Approved with Modification
☐ Additional Information/Documentation Required
☐ Denied

Comments:

Administrator Name (Print) | Title

Administrator Signature | Date

NORTHWEST SUBURBAN COLLEGE

ACCOMMODATIONS DOCUMENTATION FORM

This form must be completed by a qualified healthcare or other appropriately credentialed professional and emailed to **accommodations@nwsc.edu**.

Last Name | First Name

Date of Birth (MM/DD/YYYY) | Email

I authorize the qualified professional identified below to provide the information requested on this form to Northwest Suburban College for the purpose of evaluating my request for reasonable accommodations.

Student's Signature | Date

THE FOLLOWING MUST BE COMPLETED BY A QUALIFIED PROFESSIONAL:

The student named above has requested reasonable accommodations from Northwest Suburban College. Please provide documentation sufficient to verify the student's disability or qualifying condition, describe its current functional impact on learning or other major life activities, and support the need for the requested accommodation(s). Documentation should be completed by an appropriately qualified professional and should include relevant clinical, diagnostic, or evaluative information, as applicable.

Please complete the sections below or provide a written report on professional letterhead that addresses the requested information.

Diagnosis: Date of Diagnosis:
Relevant evaluations, assessments, clinical findings, or other information supporting the diagnosis/condition, if applicable:

A statement of the current functional impact or limitations of the disability on learning or other major life activities:
Recommended accommodations, along with rationale for how accommodation will address the student's disability:

Expected Duration of Functional Limitations:

☐ Permanent/Ongoing ☐ Temporary ☐ Episodic ☐ Unknown

Examiner Full Name Phone

Address

Title and Credentials

Examiner Signature Date