

## **INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES FOR STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES**

Learning disabilities are neurologically-based conditions that interfere with the acquisition, storage, organization, and use of skills and knowledge. They are identified by the existence of deficits in academic functioning and in processing memory, auditory, visual, and linguistic information. The diagnosis of a learning disability in an adult requires documentation of at least average intellectual functioning along with deficits in such areas as:

- Auditory processing
- Visual processing
- Information processing speed
- Abstract reasoning
- Memory (long-term, short-term, visual, auditory)
- Spoken and written language skills
- Reading skills
- Mathematical skills
- Visual spatial skills
- Motor skills
- Executive functioning (planning)

### ***Some considerations:***

A learning disability is not a disorder that a student “grows out of.” It is a permanent disorder affecting how students with normal or above-average intelligence process incoming information, outgoing information, or both.

Learning disabilities are often inconsistent. They may be manifested in only one specific academic area, such as math or foreign language. There might be problems in grade school, non in high school, and again in college.

Learning disabilities are not the same as mental retardation or emotional disorders.

Common accommodations for students with learning disabilities are alternative print formats, taped lectures, note takers, adaptive technology, course substitutions, early syllabus, exam modifications, priority registration, and study skills and strategies training.

### ***Instructional Strategies:***

The following strategies are suggested to enhance the accessibility of course instruction, materials, and activities. They are general strategies designed to support individualized reasonable accommodations for which a student is eligible, as determined by the Office of Student Life. For additional information about the assessment and accommodation of learning disabilities at UCSF, go to <http://student.ucsf.edu/osl/dss/idd.html>.

Keep instructions brief and as uncomplicated as possible.

Allow the student to tape-record lectures.

Clearly define course requirements, the dates of exams, and when assignments are due; provide advance notice of any changes.

Provide handouts and visual aids.

When appropriate, team a reader with a non-reading student during in-class assignments.

Use more than one way to demonstrate or explain information.

Have copies of the syllabus ready three to five weeks prior to the beginning of classes so textbooks are available for taping.

When possible, break information into small steps when teaching many new tasks in one lesson (state objectives, review previous lesson, summarize periodically).

Allow time for clarification of directions and essential information.

Provide study guides or review sheets for exams.

Provide alternative ways for the students to do tasks, such as dictations or oral presentations.

Provide assistance with proofreading written work.

Stress organization and ideas rather than mechanics when grading in-class writing assignments.

Allow the use of spell-check and grammar-assisted devices.

When in doubt about how to assist the student, ask him or her.

Allow the student the same anonymity as other students (i.e., avoid pointing out the student or the alternative arrangements to the rest of the class).