

Foreign Language Substitution Policy

Samford University does not have a university-wide foreign language course credit requirement. Requirements vary across majors, programs, schools, and colleges within the University. Students with disabilities are often able to successfully complete foreign language courses by incorporating strategies to compensate for their difficulties with specific learning and/or content areas. However, students with a documented disability that significantly impacts their ability to acquire a second language may petition for a substitution.

A language learning disability may be defined as low aptitude for learning languages in comparison with the student's aptitude for learning other subjects. Language learning aptitude is typically established by administering a battery of tests, including a language aptitude test, and examining the pattern of scores. If the scores demonstrate normal aptitude for other subjects but significantly lower aptitude on measures relating to language, then evidence of a weakness or disability in language aptitude is established.

The process for requesting a foreign language substitution is as follows:

1. The student should complete the application for accommodations. Instructions for accessing this can be found at www.samford.edu/dr, click on "Requesting Accommodations."
2. The student should submit documentation of their disability which substantiates the need for a course substitution and corresponds to the documentation guidelines (see pages 2 and 3).
3. The student will be asked to meet with a Disability Resources staff member to discuss their disability and the requested accommodations.
4. The student will be notified of Disability Resources' determination. If the request for a substitution is approved, the student will be asked to meet briefly with a staff member to review the Foreign Language Substitution contract. If the request for a substitution is not approved, the student will be given an opportunity to submit additional documentation for reconsideration of their request.

Foreign Language Substitutions are approved based on a demonstrated functional limitation in the area of language learning aptitude. When a student is approved for a substitution, the student is responsible for meeting with his or her advisor to discuss how the required foreign language course credit for the major, program, or school will be fulfilled by substituting courses from an approved list. Students are encouraged to contact their advisor for questions regarding the foreign language requirements for their major, program, or school.

Questions regarding a foreign language substitution should be addressed to: Samford University

Disability Resources

Dwight Beeson Hall, Room 103

Phone: 205-726-4078

Fax: 205-726-2842

Email: disability@samford.edu

Documentation Guidelines for Foreign Language Substitution Requests

Students with disabilities are often able to successfully complete foreign language courses by incorporating strategies to compensate for their difficulties with specific learning and/or content areas. However, students with a documented disability that significantly impacts their ability to acquire a second language may petition for a substitution. Foreign Language Substitutions are approved based on a demonstrated functional limitation in the area of language learning aptitude. A language learning disability may be defined as low aptitude for learning languages in comparison with the student's aptitude for learning other subjects. Language learning aptitude is typically established by administering a battery of tests, including a language aptitude test, and examining the pattern of scores. If the scores demonstrate normal aptitude for other subjects but significantly lower aptitude on measures relating to language, then evidence of a weakness or disability in language aptitude is established.

Important note: Students who request a foreign language substitution must submit documentation of a deficit in language learning aptitude from an appropriate evaluator. The purpose of documentation is to provide objective evidence that the student meets the criteria for having a disability, which is defined as 1) being diagnosed with a condition, and 2) experiencing a functional impairment or substantial limitation in at least one major life activity. Information provided below clarifies the data needed from evaluators to assist in determining the student's eligibility for a foreign language substitution.

Documentation should thoroughly address each of the following:

1. Basic components of documentation

- Submit information that is typed or printed on letterhead, dated and signed. Evaluators are responsible for ensuring documentation is legible.
- Evaluators should include their name, title, and credentials. Documentation should be submitted from an appropriate licensed professional who is not related to the student. For language learning disabilities, this is typically a clinical psychologist, neuropsychologist, learning disabilities specialist, speech-language pathologist, or other specialist qualified in the assessment of language acquisition.
- Include the student's identifying information, such as full name and date of birth.

2. History to support diagnosis

- Provide information which speaks to the nature of your working relationship with the student. For example, how long have you been treating the student, when was their most recent evaluation or visit, etc.
- Provide any information regarding the student's medical, familial, and social histories which may relate to their diagnosis, symptoms, and/or functional limitations, including previous use of accommodations in an academic setting and/or previous difficulties with language acquisition.
- Include any historical information that coincides with persistent difficulties in the student's acquisition and use of language across modalities (spoken, written) due to deficits in comprehension or production.

3. Assessment to support diagnosis

- Provide information regarding tools or instruments used to determine a diagnosis, including a brief description of each instrument, data gathered listed in the form of sub-test scores and standard scores with percentiles, and your interpretation of how these scores inform the diagnosis. Also address whether the student's learning difficulties could be better accounted for by intellectual disabilities, uncorrected visual or auditory acuity, other mental or neurological disorders, psychosocial adversity, or inadequate educational instruction.

- Adult norm-referenced psycho-educational measures are preferred. Check lists/rating scales can be helpful, but should not be used as the sole criterion for diagnostic purposes. A comprehensive evaluation should include measures of language learning aptitude, intelligence and academic achievement in the areas of reading (word reading, reading comprehension), written language (written expression, spelling), and math (number sense, number facts, calculation, mathematical reasoning).
- Appropriate instruments may include, but are not limited to: a structured clinical interview addressing relevant educational, medical, and social history, Modern Language Aptitude Test, Pimsleur Language Aptitude Battery, Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing, Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale-IV, Wechsler Individual Achievement Tests, Woodcock Johnson Psycho-Ed Battery III-Test of Cognitive Ability, Woodcock Johnson Psycho-Ed Battery III-Test of Achievement.

4. Diagnostic statement and evidence of current impairment

- Eligibility for accommodations is based on the current impact of the student's disability. Therefore, it is important to provide recent information.
- Provide a clear statement of the diagnosis based on the most recent version of the DSM. Include a summary of substantial discrepancies, strengths and weaknesses. If a diagnosis could not be determined, provide information on plans for further assessment.
- Also based on your assessment, provide information of how the disability substantially limits the student's ability to learn a second language.

5. Recommended accommodations and treatment

- Provide information regarding any medication, treatment, or strategies you would recommend based on the student's diagnosis and current impairment.
- Provide your recommendations for academic accommodations along with rationale for each accommodation based on your assessment. Particular focus should be given to any recommendations concerning language learning and the rationale for an accommodation or substitution based on assessment results. The purpose of accommodations is to best ensure equal access to the learning environment, and accommodations should be based on a demonstrated need rather than a preference. Accommodations correlate with an impairment rather than a diagnosis, so there should be a clear connection between the student's functional limitations and the accommodations being recommended. *Recommendations made by evaluators are taken into consideration based on applicability to postsecondary education and are not guaranteed to be approved as accommodations.*

Please submit the report or address questions regarding documentation to:

Samford University Disability Resources

phone: 205-726-4078 fax: 205-726-2842

email: disability@samford.edu

mailing address: Samford University
Attn: Disability Resources
800 Lakeshore Drive
Birmingham, AL 35229

In compliance with FERPA and the ADA, documentation submitted to Disability Resources is confidential and will not be shared with other internal departments or external entities. Students may request that a copy of their documentation be sent to another institution or released for their personal records.