

Part I: Student Self-Assessment

Overview

The *Higher Education Support Toolkit* offers simple, practical assistance designed to improve the likelihood of students with psychiatric disabilities to achieve their goals in college. The following guidelines suggest ways in which you can use this toolkit:

- Identify common difficulties experienced by students
- Assess student difficulties in adjusting and managing classroom and campus life
- Consider strategies and/or accommodations to help students
- Identify campus resources that are available to assist students at your institution

Forms for Part I: Student Self-Assessment

- Student Self-Assessment Checklist
- Student Self-Assessment of College Classroom Difficulties

Using the “Student Self-Assessment Checklist”

The “Student Self-Assessment Checklist” (pages 9–11) can be used to help assess generalized problems that a student may be experiencing and can assist the student in clarifying the health, personal, interpersonal and/or academic issues that may be hindering his/her academic success and satisfaction. For example, a student may experience difficulty with communication skills, relationship skills, or skills related to self-care.

When it is challenging for a student to explain the issues that they are facing within the academic setting, ask the student to complete the “Student Self-Assessment Checklist” as a helpful starting point.

Through a review of the completed “Student Self-Assessment Checklist,” areas of student concern will be revealed. Further exploration may help the student to clarify the underlying issues and to explore possible campus and community resources that could be helpful.

Use this form to:

- Assess generalized problems that a student may be experiencing
- Assist the student to clarify health, personal, interpersonal and/or academic issues
- Review and discuss the need for additional campus supports

Using the “Student Self-Assessment of College Classroom Difficulties”

The “Student Self-Assessment of College Classroom Difficulties” (pages 12–16) can be used to help assess classroom-specific problems that a student may be experiencing. This checklist delineates actions the student can take on his or her own that may ameliorate the difficulties along with possible accommodations that can be formally requested if the student actions alone are not adequate.

Use this form to:

- Help a student to identify common disability-related limitations
- Review and discuss particular classroom difficulties
- Explore the suggested actions that the student could assume independently to address the problems that he or she reports experiencing
- Explore possible accommodations that could be formally requested if the individual efforts of the student are not sufficient

Student Self-Assessment Checklist

The following is a list of challenges that you may be experiencing right now on campus. Often these challenges will impact your academic success. This checklist is tended to help identify your personal challenges, so that helpful resources and suggestions can be determined.

Please put a checkmark (✓) next to any of the statements that apply to you.

1. Psychosocial Skills

- It is difficult for me to ask for help.
- Sometimes I feel withdrawn even when I'm around people.
- I reject most people I go to school with.
- Sometimes I don't understand what people mean or why they act the way they do.
- I easily get over stimulated by all the activity around me.
- I tend to stay away from people at school.
- I am frequently rejected by others at school.
- It's easy to misinterpret what others say or do.
- Sometimes I feel suspicious of other people around me.

2. Communication Skills

- I talk so much sometimes that people have to interrupt me.
- Sometimes I speak so softly no one hears me.
- Others have said they don't understand what I am trying to say.
- I would rather read directions than listen to them.
- Sometimes I don't answer others or respond with only one or two words.
- I interrupt others quite a bit.
- It can be difficult to listen to and understand others.

3. Behavior

- I sometimes act without thinking.
- I can talk too much or too loudly.
- Sometimes strange things just happen so it's hard to meet deadlines.
- Sometimes I threaten to quit when I am angry.
- I blame others for my mistakes or find some excuse.
- Sometimes my behaviors seem strange or different to others.
- Sometimes I "lose time" and don't have any time left for studying.
- Sometimes I turn to drugs or alcohol because I feel so stressed.
- I get physically ill when there are too many demands on me.

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Student Self-Assessment Checklist

4. Perception

- It can be hard to understand others' words.
- Sometimes I hear voices or sounds others don't.
- I get suspicious of others at school.
- Sometimes I believe things others don't.
- If I explain what I see or think, people usually don't agree with me.
- Sometimes I feel like I'm not real or the world around me is not real.

5. Relationships

- General conversations like "small talk" are difficult.
- I usually don't have anything to discuss with others at school before and after class.
- I don't know how to act when people make statements I don't like.
- It really bothers me to hear negative comments about people with mental illnesses.
- Sometimes certain people make me feel like it's not going to work.
- It's difficult to agree with someone.

6. Thinking/Learning

- Sometimes it's difficult for me to concentrate for very long.
- It can be hard to learn new information at times.
- I am easily distracted.
- It can be difficult to shift my focus from one task to another.
- Sometimes it is hard to think things through.
- I can only do one thing at a time.
- If I have a task I don't usually do, I get confused.
- I have problems making decisions.
- I often reach the wrong conclusion.
- I am disorganized.
- I don't have enough energy to do my work.
- Sometimes ideas come to me too fast.
- I get too restless.
- I start to panic when I have deadlines or exams.
- I have difficulty remembering verbal commands.
- I get overwhelmed easily.
- Sometimes my mind goes blank when I'm called on in class or during exams.
- I have difficulty dealing with unexpected changes.
- I experience a lot of memory problems.

7. Medication

- I get drowsy at school or when doing my homework from my medication(s).
- I am thirsty a lot.
- My vision gets blurred.

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- I am embarrassed to take medication when I'm with my classmates.
- Sometimes my hands shake.
- My medication slows my thinking too much.

8. Self-Care

- At times, I don't eat very well.
- I don't sleep as much as I would like or need.
- I need to sleep a great deal.
- At times, it is easy to skip some of my daily hygiene tasks.
- I don't take my medication as my doctor prescribes.
- I don't exercise or do any physical fitness activities.
- I can't always predict when I'm going to have an increase in my symptoms.
- Sometimes I work long hours and don't take any breaks.
- I don't go to church (synagogue/other) as often as I should or would like to.
- I don't utilize my spiritual practices as much as I would like to.

9. Emotions

- Sometimes I worry so much, it's hard to be in school.
- I get afraid of people, places or activities.
- Sometimes I over react.
- It's hard to hear others express strong feelings.
- Sometimes it seems my reactions don't match with the others I'm around.
- I get too afraid to approach my professor(s) or advisor(s).
- Even when I get good grades, I'm terrified that I'm going to fail.
- Sometimes I feel so good that I take on more than I can handle.

10. Treatment Needs

- I need to see my doctor, therapist, case manager, etc. during regular work hours.
- I may need to be hospitalized for my illness in the future.
- I need to get to my 12-Step meeting(s) at least ____ times per week.
- I need to keep in contact with my support system.
- I need to stay in touch with my spiritual advisor/priest/rabbi/other.

11. Resource Needs

- I don't have enough money for books and supplies.
- I can't get a meeting with an academic advisor.
- I don't have a place to study.

If any one of these challenges is consistently difficult for you, please feel free to add information on the back in more detail. Also, feel free to add challenges that you experience that are not listed.

The following is a list of difficulties that you may be experiencing while attending class. Often these challenges impact your academic success. This checklist is intended to help identify your personal challenges. It also offers strategies that you can try on your own and/or possible accommodations that you can request to help you manage any difficulties that you are experiencing.

Please check any difficulty below that you are experiencing:	Possible actions that you can try on your own:	Possible accommodations that you may be able to request:
<input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty sitting still, restlessness	Go to classroom before classes start to determine the best place to sit	Request prearranged breaks during class
<input type="checkbox"/> Inability to filter out distractions (internal or external)	Arrive at class early to be able to sit where you want/need to	Request to tape record class and/or request a note taker
<input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty concentrating; decreased attention span and difficulty with doing homework and test taking	<p>Arrange to photocopy a classmate's notes</p> <p>Organize time to do homework in shorter sittings, even if more frequent</p> <p>Write things down; keep a list and a schedule; keep a journal</p>	<p>Request to tape record class and/or request a note taker</p> <p>Request pre-arranged breaks to get fresh air and to move around</p> <p>Request to take tests in a separate room to decrease distractions</p> <p>Request to take tests in a distraction-reduced environment</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> Mind going blank	Relaxation exercises/deep breathing	Request to take home exam
<input type="checkbox"/> Muscle tension	Small hand/foot exercises that can be done discreetly at desk in class	Request to prepare a paper instead of an exam

Please check any difficulty below that you are experiencing:	Possible actions that you can try on your own:	Possible accommodations that you may be able to request:
<input type="checkbox"/> Decreased stamina <input type="checkbox"/> Fatigue	Schedule courses during your best time of day and/or schedule courses on different days Ensure rest time between courses Exercise before class	Request a decreased course load without losing full-time status for financial aid and health insurance
<input type="checkbox"/> Dry mouth from medication	Bring beverage to class	
<input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty remembering verbal commands and problems with memory	Write things down to help accuracy Ask a classmate to verify that you understood the assignment correctly Write things down, keep a journal and keep a schedule	Request assignments in writing from professor
<input type="checkbox"/> Easily overwhelmed	Set small, attainable goals Break tasks into small, manageable pieces	
<input type="checkbox"/> Absent from class due to hospitalization	Contact classmates to stay connected	Arrange to contact and inform professor of situation Request to complete homework assignments from hospital Request to arrange an “incomplete” rather than fail a course

Please check any difficulty below that you are experiencing:	Possible actions that you can try on your own:	Possible accommodations that you may be able to request:
<input type="checkbox"/> Racing thoughts, over-stimulation	Schedule classes with breaks between or on different days Use relaxation and meditation practices	Request prearranged breaks during class
<input type="checkbox"/> Escalating symptoms	Use monitoring log of symptoms so you can intervene early enough	
<input type="checkbox"/> Caught up in perfectionism	Use positive self-talk to counterbalance negative thinking	Request to work with tutor on time-management and organizing skills
<input type="checkbox"/> Spend an inordinate amount of time organizing tasks, but unable to successfully complete tasks		
<input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty dealing with unexpected changes, assignments, tests, etc		Request to get advanced notice of exams, etc.
<input type="checkbox"/> Experiencing panic attacks	Go to class ahead of time to get feel of classroom and pick a location to sit Sit near the door so you can easily leave the room Use cold water on face or hands Arrive at class early to be able to sit where you want and/or need to sit Let professor know why you're not coming—don't just let it go	Request to have prearranged breaks during class

Please check any difficulty below that you are experiencing:	Possible actions that you can try on your own:	Possible accommodations that you may be able to request:
<input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty concentrating in class due to anxiety	Deep breathing exercises; Touch something (books, desk)-note temperature, texture, etc.—really focusing on object (Grounding techniques)	Request to tape record class Request a note taker
<input type="checkbox"/> Miss final exam due to panic attack or hospitalization	Inform professor via e-mail or voice mail rather than just letting it go;	Request to arrange an “incomplete” rather than fail a course
<input type="checkbox"/> Flashbacks, intrusive memories or feeling generally “out of touch” with reality	Concentrate on note taking, feel something and concentrate on texture, etc. (grounding skills)	Request prearranged breaks during class Request to tape record class Request a note taker
<input type="checkbox"/> Hyper vigilante and/or increased startle response.	Use self-talk, “I am in a classroom. I am safe” Go to classroom early to get seat that feels safest	
<input type="checkbox"/> Absent from class due to hospitalization	Inform professor rather than just letting it go; and Arrange to do homework assignments from hospital	

Please check any difficulty below that you are experiencing:	Possible actions that you can try on your own:	Possible accommodations that you may be able to request:
<input type="checkbox"/> Distracted by internal/external stimuli	Arrive at class early enough to be able to sit where you want/need to	Request to tape record class Request a note taker
<input type="checkbox"/> Pressured by voices or other stimuli	Learn to use relaxation and self-soothing exercises Schedule courses during your best time of day	Request to take breaks to get a breath of fresh air and refocus Request to decrease course load without losing full time status for financial aid and health insurance
<input type="checkbox"/> Feeling self-conscious and paranoid	Try to learn to use positive self-talk Try to learn to use relaxation and self-soothing exercises	
<input type="checkbox"/> Feeling agitated, restless or unable to sit still	Put cold water on face or hands	Request breaks during classes and exams