

Diagnosis of Test Anxiety

Test anxiety can be diagnosed using the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual-IV, under the classification of social phobia.[8] Social phobias are characterized by a marked and persistent fear of social or performance situations in which embarrassment may occur. In order to be diagnosed as suffering from a social phobia, the DSM-IV states that the individual must present four different factors.[8]

- **Must show an immediate anxiety response when exposed to the feared social or performance situation.**
- **Must show various attempts to avoid social or performance situation, or sometimes endure it but with extreme fear.**
- **Must experience a disruption to normal activities due to the avoidance or fear associated with the situation**
- **Must have experienced the symptoms for at least six months.[8]**
- **Other variables related to test anxiety are:**
- **Obsessive compulsive disorders;**
- **Perfectionist tendencies and unrealistic expectations;**
- **Negative self-esteem, self-statements, and criticism;**
- **Poor motivation or lack of confidence**
- **Stereotype threat;**
- **Inadequate study and test-taking skills;**
- **Poor eating, sleeping and exercising habits.**

[8] McDonald, A (2001). "The Prevalence and Effects of Test Anxiety in School Children". *Educational Psychology*. 21 (1): 89–101. [doi:10.1080/01443410020019867](https://doi.org/10.1080/01443410020019867).

As such, an exam anxiety – on its own - is not considered a “disability”, for the purpose of obtaining an academic accommodation. The Social Phobia, as described above is considered a disability.

Unless a student requests an academic accommodation based on the diagnosis of the “social phobia” – in accordance with the DSM criteria - they would be advised to avail themselves of the Counselling Services, Academic Strategist and Drop-In Tutor services, instead of requesting exam accommodations.