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.


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.