**Fairleigh Dickinson University**

**Metropolitan Campus**

**Services for Students with Disabilities**

**General Philosophy**

Fairleigh Dickinson University –Metropolitan Campus, in accordance with the policies underlying Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 works to ensure that reasonable accommodations are implemented for enrolled students with documented disabilities to function in the academic environment. All admitted students are judged by the appropriate admissions officer to have the ability to succeed academically, and all students are required to meet the same academic standards. At the same time, FDU recognizes that documented disabilities and potential learning differences may require accommodations. We are committed to helping all students develop fully and complete successfully their degree requirements.

**What Are "Appropriate Academic Accommodations”?**

**How Are They Implemented?**

When a student submits a request for accommodations to the Office of The Provost, The Campus Special Needs committee, comprised of faculty and staff knowledgeable in all aspects of disability support services, meets to review the application and documentation. The committee then submits to the Office of The Provost, a list of appropriate accommodation, or a request for additional evaluative materials, if needed. All requested accommodations and/or academic adjustments must be determined to be appropriate to the student's documented needs. The student will then be notified about what accommodations were approved by the committee, and instructed to come to the Office of The Provost with his/her academic schedule so that letters can be prepared that notify the faculty of the approve accommodations. After accommodations have been granted, or as early in the semester as possible, it is strongly recommended that the student and faculty member privately discuss how the limiting effects of the student's disability may impact on the completion of course requirements, and what accommodations and/or academic adjustments may need to be implemented to provide equal access. A student must give a faculty or staff member adequate time to honor his/her request for accommodations. Depending on the level of complexity of the request, a minimum of two weeks’ advanced notice is suggested. Appropriate academic accommodations may fall into one of several categories and may include:

* Services – e.g. note taking, reader services, changes to the classroom environment
* Alternative media – e.g. large print, recorded textbooks, Braille materials
* Adaptive technology – e.g. adaptive computer keyboards, assistive listening devices, computer voice input and output, magnifying microscopes
* Accommodations to Policies, Procedures, Practices – e.g. alternative testing procedures, alternate test formats, course substitutions
* Other adaptations that enable a student to enjoy equal access to the benefits and privileges of the college’s programs, services and activities

**Self-Identification**

Fairleigh Dickinson University, Metropolitan Campus acknowledges that the decision to self-identify is a personal matter and makes no pre-admission inquiry about candidate's disability.

If a candidate wishes to inquire about the disability support services offered by FDU, a confidential meeting with the Assistant Provost can be arranged by calling 201-692-2477.

Upon acceptance to FDU and a minimum of 30 days prior to the start of classes, admitted students are encouraged to discuss the nature of their disability with and to submit documentation of their disability to the Office of The Provost. Accommodations can then be determined, thereby allowing students the appropriate resources to assist them in achieving their academic potential at the start of their program of study. Admitted students requesting accommodations are required to complete and submit a Request for Accommodations form (along with appropriate documentation) to the Office of the Provost.

**Confidentiality**

Information is disclosed to FDU staff and/or faculty strictly in accordance with the Family Educational Rights to Privacy Act (FERPA) regulations. Please note: Any documentation voluntarily submitted to an admissions officer is not forwarded to the Office of

The Provost. No action on documentation is taken until the student requesting accommodations submits the Request for Accommodations form, with proper documentation to the Office of The Provost.

**Procedures for Documenting a Disability**

Each student requesting accommodations and support services through the Office of the Provost is required to submit documentation to verify eligibility under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and campus policies. As defined by Section 504 and the ADA, an individual with a disability is a person who has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits a major life activity, including learning. Academic accommodations are implemented to provide equal access to college programs and services.

**Documentation for a Physical or Sensory Disability**

Documentation must include the following information:

1. Diagnosis - A current medical diagnosis including appropriate medical reports, relevant medical history, and a clinical summary.
2. Current treatment - Identification of treatment, medications, assistive devices, or other services currently prescribed or in use.
3. Evaluation of impact - Identification of the substantial limitation on a major life activity presented by the disability, and a description of the current functional impact of the disability in a college setting. The assessment should validate the need for services based on the impact of the student's disability and level of functioning in an educational setting.
4. Specific recommendations - Suggested accommodations and/or academic adjustments, with an explanation supporting the need for each accommodation to achieve equal access.

In order to establish eligibility as an individual with a disability, the student must submit documentation that is comprehensive and appropriate to a postsecondary setting, and that clearly specifies the presence of a disability. Documentation must be current (within the past 3 years); if the documentation is not current, students may be required to submit updated information and/or documentation. Some important points:

* Any specific recommendations for accommodations must be based on significant functional limitations and must be supported by the diagnostic assessment. Accommodations and academic adjustments cannot be implemented until the student's documentation meets the criteria.
* Prior history of having received an accommodation does not, in and of itself, warrant or guarantee its continued provision.
* An Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or a 504 Plan is not sufficient documentation of a disability.
* Documentation of a physical or sensory disability must be provided by a doctor or other medical professional with training and expertise related to the particular medical condition identified. The diagnostic report must be submitted on official letterhead with name(s), title(s), professional credentials, address, and telephone/number of the person providing the documentation. All reports must be signed and dated.
* Submission of documentation is not the same as the request for services. The student must initiate the request for services and/or accommodations by following the University's Accommodations Procedures.
* The Special Needs Committee is ultimately responsible for determining appropriate accommodations, if any, based on the documentation provided.

**Documentation for a Specific Learning Disability**

Students with Learning Disabilities who are seeking support services from Fairleigh Dickinson University on the basis of a diagnosed specific learning disability are required to submit documentation to verify eligibility under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Protection under civil rights statutes is based upon documentation of a disability that currently substantially limits some major life activity, which may include learning. The following guidelines are provided in the interest of assuring that documentation is appropriate to verify eligibility and support requests for reasonable accommodations, academic adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids at the postsecondary level. The Directors of the New Jersey Special Needs Regional Centers for Students with Learning Disabilities are available to consult with diagnosticians regarding further explanation of any of these guidelines.

**DOCUMENTATION GUIDELINES**

1. Qualifications of the Evaluator

Professionals conducting assessments, rendering diagnoses of specific learning disabilities, and making recommendations for appropriate accommodations must be qualified to do so. Trained and certified and/or licensed psychologists, learning disabilities specialists (LDT-Cs), and educational therapists are typically involved in the process of assessment. Experience in working with an adolescent or adult population is preferred. It is not considered appropriate for professionals to evaluate members of their families.

1. Documentation

A. Testing needs to be comprehensive. It is not acceptable to administer only one test for the purpose of diagnosis. Best practice suggests that the complete battery of every instrument be used. Minimally, domains to be addressed must include (but are not limited to):

* **Aptitude:** The Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale-IV (WAIS-IV) is the preferred instrument. The Woodcock-Johnson Psycho-Educational Battery-III: Tests of Cognitive Ability or the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale: Fifth Edition are also acceptable. Note: The Slosson Intelligence Test and the Kaufman Brief Intelligence Test are not appropriate.
* **Achievement:** Current levels of functioning in reading, mathematics, and written language are required. Acceptable instruments include the Woodcock-Johnson Psycho-Educational Battery- III: Tests of Achievement or the Wechsler Individual Achievement Test III (WlAT III) for age appropriate students. Note: The Wide Range Achievement Test is NOT a comprehensive measure of achievement.
* **Information Processing:** Specific areas of information processing (e.g., short- and long- term memory; sequential memory; auditory and visual perception/ processing; processing speed) should be assessed. Information from subtests on the WAIS-IV or the Woodcock-Johnson Tests of Cognitive Ability- III as well as other instruments relevant to the presenting learning problem(s) may be used to address these areas.

This is not intended to be an exhaustive list or to restrict assessment in other pertinent and helpful areas, such as vocational interests and aptitudes.

B. Testing should be current. Because the provision of all reasonable accommodations and services is based upon assessment of the current impact of the student's disabilities on his/her academic performance at the postsecondary level, it is in a student's best interest to provide recent and appropriate documentation. In some instances, documentation may be inadequate in scope or content. It may not address the student's current level of functioning or need for accommodations because observed changes may have occurred in the student's performance since the previous assessment was conducted. In such cases, an update will be necessary.

Since the purpose of the update is to determine the student's current need for accommodations at the postsecondary level, the update, conducted by a qualified professional, should include a rationale for ongoing services and accommodations

1. Substantiation of the Learning Disability
2. Documentation should validate the need for services based on the individual's current level of functioning in a postsecondary educational setting. A comprehensive assessment battery and the resulting diagnostic report should include background information; a diagnostic interview; assessment of aptitude, academic achievement, and information processing; and a diagnosis.
3. There must be clear and specific evidence and identification of a learning disability. Individual "learning styles" and "learning differences" in and of themselves do not constitute a learning disability. The diagnostician is expected to use direct language in the diagnosis and documentation of a learning disability, avoiding the use of terms such as "suggests" or "is indicative of." (Please provide this information to your diagnostician.) If the data indicate that a learning disability is not present, the evaluator should state that conclusion in the report.
4. A well-written clinical diagnostic summary based on the comprehensive evaluation process as defined is a necessary component of the report The Clinical Summary should include:

A written summary of background information about the student's educational, medical, and family histories that relate to the learning disability; Demonstration that the evaluator has ruled out alternative explanations for academic problems as a result of poor education, poor motivation and/or study skills, emotional problems, attentional problems, and cultural or language differences; Indication of how patterns in the student's cognitive ability, achievement, and information processing reflect the presence of a learning disability; Indication of the substantial limitation to learning or other major life activity presented by the learning disability and the degree to which it affects the individual at the postsecondary level in the learning context for which the accommodations are being requested; Indication as to why specific accommodations are needed and how the effects of the specific disability

are accommodated; and an addendum of scores.

The report should be printed on letterhead, signed, and dated; the signature of the evaluator should include his or her credentials.

1. Recommendations for Accommodations
2. The diagnostic report should include specific recommendations for accommodations as well as an explanation as to why each accommodation is recommended.
3. A description of any accommodation and/or auxiliary aid that has been used at the secondary or postsecondary level should be discussed. Include information about the specific conditions under which the accommodation was used (e.g., standardized testing, final exams) and whether or not it benefited the student. If no accommodations have been previously provided, a detailed explanation as to why none has been used and the rationale for the student's currently needing accommodation(s) must be provided.
4. Accommodation needs can change over time, and are not always identified through the initial diagnostic process. Conversely, a prior history of accommodation does not in and of itself warrant the provision of a similar accommodation at the postsecondary level.
5. Before your third year of enrollment at FDU, you may be required to provide updated documentation to support accommodations.