



## *Disability Support Services, Florham Campus*

### **General Philosophy**

Fairleigh Dickinson University, in accordance with all applicable government regulations, guidance and policies, including those underlying Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, works to ensure that academic adjustments/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 "Academic Adjustments/Accommodations"?**

#### **How Are They Implemented?**

When a student registers with the Office of Disability Support Services (DSS), accommodations and academic adjustments are determined by a professional staff member of DSS. All requested accommodations and/or academic adjustments must be determined to be appropriate to the student's documented needs. Approved academic adjustments/accommodations are recorded on an "Accommodations letter" form kept in the student's file, which is not automatically sent to faculty but is available to faculty upon request.

After academic adjustments have been granted, or as early in the semester as possible, DSS recommends that the student and faculty member privately discuss how the student's disability may impact on the completion of course requirements, and how approved academic adjustments can be implemented to provide equal access. Students are required to provide a copy of approved accommodation letter to the faculty member.

A student must give a faculty or staff member **adequate time** to honor his/her request for academic adjustments. Depending on the level of complexity of the request, a minimum of two weeks' advanced notice is suggested.

#### **Academic accommodations may fall into one of several categories and may include:**

- Testing accommodations – e.g. extra time to complete in-class tests/assessments, a distraction-reduced testing environment
- Services – e.g. reader services, changes to the classroom environment, note-taking (depending on availability of a note-taker otherwise most appropriate alternative will be provided)
- Alternative media – e.g. large print, recorded textbooks, braille materials
- Assistive technology – e.g. assistive computer keyboards, assistive listening devices, computer voice input and output, magnifying microscopes

- 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 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 Director/Coordinator of Disability Support Services may be arranged by contacting the office at 973-443-8079.

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 Disability Support Services. Academic adjustments/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 academic adjustments/accommodations are required to apply online and to submit a copy of disability-related documentation to the Office of Disability Support Services.

## 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 the Admissions Office, Wellness Center or any other office is not forwarded to the Office of Disability Support Services. No action on documentation is taken until the student requesting accommodations meets with the Office of Disability Support Services.*

## Procedures for Documenting a Disability

Each student requesting accommodations and support services through the Office of Disability Support Services is required to submit documentation to verify eligibility under the Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and DSS policies. As defined by the Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, 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 adjustments/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.**

Any specific recommendations for academic adjustments/accommodations must be based on functional limitations and must be supported by the diagnostic assessment. Accommodations and academic adjustments cannot be implemented until the student's documentation meets these 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 always 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 registering with the DSS office or meeting with a professional staff member of the DSS office.

The DSS office is ultimately responsible for determining academic adjustments/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.

### *DOCUMENTATION GUIDELINES*

#### I. 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.

## II. 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-III (WAIS-III) is the preferred instrument. The Woodcock-Johnson Psycho-Educational Battery-Revised: Tests of Cognitive Ability or the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale: Fourth 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-Revised: Tests of Achievement or the Wechsler Individual Achievement Test (WIAT) 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-III or the Woodcock-Johnson Tests of Cognitive Ability 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 academic adjustments/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 academic adjustments/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.

## III. Substantiation of the Learning Disability

A. 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.

B. 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.

C. 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 academic adjustments/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.

#### IV. Recommendations for Academic Adjustments/Accommodations

A. The diagnostic report should include specific recommendations for academic adjustments/accommodations as well as an explanation as to why each adjustment/accommodation is recommended.

B. A description of any adjustment/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 adjustments/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.

C. 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.

D. Before your third year of enrollment at FDU, you may be required to provide updated documentation to support accommodations.

## *How to Receive Academic Adjustments/Accommodations?*

**Step 1: Register with DSS and Submit Disability-Related Documentation:** In order to receive academic adjustments/accommodations at Fairleigh Dickinson University, the student, will need to register with the DSS office (see steps below) and send a copy of his/her most recent diagnostic evaluations. NOTE: While IEP and 504 Plans from high school are sometimes helpful, they alone are not always sufficient.

- Visit our website at: <http://fdu.edu/florhamada>
- Select “New Students Apply for DSS Services”
- Login using your FDU e-mail login (Webmail) and password.
- Fill out the online form and make arrangements to submit a copy of your disability-related documentation to the following address:

**Office of Disability Support Services  
285 Madison Avenue, M-M01-01  
Madison, New Jersey 07940**

- You can also fax your documents at 973-443-8080.

**Step 2: Schedule a Meeting:** Set up a meeting with the Director/Coordinator of Disability Support Services. Make sure to bring all appropriate documentation related to your condition/disability if you haven’t already done so. If you are unsure what documentation to bring, or have yet to be tested, call and discuss the situation with our staff member prior to the meeting.

**Step 3: Discuss Procedures and Determine Academic Adjustments/Accommodations:** Determination of academic adjustments/accommodations will be based on disability-related documentation. During the meeting, you will learn about the process for receiving disability support services and learn what academic adjustments/accommodations you will receive for the current semester. Based upon the outcome of the meeting, the Office of Disability Support Services produces letters of accommodation for your professors.

Please note that, the Office of Disability Support Services will not mail out or forward your accommodation letters directly to the student’s home address or to the faculty members. The student must come to pick up his/her accommodation letters from the DSS office and give the accommodation letters to the respective faculty members.

**Step 4: Give Accommodation Letters to Your Professors:** Pick up letters from the DSS office and hand deliver them to your professors. The process of hand delivering accommodation letters to your professors will allow you to initiate dialogue regarding your situation and particular needs with your professor. The accommodation letters do not disclose details of your disability.

It is strongly recommended that you provide your professors with letters of accommodation within the first two weeks of the semester. Accommodations will not be provided until your professor receives your accommodation letters. Accommodations are not retroactive.

**Step 5: Monitor Progress and Ask if you need further assistance:** As the semester progresses, it is your responsibility to monitor the progress in your classes. If you require academic assistance or additional support services, contact the DSS office and you will be referred to the appropriate campus resource (if needed).

**Step 6: Future Semesters:** You are required to request your accommodation letters for each semester. The letters will be ready to pick-up in **two business days** after you request them. You must give a copy of your accommodation letters to your professors. Remember, accommodations will not be provided until your professor receives your letter. If, you are seeking changes to your academic adjustments/accommodations, please feel free to contact our office. **You can reach us at 973-443-8079.**

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**Contact us:**

<b>Mailing Address:</b> Office of Disability Support Services Fairleigh Dickinson University Florham Campus 285 Madison Avenue, M-MO1-01 Madison, New Jersey 07940	<b>Contact Person:</b> Mr. Darshan Shah Director, Academic & Disability Support Services Tel: 973-443-8079 Fax: 973-443-8080 E-mail: dshah@fdu.edu	<b>Office Hours:</b> Monday to Friday 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM Weekend and Holidays: Closed
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## **Frequently Asked Questions:**

### **1. If I register with Disability Support Services, will that show up on my academic record?**

No. All disability documentation and information related to a student with a disability is maintained in a confidential file and will not reflect anywhere on your academic records.

### **2. Are there separate admission standards for students with disabilities?**

No. Students with disabilities must meet the same admission standards as their non-disabled peers.

### **3. When and where do I send my disability documentation?**

We encourage applicants for admission to send a copy of their disability documentation to the Office of Disability Support Services after the admissions process is completed and the student has decided to attend FDU. Our professional staff member will review the documentation based on the appropriate guidelines to determine if the applicant qualifies for academic accommodations at FDU. The director/coordinator of Disability Support Services will then notify the applicant of any approved accommodations or the need for any additional information.

### **4. If, I am receiving accommodations elsewhere, will I automatically qualify for the same at FDU?**

No. The Office of Disability Support Services reviews all disability-related documentation according to our guidelines. Therefore, you may or may not qualify for the same accommodations that you have received. For this reason, you are required to send a copy of your disability-related documents to the Office of Disability Support Services.

### **5. I cannot write due to my recent shoulder surgery etc., do you provide assistance for temporary disability?**

Yes. We do provide academic accommodations for temporary disability. Accommodations may differ from person to person, depending on the nature and severity of student's disability.

### **6. What is the difference between Disability Support Services and the Regional Center in terms of provision of academic adjustments/accommodations?**

The Office of Disability Support Services provides academic adjustments/accommodations for students, who have a physical or mental disability, which substantially limits a major life activity, including learning. Whereas, the Regional Center specifically focuses on the needs of students with language-based learning disabilities.

For both departments, students are required to get accepted through general admission process at FDU. Admission to the Regional Center program is through a separate application process. In the event a student is not accepted to the Regional Center, and the student is accepted at the university, the student can apply and get academic adjustments/accommodations from the DSS office.



Many of the services provided by the Regional Center are also provided by the Disability Support Services for students with specific learning disabilities. On the other hand, however, the Regional Center provides greater individualized attention, tutorial support and academic advising for students with language-based learning disabilities. For detailed information about both programs please contact the respective department.

***Contact Information:***

<b>The Office of Disability Support Services-</b>	<b>973-443-8079 (Voice)</b>
<b>The Regional Center -</b>	<b>973-443-8981 (Voice)</b>