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Disability Support Services

General Philosophy

Fairleigh Dickinson University's Office of Disability Support Services, in accordance with all applicable government regulations, guidance and policies, works to ensure that students with documented disabilities have equal access to the University's courses, programs, activities, and services. The Office of Disability Support Services is committed to providing students with the tools and resources they need to pursue their academic, professional, and personal goals during their years at FDU. We work closely with administrators, faculty, staff, and students to foster a welcoming, diverse, and inclusive campus community.

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 the Office of Disability Support Services. 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.

After academic adjustments/accommodations 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 the completion of course requirements, and how approved academic adjustments can be implemented to provide equal access. Students are required to request a copy of approved accommodation letter to be sent to the faculty member.

Students must give a faculty or staff member **adequate time** to honor their 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, use of a calculator
- Services – e.g., reader services, changes to the classroom environment, assistance with notetaking
- Alternative media – e.g., large print, recorded textbooks, braille materials
- Assistive technology – e.g., captioning, adaptive computer keyboards, assistive listening devices, use of audio recording software for notetaking, screen readers, speech-to-text software
- 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 Metropolitan office at 201-692-2078 or the Florham office at 973-443-8538.

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.

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 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 students 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.
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Contact us:

<p>Fairleigh Dickinson University – Metropolitan Campus Office of Disability Support Services 1000 River Road, T-RH5-03 Teaneck, NJ 07666 Phone: 201-692-2078 Fax: 201-692-2425 E-mail: metrods@fdu.edu</p>	<p>Office Hours:</p> <p>Monday to Friday: 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM</p>
<p>Fairleigh Dickinson University – Florham Campus Office of Disability Support Services 285 Madison Avenue, M-M01-01 Madison, NJ 07940 Phone: 973-443-8538 Fax: 973-443-8080 E-mail: florhamdss@fdu.edu</p>	<p>Weekends and Holidays: Closed</p>