

## UNIVERSITY COMMITMENT

The University of New Orleans (UNO) is committed to providing for the needs of enrolled or admitted students who have disabilities under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA).

In general, University policy calls for reasonable accommodations to be made for students with documented disabilities on an individualized and flexible basis. It is the responsibility of students, however, to seek available assistance at the University and to make their needs known.

The policies and procedures outlined in this publication are intended to comply with both the letter and the spirit of these federal guidelines. Their goal is to ensure that students with disabilities are given an opportunity to succeed at UNO equal to that granted to all other students at the University.

This publication is intended as a guide for prospective or new UNO students who have disabilities, for UNO students with new disabilities, and it is meant to make students who have been dealing with disabilities on campus for some time fully aware of procedures and services. We further hope that this publication will serve not only to publicize the accommodations options which are available but to heighten awareness on the part of students with disabilities of the need for those options, of their unique individual positions, and of their rights and obligations to adapt their program of accommodations to their personal needs.

### Rights and Responsibilities of Students with Disabilities

- Every student has the right to compassionate services, free of judgment.
- Every student has the right to the best and most up-to-date information and services we can provide.
- Every student has the right to complete confidentiality regarding his/her disability and related information.
- Every student has the right to be seen in a timely manner.
- Every student has the right to be reasonably accommodated.
- Every student has the right to fully disclose information and feelings regarding his/her condition.
- Every student has the right to provide feedback to ODS regarding its operations.
- Every student has the responsibility to disclose any disability-related information to the appropriate ODS official if it may have a bearing on his/her academic progress.
- Every student has the responsibility to follow recommendations and established procedures for academic support.
- Every student has the responsibility to make appointments with ODS staff as the need arises, and to inform ODS if there is a need to cancel.
- Every student has the responsibility to provide feedback to ODS regarding its operations.

### Rights and Responsibilities of the University of New Orleans

- UNO has the right to request and receive through ODS, current documentation that support requests for accommodations, academic adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids and services.
- UNO has the right to deny requests for accommodations, academic adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids and services if the documentation demonstrates that the request is not warranted, or if the individual fails to provide appropriate documentation.
- UNO has the right to select among equally effective accommodations, adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids and services.
- UNO has the right to refuse an unreasonable accommodation, adjustment, and/or auxiliary service that impose a fundamental alteration on a program or activity of the University.
- UNO has the responsibility to provide information to faculty, staff, students, and guests with disabilities in accessible formats upon request.
- UNO has the responsibility to ensure that courses, programs, services, jobs, activities, and facilities, when viewed in their entirety, are available and usable in the most integrated and appropriate settings.
- UNO has the responsibility to evaluate faculty, staff, students, and applicants on their abilities and not their disabilities.
- UNO has the responsibility to provide or arrange reasonable accommodations, academic adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids and services for faculty, staff, students, and guests with disabilities in courses, programs, services, jobs, activities, and facilities.
- UNO has the responsibility to maintain appropriate confidentiality of records and communication, except where permitted or required by law.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY AND INFORMATION RELEASE**

The Office of Disability Services is committed to ensuring that all information regarding a student is maintained as confidential as required or permitted by any law. Any information collected is used for the benefit of the student. This information may include test data, grades, biographical history, disability information, performance reviews, and case notes. Procedures about the treatment of such information have been adopted by Office of Disability Services and are rigorously followed and shared with students.

1. No one has immediate access to student files at the Office of Disability Services except ODS staff. Any information regarding disability gained from medical examinations shall be considered confidential and shall be shared with others within the institution on a need-to-know basis only. Disability-related information is to be treated as medical information is treated. For example, University faculty and staff members do not have a right or a need to access diagnostic or other information regarding a student's disability; they need only to know what accommodations are necessary or appropriate to meet the student's disability-related needs. If a student has requested an accommodation, the student will be informed as to what information is being provided to the faculty or staff regarding the request.

2. Information in files will not be released except in the following circumstances:

- The student states the intent to harm himself/herself or others.

- A student's file may be released pursuant to a court order or subpoena.
- A student may give written authorization for the release of information when (s) he wishes to share it with others. Before giving such authorization, the student should understand the information being released, the purpose of the release, and to whom the information is being released. Information will not be released without consent unless federal or state law requires it.
- Office of Disability Services will retain a copy of all information provided for a minimum of 7 years. If a student wishes to have a record expunged, (s) he must make a written request to the director who will decide whether it is necessary for the office to retain the record.
- A student has the right to review his or her own file.

### **CONFLICT RESOLUTION/COMPLAINTS**

Students with disabilities are responsible for contacting the Office of Disability Services if reasonable accommodations are not implemented in an effective and timely manner. The Office of Disability Services will work with University personnel and the students to resolve disagreements regarding recommended accommodations.

Conflict resolution should be attempted at the lowest level possible. Faculty members and students with disabilities should first consult with the Director of ODS when accommodation-related concerns arise. If the dispute cannot be resolved, the Associate Provost would be advised and a meeting scheduled. Faculty members who question the legitimacy of an accommodation recommended by ODS should continue to afford the accommodation to the student while the appeals procedures are implemented. At this meeting, the documentation would be reviewed and the reasoning for and against the requested accommodations reviewed. If upon this review, the accommodations are determined to be warranted, the faculty member would be required to accommodate the student.

Complaints alleging that a qualified individual with a disability has been excluded from participation in, been denied the benefits of, or otherwise has been subjected to discrimination in University employment or program activities may be filed under any of the following grievance procedures as appropriate:

Students – UNO Student Policy Manual or in the UNO Student Handbook

[http://www.uno.edu/~stlf/Policy%20Manual/student\\_policy\\_manual\\_frames.htm](http://www.uno.edu/~stlf/Policy%20Manual/student_policy_manual_frames.htm)

Faculty - Faculty Grievance Procedures as outlined in the Faculty Handbook

<http://www.uno.edu/%7Eacaf/table2.htm>

The following procedures will be used to review all complaints or grievances alleging violations of the ADA or Section 504 (taken with permission directly from Florida State University's

## Grievance/Complaint Procedures For Persons with Disabilities

<http://www.fsu.edu/Books/Student-Handbook/2003codes/disabilities.html>):

- All complaints alleging violation of the ADA or Section 504 must be made in writing to the appropriate investigating department within sixty (60) calendar days of the alleged violation or claim of failure to provide reasonable accommodation. The written complaint should specify the time, place, and nature of the act claimed to be in violation and may be supplemented by supporting documents and/or affidavits from persons having firsthand knowledge of the facts. A student complaint must be filed within thirty (30) school days of the beginning of the first term in which enrolled, following that in which the alleged violation occurred.
- The appropriate department will investigate all pertinent facts and circumstances in support of the alleged violation within twenty (20) working days of receipt of the complaint, to include review and verification of all documentation and testimony by involved and/or knowledgeable parties.
- The investigating department may attempt resolution of a complaint through mutual agreement of the affected parties at any point during the course of the investigation. Should such resolution be achieved, the investigation shall be ended. The terms and conditions of the resolution agreement shall be issued to the charging party and the appropriate administrator of the party or department charged within ten (10) working days for review and signatures.
- Where resolution through mutual agreement is not achieved, written findings from the investigation regarding probable cause, along with a recommendation for resolving the complaint, shall be forwarded simultaneously to the charging party, the responsible administrator of the charged department, and the University Office of Disability Services Director immediately upon completion of the investigation.
- The responsible administrator shall take final action on the recommendation within ten (10) working days after receipt of the recommendation. Consultation will be provided by the University ADA Compliance Officer and Section 504 Compliance Officer as requested.
- Either party may appeal the findings of the investigating department to the University Chancellor (or the Chancellor's designee) by filing a request for a review of a complaint alleging discrimination on the basis of disability or failure to provide reasonable accommodation within ten (10) calendar days of receipt of the finding.
- Within seven (7) calendar days of receipt of the initial findings, the University Chancellor may render a final decision on the complaint or choose to employ the hearing panel to review the appeal. If the hearing panel is employed, there is a three to five-member hearing panel (already appointed) to review the case. The hearing panel will conduct a hearing, consider evidence (and testimony if necessary), in justification of the appeal, and render its decision within twenty-one (21) days of appointment. The Chancellor may accept, reject or modify the decision of the review panel.
- Upon final resolution of a complaint, copies of records will be forwarded to and maintained by the ODS Director. All records relating to complaints of failure to provide reasonable accommodations are evaluative in nature and all medical information contained in complaint records shall be deemed confidential. (If the hearing panel is

brought in to review a case, it is at this point that the documentation can be disclosed to the panel.)

- A complainant with a disability who believes that his or her grievance has not been handled appropriately should bring this to the attention of the ODS Director.

## **AUTHORITY**

Article VII, Section 4 of the Bylaws and Regulations of the Board of Supervisors of Louisiana State University Systems, (the administrative requirements) of Subpart E of Section 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act - {PL 93-112}, and (the administrative requirements) of Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) - {PL 101-336}.

## **GENERAL POLICY**

The University of New Orleans Office of Disability Services (ODS) is recognized as the UNO authority on all aspects related to academic accommodations for students with disabilities. Even if someone chooses not to employ ODS's assistance in acquiring accommodations, the faculty can use ODS as a resource to verify the legitimacy of the request for accommodation, review and interpret documentation, and explain the student's legal rights to accommodation.

## **ELIGIBILITY FOR SERVICES**

Only those students who identify themselves to the University and/or present appropriate written documentation of a disability shall be eligible for academic accommodations.

Accessing accommodations through ODS requires several administrative steps. The first step, is for the student to submit appropriate documentation of disability and of the disability-related need for any specific accommodations being requested to the ODS staff. Exactly what "sufficient documentation" is will depend upon the disability. Federal law states that a student need not submit written documentation of a disability if its effects are visible to the ODS staff, and if the need for all accommodations being requested is readily evident on the basis of those visible effects. These are the only circumstances under which the requirement for written documentation of disability will be waived. Once the documentation is reviewed, ODS staff will contact the student for an appointment. During this appointment, accommodations will be recommended, the student will complete a Student Information Form, and all necessary forms and procedures will be reviewed with the student.

Students who are found to be without disabilities will be referred to other campus and community resources for assistance. ODS does reserve the right to deny services or accommodations pending receipt of documentation.

## **APPROPRIATE DOCUMENTATION BY DISABILITY TYPE**

The staff of Office of Disability Services requests disability-related documentation from the appropriate licensed professional (see details below) to certify a student as having a disability and to determine reasonable accommodations. The cost of the documentation is the responsibility of the student. If the initial documentation is incomplete or inadequate to

determine the extent of the disability and reasonable accommodations, the Office of Disability Services has the discretion to require additional documentation. Any cost of obtaining additional documentation is the responsibility of the student. If the University desires a second professional opinion, the University will assume the cost.

ODS offers documentation packets to facilitate the gathering of complete and appropriate documentation.

Please refer to Appendix I for detailed documentation guidelines.

## **ACCOMMODATIONS**

### Choosing an Approach to Accommodations

#### Factors to Consider:

The complexity of the adaptations required.

If students can address the effects of a disability by altering their own behavior (e.g., by keeping a prioritized personal calendar, or taping lectures, for instance), or by using off-campus resources (e.g., like taped texts from Recordings for the Blind and Dyslexic or private tutors), they might prefer to handle the necessary accommodations personally. If they cannot do so, but their disability can be accommodated quickly and easily (e.g., selective classroom seating or permission to use a dictionary for in-class writing assignments), it might be preferable for the student and the instructor to avoid the paperwork and consultation involved in going through ODS and to work together on accommodations. However, if the student needs more specialized services (e.g., oral proctoring or low-distraction testing environment), the instructor may have difficulty providing them. ODS arranges such services on a regular basis, and already has the contacts, policies and procedures.

The ease with which the effects of the disability in question can be determined.

The ODS staff is familiar with most common disabilities and their effects on academic performance. We have standardized requirements for documentation and can tell students immediately and explicitly what kind of proof they need to submit to verify entitlement to services, and what kind of accommodations will be offered, based on that documentation. Academic department heads or instructors may not always be able to evaluate documentation themselves or to determine appropriate accommodations, and the time they spend researching the legitimacy of students' requests might be better spent arranging for the needed accommodations. Additionally, students may be eligible for accommodations of which neither they nor their instructors are aware, but which ODS would recommend based on the students' documentation.

The readiness of the student to discuss the disability.

As mentioned earlier, the student must self-identify in order to receive accommodations from the University. Students may choose not to reveal their disabilities, if their unwillingness to discuss their disabilities outweighs their need for assistance. If they choose to go through ODS, ODS will notify instructors of the accommodations which are required, but not of the disabilities which result in entitlement. Students choosing to receive accommodations directly from the

department or instructor must self-identify directly to those individuals, which may include submitting confidential medical, psychological, or psycho-educational documents as proof of disability.

### Self-Accommodation

For our purposes, it is important to note that self-accommodation does not mean providing oneself with access to materials (during lectures or tests) to which other students are denied access. It simply means using one's own resources, within the bounds of those guidelines and requirements, to enhance one's performance and minimize the impact of disability on academic achievement. For some students, it is not only the simplest but also the best choice. You might be among them if:

- You are fully aware of all the effects your disability has on your academic performance and know exactly what accommodations are needed to compensate for them.
- You know where and how to get what you need to succeed without the assistance of the University.
- The benefits of accessing University-administered accommodations are less than the cost, in time and energy, of doing so.
- You are willing to discuss your disability and its effects with instructors and/or department heads.
- Your disability and its effects are easily verified, by direct observation or by virtue of straightforward documentation which is in your personal possession.
- Your accommodation requirements can be fulfilled in the classroom or other facilities readily available to you, your instructor, or department head without a great deal of difficulty.

There are risks assumed in self-accommodation. Choosing self-accommodation initially does not constitute a permanent renouncement of your right to University-administered accommodations. It does mean you are responsible for your performance for as long as you are self-accommodating. If you choose not to self-identify as a student with a disability, and/or not to request accommodation based on that identification, the University is not responsible for any disability-related problems you may have. You cannot request retroactive accommodation (e.g., you know you have a disability but choose not to access accommodations on that basis, and as a result fail a test because you weren't able to gain or demonstrate the understanding you needed to pass it; the sole responsibility is yours, because you made the choice to take the test without accommodations). You may request accommodations on any remaining tests in the class, but the failing grade on that test will stand. Additionally, many testing agencies and graduate programs require proof of past accommodations (or an explanation for the lack of such proof) of students requesting accommodations on standardized tests or adaptations of entrance requirements based on disability. Such proof is readily available to students whose accommodations have been provided through University channels, but may be more difficult for a self-accommodating student to produce.

There are definite advantages to the self-accommodation option. For example, self-

accommodation affords the student the option of total privacy and confidentiality. Accommodations you provide for yourself are hand-tailored to fit your needs. Forms, procedures, and externally imposed deadlines are non-issues.

If you can succeed just as completely without assistance from the University, self-accommodation is probably perfect for you. If you can succeed, but less completely, without assistance, you must take into account the degree to which your success will be impaired and the importance of your other concerns. If you cannot succeed at all without assistance, you probably want to consider assistance. Those are questions all individuals must answer for themselves.

Here are some examples of some of the situations in which students might prefer to use the self-accommodation option:

- A student with a visual impairment is unable to read standard print. This student chooses to use a hand-held magnifier for reading, and perhaps make enlarged photocopies of charts, handouts, or vital notes might be referred to during class.
- A student with a hearing impairment sometimes misses points in the lecture or class discussion. This student determines to trade notes with a fellow student and/or make tape recordings of the class that can be listened to later at an amplified volume.
- A student with a mobility impairment has trouble walking swiftly. This student schedules non-consecutive classes, allowing for plenty of time to get from one building to another without rushing and with time to rest if necessary.
- A student with a chronic health problem sometimes loses concentration in class due to the side effects of medication or is forced to miss class because of illness. This student might record class lectures as well as study with a partner and share notes. The study partner might tape lectures when the student absent.
- A student with a psychological impairment finds it difficult to concentrate not near to an exit at all times. This student makes plans to arrive early to classes in order to secure the seats nearest to the doors.

### ODS Administered Accommodations

The Office of Disability Services (ODS) was established at UNO to provide a campus-wide standard for the provision of accommodations. The primary function of the office is the coordination of efforts by a variety of departments in providing accommodations.

Students with disabilities have the right to participate in services coordinated through ODS or may choose to arrange for a disability-related accommodation by working directly with their instructors. As mentioned in the General Policy, the faculty may consult with ODS on issues of accommodating a disabled student who chooses not to register with the office. When students opt to register for services with the ODS, they are required to abide by ODS's policies and procedures.

1. Only students who have presented appropriate documentation are eligible for testing accommodations through ODS.

2. ODS will proctor and/or coordinate testing for students registered with the ODS. The ODS ATATC is the designated facility for disability-related testing accommodations.
3. Students who utilize this facility must observe all policies and procedures established by ODS.
4. Faculty members are responsible for carrying out accommodations recommended by ODS. If there is a disagreement by the faculty member and/or student concerning listed accommodation, a procedure has been established to resolve the conflict

### Physical Adaptations

Procedures for accessing physical adaptations vary widely. There are a few adaptations which are commonly offered through ODS, and procedures for accessing them are listed below.

Students who need physical adaptations which are not often offered should discuss their needs with the ODS staff at the time of their initial appointment.

To have tables and chairs placed in your classrooms (for students who cannot sit comfortably in desks or cannot sit in desks for extended periods of time): submit a written request, via the Accommodation Agreement Request form (AAR) listing the classrooms you will be taking classes in and the days and times you will be there, at least 2 weeks before you will need the tables and chairs.

To obtain preferential seating in the front of the classroom (for students who cannot see well enough or cannot hear well enough to profit fully from classroom lectures if seated in the rear of the class): after discussing your accommodations needs with the ODS staff member, fill out an Accommodation Agreement Request form (AAR), listing your instructors and classes. Pick up your Student Accommodation Agreements (SAA), discuss the "selective seating" accommodation with your instructor, and make arrangements to be seated appropriately.

### Classroom Accommodations

For most classroom accommodations, you will need, after discussing your accommodation needs with a ODS staff member, to submit a completed AAR to ODS, then pick up your completed SAAs and discuss your accommodation needs with your instructors, and finally return the completed AAs to ODS. There are, however, also other procedures that should be followed in some cases.

- To obtain volunteer notetakers (for students who cannot hear well enough or cannot write well enough to take notes for themselves), submit the AAR and then completed SAAs. When you pick up your SAA forms, you must request a Student Notetaker Packet as well as the appropriate number Volunteer Notetaker Packet. Present your notetakers the Volunteer Notetaker Packet. Encourage them to submit the Volunteer Notetaker Information Form in a timely manner. If you wish to use NCR paper for auto-duplicating notes, arrange this with the Notetaker Manager.
- To arrange for ASL or signed-English interpreters (for students with hearing impairments who sign), submit a written request via the AAR to a ODS staff member, listing all those classes in which you will need interpreters by location, day and time, and subject matter. You will also sign an Agreement for Interpreting Services form, which outlines the policies and procedures for this type of service.

### Testing Accommodations

Testing accommodations are the most closely regulated accommodations on campus. All testing accommodations require the completion of the AAR and an SAA for every class and of an Accommodative Testing Form (ATF) for every test. Testing accommodations may include:

- Distraction reduced testing environments
- Extended testing time
- Test enlargement
- Adaptive technology use for testing
- Orally-proctored tests

### Other Services

ODS has available, for loan, equipment such as assistive listening devices, 4 track tape recorders, standard tape recorders, and magnification devices, for purposes of meeting students accommodations needs. The loan of this type of equipment will be discussed when the student meets with an ODS staff member to discuss accommodations. If equipment is to be loaned, the student will then complete a Loan Form, to be kept on file.

To obtain texts and class materials in alternative formats (for those students who cannot read or cannot interpret written materials), meet with an ODS staff member or the Reader/Notetaker Manager to discuss options. These students will be given a Readers Services packet, outlining procedures for requesting audio texts or texts in other alternative format. Most students can obtain many materials through agencies outside the University, like Recordings for the Blind and Dyslexic (RFB&D). Many students also receive funding from LRS or other governmental agencies for the hiring of private readers. ODS staff will work to produce the materials in alternative formats as necessary. Every case is individual, and should be addressed individually in a one-on-one meeting with an ODS staff member when discussing recommended accommodations.

To arrange an appointment for training in the use of adaptive technology on campus (for students who need to have written materials enlarged, Brailled, or voiced in order to access them, or who require computer assistance to write, proofread, or spell-check documents), after discussing your need for such access with an ODS staff member at the time of your initial appointment, make phone contact with the staff of the ATATC.

Once you know how to use the equipment properly, you may make appointments to do so. Appointments are preferable at all times, since the first priority of the ATATC is for administering testing accommodations.

## **APPENDIX I**

### APPROPRIATE DOCUMENTATION BY DISABILITY TYPE

#### Hearing Impairments

1. The documentation must be from a qualified professional (e.g., certified Otologist, Audiologist);
2. The documentation must identify an actual diagnosis of an impairment;
3. The documentation must discuss functional limitations in an academic environment which are caused by the impairment;
4. The documentation should recommend accommodations to compensate for identified functional limitations.

### Physical Impairments

1. The documentation must be from a qualified professional (e.g., physician, nurse practitioner);
2. The documentation must identify an actual diagnosis of an impairment;
3. The documentation must discuss functional limitations in an academic environment which are caused by the impairment;
4. The documentation should recommend accommodations to compensate for identified functional limitations.
5. the documentation should list current medication, dosages, and existing (not possible) side effects.

### Visual Impairments

1. The documentation must be from a qualified professional (e.g., ophthalmologist, optometrist);
2. The documentation must identify an actual diagnosis of an impairment;
3. The documentation must discuss functional limitations in an academic environment which are caused by the impairment;
4. The documentation should recommend accommodations to compensate for identified functional limitations.

### Psychological Disabilities

1. The documentation must be from a qualified professional (e.g., psychologist, psychiatrist, licensed professional counselor);
2. The documentation must identify an actual diagnosis of an impairment according to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders IV;
3. the documentation must discuss functional limitations in an academic environment which are caused by the impairment;
4. the documentation should recommend accommodations to compensate for identified functional limitations, and
5. the documentation should list current medication, dosages, and existing (not possible) side effects.

### Invisible Disabilities

Students with other invisible impairments (e.g., chronic health ailments) should provide documentation that meets the following criteria:

1. The documentation should be from a qualified professional (e.g., physician, licensed psychologist, neuropsychologist);
2. The documentation must identify an actual diagnosis of an impairment;
3. the documentation must discuss functional limitations in an academic environment which are caused by the impairment;
4. The documentation should recommend accommodations to compensate for identified functional limitations, and
5. The documentation should list current medication, dosages, and existing (not possible) side effects.

### ADD/ADHD

According to Hallowell and Ratey (1994), Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) is a neurological syndrome that is usually genetically transmitted, and is characterized by distractibility, impulsivity, and restlessness. In ADD these characteristics are present from childhood on, and because these characteristics occur with much greater intensity (than a person who does not have ADD), it interferes with everyday functioning.

Students with ADD or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) should provide documentation that meets the following criteria:

1. Documentation should be from a qualified professional (e.g., physician, licensed psychologist or neuropsychologist);
2. The documentation must identify an actual diagnosis of an impairment according to the DSM-IV;
3. The documentation must discuss functional limitations in an academic environment which are caused by the impairment;
4. The documentation should recommend accommodations to compensate for identified functional limitations, and
5. The documentation should list current medication, dosages, and existing (not possible) side effects.

### Learning Disabilities

Learning disabilities is a general term that refers to a heterogeneous group of disorders manifested by significant difficulties in the acquisition and use of listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning, or mathematical abilities. These disorders are intrinsic to the individual, presumed to be due to central nervous system dysfunction, and may occur across the life span. Problems in self-regulatory behaviors, social perception, and social interaction may exist with learning disabilities but do not by themselves constitute a learning disability. Although learning disabilities may occur concomitantly with other handicapping conditions (for example, sensory impairment, mental retardation, serious emotional disturbance) or with extrinsic influences (such as cultural differences, insufficient or inappropriate instruction), they are not the result of those conditions or influences (National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities (NJCLD), 1994). The University of New Orleans Office of Disability Services has established the following guidelines for the documentation of learning disabilities based on the National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities (NJCLD, 1994) definition of learning disabilities and the Association of Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD) guidelines for documentation of specific learning disabilities in adults:

## I. Evaluation

The evaluation must be comprehensive and current (preferably within three years prior to the student's application for assistance) and should be from a qualified professional (e.g., psychologist, neurologist, school psychologist), and include a diagnosis of a learning disability in accord with the criteria outlined in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, (DSM-IV). Documentation should validate the need for services based on the individual's current level of functioning in the educational setting. A school plan such as an individualized education program (IEP) or a 504 plan is insufficient documentation, but it can be included as part of a more comprehensive assessment battery. A comprehensive assessment battery and the resulting diagnostic report should include a diagnostic interview, assessment of aptitude, academic achievement, information processing and a diagnosis. It is not acceptable for an evaluation to consist of only one test for the purpose of diagnosis. All assessment instruments used in the evaluation must have age appropriate norms for high school seniors/college freshmen or older students. All standardized measures must be represented by standard scores or percentile ranks based on published norms. Minimally, the domains to be addressed in the evaluation must include (but are not limited to) the following:

*A. Diagnostic Interview* - Because learning disabilities are commonly manifested during childhood, though not always formally diagnosed, relevant historical information regarding the student's academic history and learning processes in elementary, secondary, and postsecondary education should be investigated. The diagnostician, using professional judgment as to which areas are relevant, should conduct a diagnostic interview which may include: a description of the presenting problem(s); developmental, medical, psychosocial and employment histories; family history (including primary language of the home and the student's current level of English fluency); and a discussion of dual diagnosis where indicated. The diagnostician may include a summary of the following:

- Description of the presenting problem(s)
- Developmental history
- Relevant medical history including the absence of a medical basis for the present symptoms
- An academic history including results of prior standardized testing, reports of classroom performance and behaviors including transcripts; study habits and attitudes; and notable trends
- Relevant family history, including primary language of the home, and current level of fluency of English
- Relevant psychosocial history
- Relevant employment history
- Discussion of dual diagnosis, alternative or co-existing mood, behavioral, neurological, and/or personality disorders along with any history of relevant medication and current use which may impact the individual's learning
- Exploration of possible alternatives which may mimic a learning disability when, in fact, one is not present
- History of prior psychotherapy and pharmacotherapy

*B. Assessment* - The neuropsychological or psychoeducational evaluation for the diagnosis of a specific learning disability must provide clear and specific evidence that a learning disability does or does not exist. Assessment, and any resulting diagnosis, should consist of and be based on a comprehensive assessment battery that does not rely on any one test or subtest. Competence in working with culturally and linguistically diverse populations is also essential. It is of utmost importance that evaluators are sensitive and respectful of cultural and linguistic differences in adolescents and adults during the assessment process. Evidence of a substantial limitation to learning or other major life activity must be provided.

1. Aptitude - A complete battery with all sub-tests and standard scores reported is essential. The following list is provided as a helpful resource, but it is not intended to be definitive or exhaustive:

- Kaufman Adolescent and Adult Intelligence Test
- Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale (5th ed.)
- Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale III (WAIS-III)

2. Achievement - A complete battery with all subtest and standard scores reported is essential. Current levels of functioning in reading (decoding and comprehension\*), mathematics (applied word problems and calculations\*\*), oral language skills, and written language skills (spelling and written expression) are required. Acceptable instruments include:

- Woodcock-Johnson Psycho-Educational Battery III: Tests of Achievement
- Scholastic Abilities Test for Adults (SATA)
- Stanford Tests of Academic Skills
- Wechsler Individual Achievement Test II (WIAT II)

Or specific achievement tests such as the:

- Nelson-Denny Reading Skills Test
- Stanford Diagnostic Mathematics Test
- Test of Written Language - 3 (TOWL-3)
- Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests - Revised

Specific achievement tests are useful instruments when administered under standardized conditions and interpreted within the context of other diagnostic information. The Wide Range Achievement Test - 3 (WRAT-3) is not a comprehensive measure of achievement and therefore is not useful if used as the sole measure of achievement.

\*The evaluation should indicate the student's ability to comprehend long passages typical of college text.

\*\*The evaluation should indicate whether or not the student was successful with algebra problems.

3. Information Processing - Strengths, weaknesses, and deficits should be discussed. Clear documentation of deficit areas is necessary in order to provide appropriate accommodations. Information processing areas, which should be discussed, include:

- a. Visual-spatial abilities
- b. memory (auditory and visual; short-term and long term)
- c. motor ability
- d. executive functions (verbal and nonverbal reasoning)
- e. processing speed
- f. attention (auditory and visual).

Other assessment measures such as non-standard measures and informal assessment procedures or observations may be helpful in determining performance across a variety of domains. Other formal assessment measures may be integrated with the above instruments to help determine a learning disability and differentiate it from co-existing neurological and/or psychiatric disorders (i.e., to establish a differential diagnosis). In addition to standardized tests, it is also very useful to include informal observations of the student during the test administration.

The Detroit Tests of Learning Aptitude - 3 (DTLA-3) and sub-tests from the WAIS-III or the Woodcock-Johnson Psychoeducational Battery III: Tests of Cognitive Ability are acceptable assessments, as well as other relevant instruments.

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

## II. Test Scores

Standard scores and/or percentiles should be provided for all normed measures. Grade equivalents are not useful unless standard scores and/or percentiles are also included. The data should logically reflect a substantial limitation to learning for which the student is requesting the accommodation. The particular profile of the student's strengths and weaknesses must be shown to relate to functional limitations that may necessitate accommodations.

The tests used should be reliable, valid and standardized for use with an adolescent/adult population. The test findings should document both the nature and severity of the learning disability. Informal inventories, surveys and direct observation by a qualified professional may be used in tandem with formal tests in order to further develop a clinical hypothesis.

## III. Specific Diagnosis

Individual "learning styles," "learning differences," "academic problems," "test difficulty or anxiety," and "non-verbal learning disability" in and of themselves, do not constitute a learning disability. It is important to rule out alternative explanations for problems in learning such as emotional, attentional or motivational problems that may be interfering with learning but do not constitute a learning disability. The diagnostician is encouraged to use direct language in the diagnosis and documentation of a learning disability, in accord with the criteria outlined in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, (DSM-IV), avoiding the use of terms such as "suggests" or "is indicative of."

If the data indicate that a learning disability is not present, the evaluator should state that conclusion in the report.

## IV. Clinical Summary

A well-written diagnostic summary is based on a comprehensive evaluation process is a necessary component of the report. Assessment instruments and the data they provide do not diagnose; rather, they provide important elements that must be integrated by the evaluator with background information, observations of the client during the testing situation, and the current context. It is essential, therefore, that professional judgment be utilized in the development of a clinical summary. The clinical summary should include:

- A. Demonstration of the evaluator's having 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/language differences;
- B. Indication of how patterns in the student's cognitive ability, achievement and information processing reflect the presence of a learning disability;
- C. Indication of the substantial limitation to learning or other major life activity presented by the learning disability and the degree to which it impacts the individual in the learning context for
- D. Indication as to why specific accommodations are needed and how the effects of the specific disability are accommodated.

The summary should also include any record of prior accommodation or auxiliary aids, including any information about specific conditions under which the accommodations were used (e.g., standardized testing, final exams, and licensing or certification examinations).

#### V. Recommendations for Accommodations

It is important to recognize that 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.

The diagnostic report should include specific recommendations for accommodations as well as an explanation as to why each accommodation is recommended. The evaluators should describe the impact the diagnosed learning disability has on a specific major life activity as well as the degree of significance of this impact on the individual. The evaluator should support recommendations with specific test results or clinical observations.

If accommodations are not clearly identified in a diagnostic report, the disability service provider should seek clarification and, if necessary, more information. The final determination for providing appropriate and reasonable accommodations rests with the institution.

In instances where a request for accommodations is denied in a postsecondary institution, a written grievance or appeal procedure should be in place.

#### VI. Qualifications of the Evaluator

Professionals conducting assessments and rendering diagnosis of specific learning disabilities and making recommendations for appropriate accommodations must be qualified to do so.

The name, title, and professional credentials of the evaluator, including information about license or certification (e.g., licensed psychologist) as well as the area of specialization, employment, and state/province in which the individual practices should clearly be stated on documentation. For example, the following professionals would generally be considered qualified to evaluate specific learning disabilities, provided that they have additional training and

experience in the assessment of learning problems in adolescents and adults: clinical or educational psychologists, school psychologists, and neuropsychologists. Use of diagnostic terminology indicating a learning disability by someone whose training and experience are not in these fields is not acceptable. It is not considered appropriate for professionals to evaluate members of their families. All reports should be on letterhead, typed, dated, signed, and otherwise legible.

## **APPENDIX II**

### **Definitions**

**Academic Adjustment** - 1. Academic requirements. AA recipient to which this subpart applies shall make such modifications to his/her academic requirements that are necessary to ensure that such requirements do not discriminate or do not have the effect of discriminating on the basis of handicap, against a qualified handicap applicant or student. Academic requirements that the recipient can demonstrate are essential to the program of instruction being pursued by such student or to any directly related licensing requirement will not be regarded as discriminatory within the meaning of this section. Modifications may include changes in the length of time permitted for the completion of degree requirements, substitution of specific courses required for the completion of degree requirements, and adaptation of the manner in which specific courses are conducted. 2. Other rules. A recipient to which this subpart applies may not impose handicapped students' other rules, such as the prohibition of tape recorders in classrooms or of dog guides in campus buildings, that have the effect of limiting the participation of handicapped students in the recipient's education program or activity. 3. Course examinations. In its course examinations or other procedures for evaluating students' academic achievement in its program, a recipient to which this subpart applies shall provide such methods for evaluating the achievement of students who have a handicap that impairs sensory, manual, or speaking skills as will best ensure that the results of the evaluation represents the student's achievement in the course, rather than reflecting the student's impaired sensory, manual, or speaking skills (except where such skills are the factors that the test purports to measure). 4. Auxiliary aids: A. A recipient to which this subpart applies shall take such steps as are necessary to ensure that no handicapped student is denied the benefits of, excluded from participation in, or otherwise subjected to discrimination under the education program or activity operated by the recipient because of the absence of education auxiliary aids for student with impaired sensory, manual, or speaking skills. B. Auxiliary aids may include taped texts, interpreters or other effective methods of making orally delivered materials available to students with hearing impairments, readers in libraries for students with visual impairments, classroom equipment adapted for use by students with manual impairments, and other similar services and actions. Recipients need not provide attendants, individually prescribed devices, readers for personal use or study, or other devices or services of a personal nature. (Taken directly from Subpart E Section 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act).

**Accessibility** - Approachable, functional, and useable by persons with disabilities, independently, safely, and with dignity (Goldman, 1991).

**Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD)** - According to Hallowell and Ratey (1994), ADD is a

neurological syndrome that is usually genetically transmitted, and is characterized by distractibility, impulsivity, and restlessness. In ADD these characteristics are present from childhood on, and because these characteristics occur with much greater intensity (than a person who does not have ADD), it interferes with everyday functioning.

**Hearing Impairment** - The causes and degrees of hearing loss vary across the deaf and hard-of-hearing community, as do methods of communication and attitudes toward deafness. In general, there are three types of hearing loss: 1. Conductive loss affects the sound-conducting paths of the outer and middle ear. The degree of hearing loss can be decreased through the use of a hearing aid or by surgery; 2. Sensorineural loss affects the inner ear and the auditory nerve and can range from mild to profound; and, 3. Mixed loss results from both a conductive and sensorineural loss (Disability Services, U of Minnesota, 1995).

**Learning disabilities** - Learning disabilities is a general term that refers to a heterogeneous group of disorders manifested by significant difficulties in the acquisition and use of listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning, or mathematical abilities. These disorders are intrinsic to the individual, presumed to be due to central nervous system dysfunction, and may occur across the life span. Problems in self-regulatory behaviors, social perception, and social interaction may exist with learning disabilities but do not by themselves constitute a learning disability. Although learning disabilities may occur concomitantly with other handicapping conditions (for example, sensory impairment, mental retardation, serious emotional disturbance) or with extrinsic influences (such as cultural differences, insufficient or inappropriate instruction), they are not the result of those conditions or influences (National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities (NJCLD), 1994).

The University of New Orleans Office of Disability Services has established guidelines for the documentation of learning disabilities based on the National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities (NJCLD, 1994) definition of learning disabilities and the Association of Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD) guidelines for documentation of specific learning disabilities in adults.

**Mobility Impairments** - These range in severity from limitations on stamina to paralysis. Some mobility impairments are caused by conditions present at birth while others are the result of physical injury. Injuries cause different types of mobility impairments, depending on what area of the spine is affected. Quadriplegia, paralysis of the extremities and trunk, is caused by a neck injury. Students with quadriplegia have limited or no use of their arms and hands and often use electric wheelchairs. Paraplegia, a paralysis of lower extremities and the lower trunk, is caused by injuries to the mid-back. Students often use a manual wheelchair and have full movement of arms and hands (Disability Services, U of Minnesota, 1995).

**Otherwise Qualified** - With respect to postsecondary and vocational education services, a handicapped person who meets the academic and technical standards requisite to admissions or participation in the recipient's education program or activity (Section 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act).

**Person with a disability** - Any person who (1) has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities; (2) has a record of such impairment; or (3) is regarded as having such an impairment. (Section 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act - PL 93-112).

**Psychiatric Disabilities** - Students with psychiatric disabilities may experience significant emotional difficulty that generally has required treatment in a hospital setting. With appropriate treatment, often combining medications, psychotherapy, and support, the majority of psychiatric disorders are cured or controlled (Disability Services, U of Minnesota, 1995). Some examples include depression, bipolar disorder, anxiety disorders, and schizophrenia.

**Reasonable Accommodation** - Those modifications and aids with which an otherwise qualified person with a disability could do a particular job, e.g., making existing facilities accessible, job restructuring, part-time or modified work schedules, reassignment, acquisition/modification of equipment or devices, adjustment or modification of examinations, training materials or policies, provision of a reader or interpreter. Those accommodations which would impose an undue hardship on the operation of the business of the employer are excluded (Goldman, 1991).

**Systemic Disabilities** - Conditions affecting one or more of the body's systems. These include the respiratory, immunological, neurological, and circulatory systems (Disability Services, U of Minnesota, 1995).

**Traumatic Brain Injury** - Though not always visible and seemingly minor, brain injury is complex. It can cause physical, cognitive, social, and vocational changes that affect an individual for a short period of time or permanently. Depending on the extent and location of the injury, symptoms caused by a brain injury vary widely. Some common results are seizures, loss of balance or coordination, difficulty with speech, limited concentration, memory loss, and loss of organizational and reasoning skills (Disability Services, U of Minnesota, 1995).

**Undue Hardship** - An action requiring significant difficulty or expense (Goldman, 1991).

**Vision Impairments** - There are three degrees of vision loss: 1. visual acuity of 20/200 - the legally blind person can see at 20 feet what the average sighted person can see at 200; 2. low vision - limited or diminished vision that cannot be corrected with standard lenses; and, 3. partial sighted - the field of vision is impaired because of illness, a degenerative syndrome, or trauma (Disability Services, U of Minnesota, 1995).

## **APPENDIX II**

### **UNDERSTANDING AND COMPLETING ODS FORMS**

ODS has several forms which must be completed by students for varying purposes. There are distinctive procedures to follow. Understanding the procedures for the forms is very important. There is a reason for every step in the procedure and every line on the forms. The most important of these forms are:

### Accommodative Testing Form (ATF)

Students will use this form to make arrangements to take tests with accommodations in the Accommodative Testing and Adaptive Technology Center (ATATC). A separate ATF must be completed for each test to be taken. Each form must be submitted no later than one week before the date of the test to which it refers. The ATF is printed on two-part NCR paper; the original (top/yellow sheet) must be submitted to ODS and the copy (bottom/pink sheet) may be given to the instructor. ODS cannot accept forms without complete information.

### Student Accommodation Agreement (SAA)

This form is used by most students receiving classroom accommodations and by all students receiving testing accommodations through ODS. One form should be submitted for each class in which such accommodations will be needed. The SAA is printed on three-part NCR paper, so that the student may submit the original (top/white sheet) to ODS, retain the first copy (middle/yellow sheet), and give the second copy (bottom/pink sheet) to the instructor.

### Accommodation Agreement Request (AAR)

This form is used by those students who need to complete SAAs, to request that a ODS staff member prepare the top section of those forms and make the forms available to the student to complete. This form is also to be used by students who must request the placement of adaptive furniture into classrooms or to arrange for interpreting or real-time captioning services.

### Information Release

This form is provided as a courtesy to those students whose documentation providers need official written requests for document release. It is in the form of a letter from the student to the provider, requesting that documentation be sent to ODS. The student should enter the provider's address in the inside address portion of the letter, and her or his own address in the return address.

### Student Information Form (SIF)

This form must be completed by any student wishing to receive services of any kind from ODS. Any information about which the student is unsure or which the student is reluctant to provide should be discussed with a ODS staff member. This form will be used as a source of contact information for the student as well as for statistical data on the student. It will be kept in the student's confidential file.

### Loan Form

This form is signed by any student wishing to borrow any piece of equipment or alternative format textbook belonging to ODS for purpose of accommodation. The form states the individual's responsibility for the care and use of the item, as well as lists the date (and, in some instances, time) by which return of the item is expected. It will be kept on file in the ODS office, and will be presented for the student's signature by the staff member releasing the item.

### Volunteer Notetaker Information Form

This form is completed by students who act as volunteer notetakers for students with disabilities who need them. The form requests information on the note taker's identity, the identity of the

student for whom the notetaker is taking notes and the semester and class in which notes are being taken. ODS uses this information to determine to whom to issue the non-monetary rewards for the volunteer notetakers.

### **APPENDIX III**

#### UNO departments that may be of particular interest:

While they serve the entire UNO community, there are a number of departments at UNO that routinely provide especially valuable services to students with disabilities. We have described some of these below, listing their phone numbers and locations. The campus operator can reach those departments that do not have a TDD in-house through TDD relay. All University phones have a 504 area code.

The Learning Resource Center  
Facility Services  
Training, Resources and Assistive-technology Center (TRAC)  
Counseling Services  
Student Health Services  
Student Housing  
University Police  
UNO Information/Campus Operator

The Learning Resource Center, Liberal Arts building, Room 334, 280-7054 (voice only).

<http://lrc.uno.edu/>

The LRC offers a Writing Center, a Math Tutor Center (MAT 107) and tutoring in other subject areas, as well as a computer lab and a Media Library, from which videotapes and CD ROM's to supplement UNO courses in Mathematics, Sciences, and Liberal Arts are available for use.

Facility Services, 280-6363 (voice only)

Facility Services houses the ADA Compliance Officer for the university; this person is responsible for the accessibility of the UNO campus. Any problems with ramps, elevators, or accessible restrooms or doorways should be addressed to either Facility Services, ODS or both, as should any other problems with the physical accessibility of the campus.

Training, Resources and Assistive-technology Center (TRAC), 280-5700(Voice/TTY).

<http://www.uno.edu/~trac/>

TRAC is a related facility, housed on the UNO campus, with administrative autonomy. TRAC provides quality services, training, and programming to persons with disabilities, rehabilitation professionals, educators and employers.

Counseling Services, Alumni Development Center, Room 4, 280-6683 (voice only)

<http://www.uno.edu/~counserv/>

The mission of Counseling Services is to attempt to meet the needs of individual students in regard to their personal and career development. Problems with interpersonal relationships, depression, anxiety, feelings of inadequacy, loneliness, sexual worries, poor grades and career concerns, and even mental illness are all difficulties that college students may encounter. Counseling Services is available to all currently enrolled UNO students for a time-limited, but full range of counseling services.

Student Health Services, University Center, Room 244, (voice only) at 280-6387.

[http://www.uno.edu/%7Estlf/student\\_health.htm](http://www.uno.edu/%7Estlf/student_health.htm)

All students enrolled at UNO have access to Student Health Services, regardless of whether or not they have insurance of any kind. However, we only provide primary care. In order to provide access to specialist care and emergency room services, Student Health Services offers an optional low-cost sickness and accident insurance policy. SHS also includes the campus pharmacy (UC 238, 280-7074, voice only).

### Student Housing

<http://www.uno.edu/~hous/>

Offers adapted housing facilities for students with disabilities.

Bienville Hall/Lafitte Village 280-6402 (voice only) Traditional dorm style living/married student housing.

Privateer Place, 282-5670 (voice only). Apartment style housing.

University Police (UP), Campus Police Building, 280-6371 or emergency at 280-6666

<http://www.uno.edu/~upd/>

UP provides the required parking decals for UNO students, including verification of state-issued handicapped parking privileges. Additionally, students who have mobility impairments or other health issues may be able obtain special parking permits allowing them to park in spaces close to their classrooms that would normally be closed to students. These special permits require registration with ODS, documentation of an impairment to substantiate the request, and a memo from ODS to UP supporting the request. UP is also responsible for managing all emergency action on campus, and will, therefore, be involved in any medical emergency taking place on UNO grounds.

UNO Information/Campus Operator, 280-6000

The operator can provide general information about the University and will transfer calls directly to any department or individual staff member on campus. Operators also serve as the on-campus TDD relay line.