



# IMMACULATA UNIVERSITY

## HANDBOOK

# ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS

## **Statement of Introduction and Purpose**

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) as well as Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Immaculata University is committed to providing reasonable academic accommodations to students diagnosed with a disability and who are seeking accommodations. According to ADA and Section 504, the determination of a disability is made only when an individual's impairment substantially limits his/her ability to perform one or more of the person's major life activities. Also, an institution is required to provide accommodations only to individuals who have a record of such impairment. While the University or individual instructor is not, by law, required to fundamentally alter the nature of a class or curriculum to meet the needs of individual's with a disability, the University is committed to assist every student in their effort to achieve academic success.

In light of such a commitment, the University has set forth the following guidelines for students to follow should they have a disability that qualifies them to receive accommodations under the statutes outline by ADA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

University personnel who are responsible for maintaining its adherence to federal guidelines include the Dean of the College of Graduate Studies, Dean of the College of LifeLong Learning, Dean of the College of Undergraduate Studies, and the Vice President for Academic Affairs, who is the University ADA compliance officer.

## **Student Responsibilities**

Students must provide documentation of their disability before receiving services. In the case of a medical disability, documentation from a physician is appropriate. Testing to diagnose a disability is the responsibility of the student.

*In and of themselves, documents such as an SOP, IEP, or 504 plans are not sufficient to qualify for accommodations at the college level.*

In order for students with disabilities to receive services, they must submit the appropriate documentation (see Documentation Guidelines) for their disability and for their need for accommodations. Evaluations and reports must be completed by licensed, certified, professionals. A disability is defined by law as resulting in impairment to a major life activity, such as learning. Confidentiality is maintained through the keeping of all documentation on file in the appropriate college office. Students transferring from one college to another within the University may request that documentation be forwarded appropriately.

## **Process and Timeline**

Once the appropriate college office has received necessary documentation, a Letter of Accommodation outlining the appropriate accommodation will be provided to the student.

The Letter of Accommodation briefly describes that the student provided documentation of a physical or other type of disability, along with a list of recommended accommodations. It is the responsibility of the student to present a copy of the Letter of Accommodations to each instructor at the beginning of the semester.

Students must request accommodations prior to the start of the semester in which the accommodations are sought. Failure to follow this timeline may result in a period of class enrollment during which the accommodations are not able to be effectively implemented.

**No accommodations will be made without a Letter of Accommodations.**

## ***Documentation Guidelines***

### **Students with Learning Disabilities:**

Students with learning disabilities who are requesting support services from the appropriate college office at Immaculata University are required to submit documentation to verify eligibility under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. To ensure that the documentation is complete and appropriate, the following guidelines are provided:

1. The documentation must include an LD diagnosis and the rationale for this diagnosis.
2. The diagnosis should be determined by a licensed or certified professional trained in psycho-educational assessment.
3. The evaluation must be current (within the last 3 years) and relevant to the educational setting. Exceptions will be determined on an individual basis.
4. The battery of assessments must include a cognitive evaluation (WAIS-IV or WJ-R), achievement battery, and the following information:
  - The name(s) of the assessment instrument(s) used.
  - Quantitative and Qualitative information that supports the diagnosis.
  - The severity of the condition(s).
  - The areas of educational impact.
  - Additional observations or recommendations that would assist in meeting the individual needs of the student.
  - The names, titles, address, telephone, and fax numbers of the evaluators, as well as the date(s) of testing.

**Students with AD/HD:**

Students with AD/HD who are requesting support services from the appropriate college office at Immaculata University are required to submit documentation to verify eligibility under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. To ensure that the documentation is complete and appropriate, the following guidelines are provided:

1. The documentation must include an AD/HD diagnosis and the rationale for this diagnosis (i.e. DSM-IV criteria).
2. The diagnosis must be a medical diagnosis or part of a comprehensive clinical evaluation.
3. The evaluation should be current (within the last 3 years) and relevant to the educational setting.
4. The documentation must include the following information:
  - The name(s) of the assessment instrument(s) used (aptitude, achievement, information procession, behavioral checklists).
  - Quantitative and Qualitative information that supports the diagnosis.
  - The severity of the condition.
  - The areas of educational impact.
  - Recommendations for prescriptive treatments, environmental management and reasonable accommodations.
  - Additional recommended learning accommodations that would assist in meeting the individual needs of the student.
  - The names, titles, address, telephone, and fax numbers of the evaluators, as well as the date(s) of testing.

**Students with Psychiatric Disabilities:**

Students with Psychiatric Disabilities who are requesting support services from the appropriate college office at Immaculata University are required to submit documentation to verify eligibility under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

1. The assessment must be administered by a trained, qualified, and licensed professional, who has had direct experience with adolescents and adults with psychiatric disorders.
  - A qualified professional may include, but is not limited to: a medical doctor, psychologist, or student clinician who is being supervised by a professional.
  - The professional completing the evaluation should not be a family member.
2. The evaluation report must be comprehensive and include a specific diagnosis based on the DSM-IV-TR diagnostic criteria.

3. The diagnostic evaluation should be current (within the 3 years) and relevant to the student's learning environment and show the student's current level of functioning.
  - If the documentation does not include the student's present level of functioning, a re-evaluation may be required.
4. Reasonable accommodations will be based on the current impact of the disability on the student's academic performance.
5. The documentation must include the following information:
  - All reports should be on letterhead, typed, dated, and signed.
  - The name(s) of the assessment instrument(s) used.
  - The severity of the condition.
  - The areas of educational impact.
  - Additional recommended learning accommodations that would assist in meeting the individual needs of the student.
  - The evaluator's name, title, professional credentials, and affiliation, as well as the date(s) of testing should be provided.

### **Students with Sensory Impairments:**

Students with Sensory Impairments who are requesting support services from the appropriate college office at Immaculata University are required to submit documentation to verify eligibility under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. To ensure that the documentation is complete and appropriate, the following guidelines are provided:

#### **Hearing Impairments and Deafness**

Students who are deaf or hard-of-hearing must provide documentation of the following:

1. An audiological evaluation and/or audiogram.
2. An interpretation of the functional implications of the diagnostic data.
3. The documentation must include the following information:
  - a. All reports should be on letterhead, typed, dated, and signed.
  - b. The name(s) of the assessment instrument(s) used.
  - c. The severity of the condition.
  - d. The areas of educational impact.
  - e. Additional recommended learning accommodations that would assist in meeting the individual needs of the student.
  - f. The evaluator's name, title, professional credentials, and affiliation, as well as the date(s) of testing should be provided.

#### **Visual Impairments and Blindness**

Students requesting accommodations on the basis of low vision or blindness must provide documentation of the following:

1. An ocular assessment or evaluation from an ophthalmologist, or a low-vision evaluation of residual visual function, where appropriate.
2. An assessment of functionally limiting manifestations of the disabling condition.
3. The documentation must include the following information:
  - a. All reports should be on letterhead, typed, dated, and signed.
  - b. The name(s) of the assessment instrument(s) used.
  - c. The severity of the condition.
  - d. The areas of educational impact.
  - e. Additional recommended learning accommodations that would assist in meeting the individual needs of the student.
  - f. The evaluator's name, title, professional credentials, and affiliation, as well as the date(s) of testing should be provided.

### **Students with Physical/ Mobility/ Chronic Health Disabilities:**

**Physical/ Mobility/ Chronic Health Disabilities** resulting from congenital conditions, accidents, or progressive neuromuscular diseases. These disabilities include, but are not limited to conditions such as: spinal cord injuries, cerebral palsy, lupus, spinal bifida, chemical sensitivities, amputation, muscular dystrophy, cardiac conditions, cystic fibrosis, paralysis, polio/post polio, cancer and stroke.

Students who are requesting support services in relation to a Physical/ Mobility/ Chronic Health Disability are to contact the appropriate college office to discuss classroom location/physical space accommodations and the Office of Student Life (x 3130) in order to discuss housing accommodations pertaining to such disability.

## **Faculty Responsibilities**

Immaculata University recognizes its responsibilities to fully include students with disabilities in the academic life of the university and encourages all faculty members to actively assist in the process. The university is committed to providing ADA services that are free from discrimination and acknowledges that an individual may bring legal action against the university or the individual faculty member should either party engage in harassment, retaliation, or obstruction of a disabled individual's rights under the law.

Students must present a Letter of Accommodation that validates their claim and specifies all accommodations. Students without proper authorization should be referred to the appropriate college office. Any questions about the accommodation letter should be addressed to the appropriate college office. A student who is experiencing difficulty in having his/her accommodations met should contact the appropriate college office.

According to the requirements of the ADA, the university is required to assist students in acquiring required texts in alternative formats. It is strongly recommended that faculty make syllabi and booklists available as early as possible so that students can make arrangements to acquire and/or convert texts.

Immaculata University strongly encourages the inclusion of a syllabus statement that invites students with disabilities to come forward early in the semester with requests for accommodations and services. The following statement may be used by faculty or varied to suit individual style:

### **Disability Statement**

Students with a documented disability (learning, physical, psychological), who are requesting reasonable academic accommodation, must contact the appropriate office, listed below. The Disability policy may be found in the Undergraduate/Graduate Catalog.

### **Appropriate Offices**

**College of Graduate Studies:** Assistant Dean, Loyola Hall, Terrace 1, 610-647-4400 X 3221

**College of LifeLong Learning:** Director of Enrollment Management, Continuing Education Program, Good Counsel Terrace, 610-467-4400 X 3243

**College of Undergraduate Studies:** Katie Peters, Manager of Academic Success, Villa Maria 38, 610-647-4400 X 3728

If the request for accommodations implicates student housing, the student will be notified and referred to the Dean of Students (or his/her designee) to address housing accommodations. Students must realize that additional documentation may be required as outlined by procedures, policies or laws as deemed necessary in order to provide the necessary housing support/accommodations. In general, the academic office may not be able to share documentation, but when possible will do so with the student's expressed written permission. While we know this may be frustrating for the student, it is still the student's responsibility to provide all documentation as requested.

## **GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE**

The purpose of this grievance procedure is to provide a student requesting a learning accommodation with a process to file a grievance should the accommodation provided by the University be questioned or if any member of the Immaculata faculty or staff are not meeting the agreed to learning accommodations.

Under such circumstances, the student must file a grievance via a letter to the Vice President of Academic Affairs within five (5) days after the decision regarding recommended accommodations by the University, or the offense or omission by the University faculty or staff has occurred.

For a grievance to be processed, the grievance letter must demonstrate to the Vice President for Academic Affairs that the student has communicated his or her concerns to the parties involved prior to contacting the Vice President for Academic Affairs and the parties have not responded or have not agreed to the student's request or needs.

Following a review, the Vice President for Academic Affairs will contact the student with a decision regarding the matter.

*Should the student not accept the decision communicated from the Vice President for Academic Affairs, the student may file a formal complaint following the Immaculata University Grievance Review Policy as outlined on page 30 of the Undergraduate Catalog and page 85 of the Graduate Catalog*

## **Definitions**

### **Terms:**

**Psychiatric Disabilities** - Comprised of a range of conditions characterized by emotional, cognitive, and/or behavioral dysfunction. A diagnosis of a disorder does not, in and of itself, meet the definition of a disability necessitating reasonable accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

**Major Life Activity** - Examples of major life activities include: walking, sitting, standing, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, working, self-care, and other similar activities.

**Functional Limitation** - Is characterized by a substantial impairment in an individual's ability to function in the condition, manner, or duration of a required major life activity. To ensure that the documentation is complete and appropriate, the following guidelines are provided:

**IEP (Individualized Education Program)** - A document mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1975 (reauthorized in 2004 as the IDEA). The IDEA requires public schools to develop an IEP for every student with a disability who is found to meet the federal and state requirements for special education. The IEP must be designed to provide the child with a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. The IEP refers both to the educational program to be provided to a child with a disability and to the written document that describes that educational program.

**SOP (Summary of Performance)** - Required under the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004. The language as stated in IDEA 2004 regarding the SOP is as follows:

*For a child whose eligibility under special education terminates due to graduation with a regular diploma, or due to exceeding the age of eligibility, the local education agency “shall provide the child with a summary of the child’s academic achievement and functional performance, which shall include recommendations on how to assist the child in meeting the child’s postsecondary goals” (§Sec. 300.305(e)(3)). The information about students’ current level of functioning is intended to help postsecondary institutions consider accommodations for access.*

**504 Plan (Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973)** - A 504 plan is a legal document that outlines a plan of instructional services for students in the general education setting. For example, students with ADHD often have a 504 plan. While not an IEP, the document usually describes the types of accommodations that will be made for a student in school. Students with a 504 Plan are those who are entitled to the protections of §504, but are not also eligible under the IDEA. Unlike the IDEA, §504 does not list a few disabilities (each with strict eligibility criteria) which result in eligibility. Instead, a broad formula is used to include many more disabilities.