GUIDELINES FOR DOCUMENTATION OF A DISABILITY

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In compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), as amended, Grinnell College recognizes that qualified students who have diagnosed or identified disabilities are entitled to benefit from the educational programs of the college if reasonable accommodations can be arranged. Costs associated with diagnosis, evaluation, and testing are the responsibility of the student, except in cases of severe financial need demonstrated to, and upon recommendation of, the Office of Financial Aid. Please direct inquiries to the Academic Advising Office, 641-269-3702.

In order to anticipate and evaluate a student's need for academic accommodations or auxiliary aids, **students need to provide documentation of the disability which includes an evaluation by an appropriate professional and describes the current impact of the disability as it relates to the accommodation request**. In addition to assuring fair and equitable treatment of students at Grinnell, fulfillment of these guidelines will assure that students are more likely to have the documentation necessary to qualify for accommodations on standardized graduate school entrance examinations.

As appropriate to the disability, the documentation should include the following seven elements:

1. A diagnostic statement identifying the disability, the date of the current evaluation and the date of the original diagnosis/onset of the condition. The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of the American Psychiatric Association (DSM)* or the *International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems of the World Health Organization (ICD)* are the recommended diagnostic taxonomies.

2. A description of the diagnostic criteria, diagnostic test(s), or evaluation method(s) used to evaluate the current condition. This description should identify the evaluation methods, procedures and tests used, include the specific results of procedures used, and appropriate narrative. When available both summary and specific test scores should be reported as standard scores and the norming population identified. When standard scores are not available; the mean, standard deviation, and the standard error of measurement are requested as appropriate to the construction of the test. Diagnostic methods used should be congruent with the disability and current professional practices within the field. Informal or non-standardized evaluations should be described in enough detail that a professional colleague could understand their role and significance in the evaluation process.

3. A description of the current functional impact of the condition/disability on the individual. The current functional impact on physical, perceptual, cognitive, and behavioral abilities should be clearly described. Currency will be evaluated based on the typical progression of the disability, its interaction with development across the life span, the presence or absence of significant events (since the date of the evaluation) that would impact functioning, and the applicability of the information to the current context of the request for accommodations.

4. A description of treatments, medications, assistive devices, accommodations and/or assistive services currently prescribed or in use and their estimated effectiveness in ameliorating the impact of the disability. Significant side affects that may impact physical, perceptual, behavioral or cognitive performance should also be noted.

5. A description of the expected duration, progression or stability of the condition. This description should provide an estimate of the change in the functional limitations of the disability over time and/or recommendations concerning the predictable need for reevaluation.

6. A history of previous accommodations and auxiliary aids and their impact. This information may come from multiple sources and contexts. While information from previous schools or employers may be useful, the individual's narrative is likely to be the primary source for this information.

7. The credentials of the evaluator(s). Information describing the certification, licensure, and/or the professional training of individuals conducting the evaluation should be provided, and the documentation should be on the organization's official letterhead.

Documentation prepared for specific non-educational venues (e.g., Social Security Administration or Department of Veteran's Affairs) may not meet these criteria. Similarly, high school IEP or 504 plans may not be considered sufficient documentation unless accompanied by a current and complete evaluation.

Recommendations from professionals with a history of working with the individual provide valuable information for the review process. Thus, in addition to responding to the seven points outlined above, recommendations for accommodation from the treating professional are welcome, and will be given consideration in evaluating a request. Recommendations should, based on the context of the evaluation,

- provide a clear description of the recommended accommodations, adaptive devices, assistive services, compensatory strategies, and/or collateral support services that may ameliorate the functional impact of the disability and provide fuller access;
- describe recommendations for collateral medical, psychological, and/or educational support services or training that would be beneficial;
- connect the recommended accommodations to the impact of the condition;
- provide possible alternatives to the recommended accommodations; and
- include a statement of the level of need of (or consequences for not receiving) the recommended accommodations.

Reasonable accommodations depend upon the nature and degree of severity of the documented disability. While the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 requires that priority consideration be given to the specific methods requested by the students, it does not imply that a particular accommodation must be granted if it is deemed not reasonable and other suitable techniques are available. Where such recommendations are congruent with the programs, services, and benefits offered by the College they will be given deference. When recommendations go beyond services and benefits that can be provided by the College they may be used to suggest potential referrals to local area service providers.

Grinnell College affirms the confidentiality inherent in diagnostic evaluations and will not release any part of the evaluation or any requests for academic accommodations without the student's informed and written consent.

To assist students in applying these general guidelines to their specific circumstances, students and their service providers are referred to more explicit guidelines for specific disabilities. These guidelines reflect available national guidelines, licensing board practices and current practices in the field. Students are encouraged to ask that their physician, psychologist, psychiatrist or other professional take these into consideration and provide information that will be of maximum use to the student in the widest possible number of settings and potential future documentation needs.