1. PURPOSE

1.1. The University of Houston System ("System") adheres to the mandates of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008, as applicable. The System has developed this Student Academic Adjustments/Auxiliary Aids Policy to assist with the submission and processing of student academic adjustments/auxiliary aids requests. This Policy applies to students within each of the five units (the System and the four universities) who have a disability as defined by this Policy as well as federal and state law.

1.2. The System does not discriminate on the basis of disability against students in any program, service or activity offered by the System. The System is committed to ensuring that no student with a disability is excluded, denied services, segregated or otherwise treated differently than other students because of the absence of a reasonable academic adjustment/auxiliary aid.

1.3. It is the policy of the System that all students who have a disability are afforded equal academic opportunities in compliance with federal and state laws. The System, in keeping with its values and goals, provides reasonable academic adjustments/auxiliary aids to students with disabilities.

2. DEFINITIONS

2.1. **Student With a Disability** – A student with a physical, cognitive, psychological and/or sensory impairment who, as a result of such impairment, is substantially limited in performing one or more major life activities. This includes students who have a “record of” such impairment.

2.2. **Major Life Activity** – An activity that is considered important for living and that the average individual can perform with little or no difficulty. Major life activities include, but are not limited to walking, talking, eating, sleeping, seeing, hearing, breathing, learning, working, standing, lifting, bending, reading, concentrating, thinking, communicating, caring for oneself or the operation of a major bodily function (including, but not limited to, functions of the immune
system, normal cell growth, digestive, bowel, bladder, neurological, brain, respiratory, circulatory, endocrine and reproductive functions).

2.3. Reasonable Academic Adjustments/Auxiliary Aids – A reasonable academic adjustment/auxiliary aid in the academic environment, including facilities, services, instruction delivery, testing and/or equipment, that would allow the student to have equal access to her/his academic program(s) and equal opportunity to pursue her/his academic goals, so long as it does not create an undue burden or hardship to the System or University.

2.4. Undue Burden/Hardship – Any academic adjustment/auxiliary aid that would:
   a) fundamentally affect or change the nature of a program or course being taught; b) be significantly disruptive; c) be very costly to the component institution; or d) fundamentally alter the essential requirements of instruction or course requirements. In addition, it is an undue burden/hardship to permit any substitution or waiver for any course that comprises the Undergraduate Core Curriculum.

2.5. Substantial Limitation – An impairment or restriction whereby a student cannot perform one or more Major Life Activities, or is hindered as to the condition, manner or duration under which a student can perform one or more Major Life Activities as compared to the average student in the general performance of the affected activity.

3. CONFIDENTIALITY

Records or information obtained as part of the accommodation request process that reflect diagnoses, evaluation or treatment of a student’s medical or mental health condition are confidential and shall be maintained by the University’s student disability services center. Such records or information shall be shared with only those System or University officials who the University’s student disability services center and/or the System’s General Counsel or her/his designee determines have a “need to know” such information and/or the content of such records in order to evaluate and/or implement the academic adjustments/auxiliary aids request, and such records shall not otherwise be released to anyone except as required by law.

4. INSTRUCTOR/official RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

4.1. Each instructor and official has an obligation to be aware of the System’s policies and procedures regarding equal educational opportunities for students. An instructor or official may contact the Academic Accommodations Evaluation Committee (AAEC), the University’s student disability services center or the ADA Coordinator with questions or concerns. It is the responsibility of each Department Chair to ensure that all instructors, teaching assistants and staff know and understand their obligations with regard to this policy. Failure to follow the
procedures of this Policy may be considered a violation of this Policy and may result in disciplinary action.

4.2. The System also requires that each instructor announce to her/his classes at the beginning of each semester the instructor’s willingness to reasonably assist Students with Disabilities. The instructor will provide the class with the contact information of the University’s student disability services center. Furthermore, the System suggests that all course syllabi contain the following statement:

The University of Houston System complies with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, pertaining to the provision of reasonable academic adjustments/auxiliary aids for students with a disability. In accordance with Section 504 and ADA guidelines, each University within the System strives to provide reasonable academic adjustments/auxiliary aids to students who request and require them. If you believe that you have a disability requiring an academic adjustments/auxiliary aid, please contact your University’s student disability services center.

5. ACADEMIC ADJUSTMENTS/AUXILIARY AIDS REQUESTS

5.1. Step One: Student Meeting With Disability Services Center

5.1.1. A Student with a Disability who wants to request an academic adjustment/auxiliary aid must first contact the University’s student disability services center to schedule a meeting with the center. Only students who schedule and meet with a representative of the center will be considered for academic adjustments/auxiliary aids. The meeting may be in person, telephonic or electronic. The University’s student disability services center will establish a student file.

5.1.2. At or before the meeting, the student must provide documentation of a disability from an appropriately licensed professional that clearly identifies the nature of the disability and how the disability affects a Major Life Activity. The student is responsible for any costs necessary to provide the appropriate documentation from the professional. The University’s student disability services center has the authority to obtain, at the University’s expense, an independent medical opinion concerning the disability for which the student seeks an academic adjustment/auxiliary aid, including additional suggestions or recommendations regarding Reasonable Academic Adjustments/Auxiliary Aids.
5.2. **Step Two: Completing the Academic Adjustments/Auxiliary Aids Form**

A student who seeks an academic adjustment/auxiliary aid must complete an Academic Adjustments/Auxiliary Aids Form in conjunction with the University’s student disability services center. The Form will denote the academic adjustment(s)/auxiliary aid(s) upon which the student and the University’s student disability services center agree. The student and appropriate center representative(s) will sign the Form.

5.3. **Step Three: Academic Accommodations Evaluation Committee**

5.3.1. The University’s Academic Accommodations Evaluation Committee (AAEC) is charged with evaluating student academic adjustments/auxiliary aids requests that have the support of the University’s student disability services center. The AAEC will evaluate initial and revised requests for academic adjustments/auxiliary aids; not requests that simply continue already approved academic adjustments/auxiliary aids.

5.3.2. The University’s Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost (or comparable administrator) will appoint the AAEC (including the chairperson), which will be comprised of no less than three faculty and/or staff members who have professional expertise in relevant areas (e.g., learning disorders, sensory disorders, on-line education, special education, etc.). The head of the University’s student disability services center will be appointed as an ex-officio (non-voting) member. The AAEC will meet prior to the start of each semester and on a regular schedule thereafter to review student academic adjustments/auxiliary aids requests in a timely manner.

5.3.3. Based on a review of the student’s file, the AAEC will make recommendations regarding the student’s academic adjustments/auxiliary aids request. The AAEC may: 1) implement the requested accommodation without modification; 2) deny the student’s requested accommodation; or 3) implement an alternative accommodation. The AAEC decision will be based on a majority vote and the decision will be made within three business days from reviewing the student’s file. The AAEC will note its recommendation on the Academic Adjustments/Auxiliary Aids Form and return the Form to the University’s student disability services center.

5.4. **Step Four: Student Notification**

The University’s student disability services center will notify the student of the AAEC’s decision and justification of such within three business days of receiving the decision. Students are responsible for retrieving the Academic
Adjustments/Auxiliary Aids Form and for securing the instructors’ and/or officials’ signatures on the Form. Students may seek assistance from the University’s student disability services center in presenting the Academic Adjustment/Auxiliary Aids Form to instructors or officials, if needed.

5.5. **Step Five: Instructor/Official Decision**

5.5.1. The instructor or appropriate official has the option to: 1) adopt the AAEC’s recommendation without modification; 2) reject the AAEC’s recommendation; or 3) make modifications to the AAEC’s recommendation. The instructor or appropriate official will note her/his decision and justification of such on the Academic Adjustments/Auxiliary Aids Form and return the Form with her/his signature to the student within five business days from being presented with the Form.

5.5.2. The instructor/official will keep one copy of the Form and return the other two copies to the student. The student then keeps one copy of the Form and provides the other copy to the University’s student disability services center within five business days from receiving the Form from the instructor/official.

5.5.3. The instructor or appropriate official is strongly encouraged to provide a recommended academic adjustment/auxiliary aid whenever possible. An instructor or official who declines to implement a recommended academic adjustment/auxiliary aid must notify her/his supervisor of such. The supervisor will attempt to facilitate a reasonable accommodation with the assistance of the student, instructor or official, student disability center representative, AAEC Chairperson and/or the University’s ADA Coordinator. If an accommodation is not reached, the supervisor will notify the ADA Coordinator of such, who will attempt to find a reasonable accommodation.

5.5.4. An instructor or official who implements an academic adjustment/auxiliary aid and the student may be asked to provide information to the University’s student disability services center and to the AAEC regarding both the manageability and effectiveness of the accommodation(s) at the end of the semester. This may be accomplished by periodic surveys. Students, instructors and officials are also encouraged to provide suggestions for possible improvements.

5.6. **Step Six: Student Appeals**

5.6.1. A student who believes that his/her request for an academic adjustments/auxiliary aids has been unreasonably denied by the University’s disability service center, the AAEC, or the instructor or other official may file an appeal within 10 business days of the denial with the
University’s appellate board as described in the System’s Discrimination and Harassment Policy, SAM 01.D.07. The student’s appellate rights begin with Step Seven of the Discrimination and Harassment Policy.

5.6.2. A review of the appeal will be conducted within 15 business days and will provide a final decision and justification of such on whether to grant the academic adjustment/auxiliary aid. The questioned academic adjustment/auxiliary aid will be provided temporarily while a final decision is pending.

6. REVIEW AND RESPONSIBILITY

Responsible Party: Vice Chancellor for Legal Affairs and General Counsel

Review: Every three years on or before August 31

Interim Due Date for Review: September 1, 2013

7. APPROVAL

Approved: Vice Chancellor for Legal Affairs and General Counsel

Chancellor

Date:

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REVISION LOG

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