

Disability-Related Flexibility in Attendance/Assignments Policy & Guidelines

Students are expected and encouraged to attend class. However, flexibility in attendance and deadlines may be an appropriate accommodation for some students with disabilities.

Students who may qualify for this accommodation include students with chronic conditions, or conditions that flare up unexpectedly. This could include conditions such as lupus, fibromyalgia, seizure disorders, cancer, migraines and conditions requiring ongoing treatments that may interfere with class schedules.

If it is determined that a student is eligible for flexibility in attendance or deadlines, DSS will begin the interactive process between the DSS office, the student and the faculty. To assist DSS in understanding the potential impacts of this accommodation on a particular course, we will work with faculty to explore the following guidelines offered by the Office for Civil Rights (OCR):

- *How much interaction is there between the instructor and students and among students in the course?*
- *Do student contributions constitute a significant component of the learning process?*
- *Does the fundamental nature of the course rely upon student participation as an essential method for learning?*
- *To what degree does a delayed deadline or inability to attend class constitute a significant loss to the educational experience of other students in the course?*
- *What do the course description and syllabus say about attendance?*
- *Which method is used to calculate the final grade (attendance, assignments, exams, etc.)? How much weight is placed on particular assignments?*
- *What are the classroom practices and policies regarding attendance? Are there exceptions for extenuating circumstances?*

If, after the above review, this accommodation is determined to be reasonable, DSS will work with faculty and the student to specify:

- How and when the student should inform you they will miss class (in some cases, students may not be able to make this notification until after the fact, consideration should be given for each individual instance).
- How the student will make up missed assignments or exams.
- The number of absences (beyond what any student is allowed) that would be reasonable.
- If it is reasonable for online discussion expectations to be modified due to disability-related reasons and under what conditions.
- If it is reasonable, to extend the window for completing online exams or assignments.

Generally, a reasonable timeframe for a makeup or postponement of an assignment, paper, exam or quiz is typically a minimum of 48 hours. In some cases, it may be appropriate to

consider an alternative assignment, reading or project to make up for missed class discussions or projects. Other examples of how disability absences might be accommodated may include: the ability to turn in the assignment without grade penalty, or make up assignments, quizzes or exams without grade penalty.

What is the process?

- DSS determines if the accommodation may be reasonable based on the documentation provided by the student.
- DSS will initiate contact with the faculty using a form asking about the factors outlined above. Faculty members should return the completed form to DSS within *three business days*.
- Once the agreement has been received by DSS, a copy will be sent to the student.
- If the student has concerns about the agreement, they should contact their coordinator immediately.
- Once the agreement is sent to the student, it will be considered active. Copies of this information will be kept in the student file.

Important reminders

- The accommodation does not provide a “blanket” reason to miss class.
- Faculty are responsible for this accommodation upon receipt of the letter from DSS; please do not delay in returning the necessary information.
- In most cases, DSS will not support retroactive requests for accommodations.
- Students are not required to present faculty with medical documentation or verification of the qualifying disability.
- If absences exceed those agreed upon, faculty should contact DSS.
- Absences not related to the disability should be addressed according to the regular attendance policy.
- Not all course(s)/course components can be provided extensions.

Student responsibilities

- Request accommodations for each semester they are needed; these are not automatically established and do not carry through semester-to-semester.
- Be aware that flexible attendance may not be appropriate for all courses.
- Meet all core learning objectives. You are still required to keep up with the course and complete all coursework.
- Understand that this accommodation does not provide for unlimited absences.
- Notify DSS and your instructor immediately if you will or do miss class due to the effects of your disability.

Faculty responsibilities

- Carefully consider if, or to what degree, class attendance is essential to your course:

- Establish clear expectations of how classroom attendance, missed quizzes/exams, assignment deadlines and instructor notification will be handled in the case of disability-related absences.
- Contact DSS as soon as possible if you have concerns about a student's accommodation request.