

Flexible Attendance Accommodations

Guidelines for Faculty

Policies identifying the number of allowable absences before they impact grades may be designed to motivate attendance, reflect the interactive or participatory nature of a course, or be based on department, college or accrediting agency rules.

When a student has a chronic condition with random or cyclical acute episodes, modifications to attendance policies may be appropriate. While the attendance accommodation may be considered for each course for these students, it cannot be guaranteed when essential elements of a course may necessitate attending in order to satisfy the core course components. This is especially true for a lab or other experiential learning course.

Initially, the instructor and the student make an agreement upon the reasonableness of accommodations pertaining to attendance. There are cases, if the student is not in class, where it may very well be reasonable to fully deny participation points and where an alternative assignment in lieu of attendance may not be possible. Instructors are expected to make reasonable accommodations in allowing students to make up graded material when possible.

When it comes to participation points, one must first understand why the points are in place. What purpose does attending the course serve?

These questions from a prior OCR case may be used as a guide in determining the reasonableness of an attendance accommodation:

- Is there classroom/lab interaction between the instructor and students or among the students themselves?
- Do student contributions/experiences in class/lab constitute a significant component of the learning process?
- Does the fundamental nature of the course rely upon student participation as an essential method of learning?
- To what degree does a student's failure to attend class/lab constitute a significant loss of the educational experience of other students in the class?
- What does the course description and syllabus say regarding attendance?
- Is the attendance policy consistently applied to all students?
- What is the method by which the final course grade is calculated?
- Is there a legitimate alternative accommodation that can be implemented?

The attendance accommodation is in place to support the occasional miss for medical reasons. The attendance accommodation can often only support a student if the number of classes missed does not exceed 20-25% of the course and is otherwise deemed permissible as evaluated according to the above standards.

A recent diagnosis, onset, or change in condition is comparable to an unexpected illness or injury and may not warrant accommodations in attendance policy. They may warrant a withdrawal or a retroactive medical withdrawal under some circumstances.

Late Work, Make-Up, & Pop Quiz Policies

These policies all tie into attendance and should be included when you discuss attendance. As with the course attendance policy, accommodations may be appropriate depending on the nature of the assignment or quiz and its relationship to the pacing and progression of instruction. A generic “no make-up exams given” or “no late work accepted” policy is not reasonable when considering someone’s accommodation.

Be sure to discuss:

- Assignments and due dates
- Scheduled tests
- Pop quizzes
- Note takers
- Projects – individual and group

Note/Excuse Policies

When meeting to discuss the attendance accommodation, it is reasonable for an instructor to expect a student with a chronic condition who has appropriate documentation on file with the Office of Accessibility Services to share that between X and Y absences of between A and B duration can be expected any given semester. It is also reasonable for the instructor to accept the student's statement rather than a signed doctor's note, as long as the frequency and duration fit within the parameters. If they exceed the parameters, then the Office of Accessibility Services may request new documentation or a doctor’s note.

Attendance accommodations and any related coursework policies and guidelines should be established in advance, not retroactively. When the student meets with the faculty member to get their Schedule & Accommodations Report (Green Sheet) signed, the faculty member and student should write a flexible attendance agreement. The agreement should be signed by the student and the instructor and a copy should be sent to the Office of Accessibility Services.

Additional Guidelines for the Office of Accessibility Services

Documentation for modifications to attendance policies:

- Is there a physical or mental health impairment?
- Is one of the impacts random, cyclical or triggered acute episodes?
- What is the typical frequency of episodes? (2-5 times per month; 1-4 times/year, ...)
- What is the typical duration of episodes? (1-3 hours; 1-2 days;...)
- Describe any known triggers or cycles.
- Is the individual under a self care regimen for typical episodes?



Flexible Attendance Agreement

Student Name: _____

Student ID: _____

Professor Name: _____

Course: _____

Date of Meeting: _____

Semester: _____

The Office of Accessibility Services requires that students with a flexible attendance accommodation meet with their instructors to discuss the extent to which modification in attendance policies may be reasonable for a particular class. Following this meeting, the student and instructor should have a clear understanding of what accommodations can be made for accommodation based absences. To facilitate this discussion, this agreement should be reviewed and completed to clearly set out expectations.

Maximum number of accommodation based absences allowed for this student for this course: _____

(Do not restate the number of absences allowed for all students in the course. Be as specific as possible. Avoid vague phrases such as “flexible”, “to be determined”, or “open”.)

How and when will the student notify the instructor of an accommodation based absence?

(Depending on the nature of the student’s disability, is it reasonable for the student to notify the instructor of an accommodation based absence either before or after the missed class session? In what format – email, phone call, other?)

Procedure for turning in homework/assignments/projects due the day of an accommodation based absence:

(If allowed, include maximum number of days assignments may be late and how they are to be submitted. In most cases, an extension on in-class and out of class assignments of no more than 24 hours unless otherwise approved by faculty in advance is typical. These modified due dates need to be approved by the professor before the actual due date.)

Procedure for making up a missed quiz, examination, or in-class graded assignment given on the day of an accommodation based absence:

This agreement is valid with an approved flexible attendance accommodation and only when both the student and instructor have completed this form together. If necessary, OAS staff, the department chair, or other appropriate administrator may also be included in the discussion. Both the instructor and student should retain copies. If the maximum number of allowed absences is exceeded during the semester, the student and instructor should meet to discuss an appropriate course of action (incomplete, withdrawal, revision to agreement, etc.). OAS should be informed as soon as possible in order to work with the instructor and student to come to a reasonable solution. Sign two copies. Instructor and student each retain a copy until after grades are posted for the semester.

Student Signature: _____

Date: _____

Instructor Signature: _____

Date: _____

If it is thought that attendance can be justified as an integral part of how the course is taught and/or how learning is to be demonstrated and measured, there can be a point at which disability-related absences cannot be reasonably accommodated. If at any point, the instructor and/or the student have any questions or concerns about this process, the Flexible Attendance Agreement and/or the provision of this accommodation, OAS should be notified so they can address the concerns and work to resolve them.