

Flexible Attendance Accommodation Guidelines

Overview

Students are responsible for attending their classes regularly and meeting all deadlines. Instructors have the right to determine attendance policies and establish assignment deadlines and test dates. Flexible accommodations for disability-related absences do not waive these rights and responsibilities, but rather are designed to provide some elasticity. If a student has a disability or health condition that causes flare-ups of disabling symptoms, they may occasionally miss class or fail to adhere to a scheduled deadline. In these instances, modifying attendance requirements, assignment deadlines and/or exam dates, may be considered a reasonable accommodation. The following guidelines are designed to facilitate understanding for students and instructors of their roles and expectations in navigating these accommodations.

What do flexible attendance accommodations mean?

The number of reasonable absences and lengths of extensions will vary and is based on several factors, including the interactive or participatory nature of a course and any applicable college, department, and accrediting agency regulations. For example, allowing 2-5 absences beyond what would be provided to any student, or agreeing to a deadline extension or exam reschedule with no grade reduction may be reasonable and necessary for the student to access the course. In some cases, flexible accommodations may not be reasonable or appropriate, even if the student has a disability or health condition that otherwise warrants flexibility, e.g. clinical practicums that are required for many graduate and professional programs.

Instructors are not obligated to provide these accommodations retroactively, and are never required to re-teach missed material. Students should never be required to provide medical documentation to a professor for disability-related absences, and non-disability related absences are not covered by these accommodations. All assignments, quizzes, and exams must be completed by the last day of the final exam period, unless an incomplete has been requested by the student and granted by the professor.

What is the process?

CDAR has established the following procedure for considering requests for flexibility in classroom attendance policies:

1. Students with disabilities request accommodations each semester.
2. If CDAR makes a determination that flexible attendance may be a reasonable accommodation, CDAR approves the accommodation. Instructors are then sent a faculty notification letter via email that outlines all accommodations the student has requested for each course.
3. The student is advised to meet with each instructor and discuss their intent to utilize the flexible attendance accommodation in their course. Each student is informed of the flexible attendance guidelines and their role and responsibility therein.

4. The student is responsible for scheduling an appointment with each instructor to discuss and come to an agreement on how flexible attendance will be administered in the course. It is recommended that the student and instructor start their discussion by reviewing the syllabus together, paying particular attention to course attendance policies and learning objectives, discussing how and when the student will inform the instructor when they are missing class due to disability and establishing timeframes to turn in missed work or reschedule missed exams. To assist in this process, an optional flexible attendance agreement template is included with these guidelines.
5. If a disagreement arises on one or more points of the agreement, the student and/or instructor must contact CDAR immediately. In consultation with the student and the instructor, CDAR will then determine the appropriate level of flexible attendance to be granted, if any. Guidance from the Office of Civil Rights suggests factors considered include, but are not limited to, the student's individual circumstances as well as the following:
 - What does the course description and syllabus say regarding attendance?
 - By what method is the final grade calculated?
 - Is there regular classroom interaction between the instructor and students and among the students themselves?
 - Do student contributions in class 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 constitute a significant loss of the educational experience of other students in the class?
 - Is there an alternative way for the student to make up class participation?
 - Have exceptions been made for extenuating circumstances other than disability?

CDAR's determination will be communicated in writing to the student and the instructor.

Instructor Responsibilities:

1. As in all instances of students with disabilities, instructors should not ask about the specifics of the disability and its limitations, but if the student discloses that information, instructors should keep it confidential.
2. Instructors should be available to discuss the accommodations with the student and be clear in their expectations, as the agreement will guide the terms of the accommodation.
3. Instructors should consider the maximum number of absences allowed for the course which would still allow the student to meet technical standards, fundamental course objectives and meet any accreditation requirements of the program.
4. Instructors should never deny an accommodation approved by CDAR without first contacting CDAR.
5. If, at any time, the instructor has concerns about a requested accommodation, they should contact CDAR as soon as possible.

Student Responsibilities:

1. Students should schedule an appointment and meet with the instructor to have a conversation about flexible attendance within two weeks from the date on the faculty notification letter.

2. During the meeting, the student should clearly express their needs as they will guide the specific terms of the agreement on how the accommodation will be administered in the course. To assist in this process, an optional flexible attendance agreement template is included with these guidelines.
3. When disability-related absences have occurred/will occur, students are responsible for contacting the instructor as soon as possible and, as necessary, informing the instructor as to when the student will return to class. If the student is unable to contact the instructor themselves, they should have someone in mind to contact the instructor on their behalf.
4. This accommodation potentially provides relief from requirements for physical attendance in classes. The student is responsible for all course material, including materials covered or work done during such disability-necessitated absences. The student should be aware that they are still required to meet all of the course's core learning objectives and curricular outcomes.
Extension of deadlines for assignments due and arrangements for making up tests and exams missed during disability related absences must be addressed in conversation with instructors and is highly recommended to be written down so both instructor and student have the agreement to reference. To assist in this process, an optional flexible attendance agreement template is included with these guidelines.
5. If, at any time, the student believes an instructor is not honoring the terms of the agreement, the student should contact CDAR as soon as possible. CDAR will then contact the instructor to gather additional information and discuss available options.
6. If the student is unable to meet the terms of the agreement, the student should first visit with their instructor to determine what possibilities exist for additional flexibility, if any. The student or instructor is encouraged to confer with CDAR.

Flexible Attendance Agreement Form

Student Name: _____ Date: _____

Course Name/Number: _____ Semester/Yr: _____

Instructor's Name(s): _____

Procedure for turning in homework/projects due the day of a disability related absence; include maximum number of days assignments may be late:

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

Method(s) to make up lost attendance/class participation points (if applicable):

It is recommended to sign and keep copies of this agreement to show that both parties agree to the terms and agree to follow the roles and responsibilities as outlined in the flexible assignment guidelines. It is also recommended to share a copy of this agreement with CDAR.

Student Signature _____ Date _____

Instructor Signature _____ Date _____