

What Does Flexibility Regarding Assignment Due Dates Mean?

A Guide for Implementation

We have learned that faculty and students would like more guidance regarding the accommodation “flexibility regarding assignment due dates.” This information is designed to help faculty in assessing how to implement this accommodation in the classroom. Also, this guide is intended to assist students in discussing this accommodation with faculty. In this guide, we outline factors for faculty to consider, the process, and responsibilities.

Some Initial Guidance

It is the primary responsibility of the student, with or without a disability, to complete the assignments in a timely manner as outlines in the course syllabus. The amount of flexibility in assignment due dates is the sole discretion of the course professor after careful deliberations and consultation with faculty peers and SDS. The student cannot dictate to the professor the amount of any extension granted or if an extension can be granted.

When is flexibility appropriate?

Some factors for faculty to consider:

Generally students are expected to follow established classroom assignment due date policies. However, some disabilities are episodic in nature and as a result a student may have a disability related reason for being late on an assignment. While we want to encourage faculty to be flexible, faculty are not required to alter any essential functions of the course.

You may find it helpful to consider the following when determining whether an assignment due date is an essential function of a course:

- How much flexibility do I typically allow on assignment due dates?
- Do future assignments build on the work done in previous assignments?
- What is the practice in other sessions of the same course or within the same department?
- Would extending the assignment due date alter an essential educational objective? Can I clearly articulate that objective?

What is the process?

1. Student Disability Services (SDS) determines when the accommodation is reasonable. We explain to students that this does not mean that they can turn in their assignments whenever they want. We explain that it is student’s responsibility to discuss this accommodation with the professor and abide by whatever flexibility the professor allows.
2. The student is responsible for initiating the conversation about this accommodation early in the semester. This accommodation cannot be provided without a discussion between the professor and student. Some students register late in the semester and some wait to give professors accommodation letters. In these cases, professors are not expected to provide any retroactive accommodations. However, it may still be helpful to have this information, even at a late point in the semester.

3. The professor can assess the impact of flexibility in assignment due dates and determine what accommodations can be made. There are some classes in which this accommodation is not appropriate. The key is that the professor should be as flexible with the student with a disability as they are with other students. If the professor can allow greater flexibility that's fine. The key to implementing this accommodation successfully is for faculty to be very clear about expectations.
4. Student Disability Services is available to provide support for faculty and students regarding this accommodation. Feel free to contact us at any point in the process.

Student Responsibilities:

- Initiate conversation early with faculty. Be clear in communications. Understand that not all classes can offer flexible assignment due dates. Do not just hand your professor your letter and expect to receive the accommodation. A conversation must occur between you and your professor.
- You are still required to complete all coursework in a timely fashion. If you are going to be late on the assignment contact the professor well before the assignment due date and discuss possible accommodations. Waiting until the due date to bring up the need is too late.

Professor Responsibilities:

- Be available to discuss the accommodation with the student.
- Determine how essential assignment due dates are for your course. If you determine, through a deliberative consideration (using the bullet points listed above), that an assignment due date is an essential requirement for the course this accommodation may not be applicable.
- Be very clear in your expectations when you meet with the student. You may choose to use the discussion points at the end of this guide to assist in this conversation. Feel free to contact us for assistance with this discussion.

Student Disability Services Responsibilities:

- Approve this accommodation only when appropriate.
- Provide student with memos, guidelines and information about his or her responsibilities.
- Provide assistance for faculty in determining how to implement this accommodation in the class.
- Provide support to student and faculty when questions or difficulties arise due to this accommodation.

Discussion Points for Flexibility Regarding Assignment Due Dates:

These discussion points can serve as a resource for the faculty member and student outlining how assignment due dates and instructor notification are to be handled.

How much flexibility in assignment due dates has been allowed to other students?

What is the practice regarding assignment due dates in other sessions of the same course or within the same department?

Instructor Notification: How does the professor prefer to be notified?