

## **What Does Flexibility Regarding Attendance Mean? A Guide for Implementation**

We have learned that faculty and students would like more guidance regarding the accommodation “flexibility regarding attendance.” 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, responsibilities, and some common scenarios. Please see “frequently asked questions” for more information regarding this accommodation.

### **When is flexibility appropriate? Some factors for faculty to consider:**

Generally students are expected to follow established classroom attendance policies. However, some disabilities are episodic in nature and as a result a student may have to miss class for medical concerns. While we want to encourage faculty to be flexible with the attendance policy, you are not required to alter any essential functions of the course.

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

- Is there classroom interaction between the instructor and students and among students?
- Do student contributions in class constitute a significant component of the learning process?
- Does the fundamental nature of the course rely on student participation as an essential method for learning?
- To what degree does a student’s failure to attend constitute a significant loss to the educational experience of other students in the class?
- What do the course description and syllabus say?
- What method is used to calculate the final grade?
- What are the classroom practices and policies regarding attendance?

### **What is the process?**

1. Student Disability Services (SDS) determines that the accommodation is reasonable. We explain to students that this does not mean that they can miss as many classes as they want. Also, the student is responsible for completing all coursework. Finally, we explain that it is student responsibility to discuss this accommodation with the professor.
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 attendance on class and determine what accommodations can be made. There are some classes in which this accommodation is not appropriate. These tend to be classes when the student learning is being assessed in the classroom or when allowing an

absence would place an undue burden on the professor. The professor and student can use the discussion points at the end of this guide to address all aspects of the course, including how attendance can be accommodated when the student misses homework and exams. It is also important to discuss the professor's expectations of the student when the student misses class. 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 attendance. 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. When you miss class, notify your professor immediately. The accommodation of flexibility regarding attendance does not mean that you will automatically get an extension for work that is due on a day that you are absent. You should still make every attempt to turn your work in via email. If you will not be able to turn in a homework assignment or if you miss a quiz or exam, it will be your responsibility to contact your professor to ask if you will be allowed to make up the work.
- Keep SDS updated and informed if you are missing class. If your professor contacts us, it is helpful for us to know about your situation.

### **Professor Responsibilities:**

- Be available to discuss the accommodation with the student.
- Determine how essential attendance is to your course. If you determine, through a deliberative consideration (using the bullet points listed above), that attendance is an essential requirement 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.
- Sometimes student absences become excessive. While this should always be addressed first between you and the student, you are welcome to contact us to help address the concern.

### **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 Attendance:**

These discussion points can serve as a resource for the faculty member and student outlining how classroom attendance, exams and quizzes, assignment due dates, and instructor notification are to be handled in case of absences.

**Classroom Attendance:** Is there an attendance policy? Is there room for flexibility? Are there a maximum number of absences allowed?

**Exams and Quizzes:** Will student be allowed make ups? Is there a timeframe within which make ups must be completed?

**Assignment Due Dates:** Would student be able to turn in work electronically? Will there be flexibility if a student is absent on a day that an assignment is due?

**Instructor Notification:** How does the professor prefer to be notified? Do notifications need to occur in advance of an absence?