

Policies and Procedures for Disability-Related Exception to Attendance Policies

1. In most cases, class attendance is critical to a student's mastery of the knowledge and/or skills that are taught in a specific course.
2. Students are expected to follow the attendance policy established by the instructor in each class.
3. The University recognizes, however, that there may be times when a qualified student with a disability cannot attend class because of disability-related reasons.
4. If such a student believes it may not be possible to abide by the attendance policy because of medical issues related to a disability, the student should contact the appropriate Student Disability Services coordinator prior to the beginning of the semester, or as soon as possible after the need for an exception arises, to discuss the matter of a possible accommodation. Determination of eligibility for a disability-related exception to the attendance policy is made by Student Disability Services staff in consultation with the instructor of the course for which the exception is sought and, if necessary, with the department chair or other appropriate administrator.
5. Essential Course Requirements: The University will make every effort to reasonably accommodate a student's disability related academic needs. Please note, however, that neither the University nor an individual faculty member is required to waive an essential or fundamental academic requirement of a course, regardless of the nature of the student's disability.

The department identifies and defines the essential or fundamental academic requirements for its courses and instructors may establish an acceptable number of excused absences in light of these essential requirements. Attendance requirements for each course are usually stated on the course syllabus.

The following questions will be considered when determining the extent to which attendance is an essential requirement of a course and whether an exception to the attendance policy may be appropriate:

- a. Is there classroom interaction between the instructor and students and among the students themselves?
- b. Do student contributions in class constitute a significant component of the learning process?
- c. Does the fundamental nature of the course rely on student participation as an essential method of learning?

- d. To what degree does a student's failure to attend class constitute a significant loss to the educational experience of other students in the class?
 - e. What does the course description and syllabus say regarding attendance? Each instructor may have different requirements regarding attendance.
 - f. By what method is the final grade calculated?
6. As with all disability accommodations, exceptions to the attendance policy will be determined on an individual, case-by-case basis depending on:
- a. the extent to which the supporting medical or psychological documentation from a licensed professional qualified to diagnose and treat the disability in question supports the need for an exception to an attendance policy, and
 - b. the reasonableness of this accommodation in each requested class as determined by discussions between the Student Disability Services Office and the course instructor based upon the above criteria. In questionable cases, the academic department head and/or other appropriate academic administrator will be included in these discussions.
7. Students who are approved for an exception to the attendance policy based on disability are required to provide a memo from Student Disability Services to each instructor confirming the accommodation.
8. Accommodations are **not** retroactive. All accommodations, including an exception to the attendance policy, become effective when the student delivers the notification memo from Student Disability Services to the instructor.
9. An exception to the attendance policy does **not** mean that unlimited absences will be permitted. The number of additional absences a student may receive as a reasonable accommodation will be determined on a case-by-case basis for each class, depending on the student's individual disability, the nature of the course and the degree to which class attendance is an essential requirement of the specific course as provided in Paragraphs 5 and 6 (a) & (b) of this Policy.
10. Exception to the attendance policy does **not** mean exception to any of the other academic requirements of the course. Students are required to fulfill all course requirements and will be held to the same evaluation standards as specified in the course syllabus.
11. Students who are approved for an exception to the attendance policy are expected to contact instructors in advance of an anticipated absence. This is particularly important if the anticipated absence will result in the student missing a quiz or exam or a deadline for turning in an assignment. For emergencies or

unexpected disability-related absences, contact should be made as soon as possible to verify the reason for the absence and to discuss make-up work. The student and instructor should come to a clear agreement about the nature of the make-up work and deadlines for completing it. This agreement should be put into writing and signed by both the student and the instructor. The instructor should forward a copy of the signed agreement to the Office of Student Disability Services.

12. **It is the individual student's responsibility to obtain copies of lecture notes and/or materials from missed classes.** Students who are likely to be absent from class should plan responsibly ahead of time to get lecture notes from a classmate or "study buddy." Phone numbers should be exchanged in advance. The Office of Student Disability Services cannot provide note takers for students who are absent from class.
13. Students should understand that even though an exception to the attendance policy has been made for them, absences are likely to have a negative impact on their academic performance simply because of the content and experiential learning they may have missed by not being in class. For this reason, they should make every attempt to attend class. Students should make special effort to attend class for quizzes and exams and to observe deadlines for submission of assignments.
14. Students should be aware that exception to the attendance policy will not be possible in all courses because class attendance is an essential, integral part of some courses, as discussed in paragraph 4 of this policy. Some academic programs or majors may not be amenable to exceptions to the attendance policy. Students who know that attendance may be an on-going issue for them should consult with the academic department regarding the feasibility of attendance exceptions in the specific program of their interest.
15. All students who request an exception to the attendance policy for disability reasons will be given a copy of these policies and procedures by Student Disability Services staff. Students will be required to sign a statement for their Student Disability Services file that they have read and understand the policies and procedures and that they agree to abide by them.