



GUIDE SHEET

DISABILITY RELATED ABSENCES ACCOMMODATION

Some students may require excused absences from class due to the nature and impact of their disability. While we encourage instructors to be flexible with the attendance policy, they are not required to alter any essential functions of the course. The role of attendance, due dates and participation varies from course to course, so it is important for the instructor and student to discuss and agree on how absences will be handled in each course.

Federal law requires higher education institutions to consider reasonable modification of attendance policies, if needed, to accommodate a student's disability. In making this determination, the following questions must be answered.

1. Does the student have a documented disability that directly impacts his/her ability to attend class on a regular basis?

Learning Specialists in the DRC will make this determination based on the student's documentation and the interactive intake appointment with the student. The student will provide verification of the accommodation in the accommodation letter they provide to their instructors.

2. Is attendance an essential part of the class? Would modification of attendance policies result in a fundamental alteration of the curriculum?

Instructors make this determination, and can consult with DRC Learning Specialists as needed.

The Office of Civil Rights (OCR) has provided guidelines to assess if attendance is an essential part of the course and to guide the discussion of what reasonable accommodations will look like in a course.

1. How much classroom interaction is there between the instructor and students, and among students?
2. Do student contributions constitute a significant component of the learning process?
3. Does the fundamental nature of the course rely on student participation as an essential method for learning and assessment?
4. To what degree does a student's absence constitute a significant loss to the educational experience of other students in the class?
5. How is attendance calculated in the final grade?
6. What is the classroom policy regarding attendance?

Instructors and students can use the previous questions to address all aspects of the course, including how attendance can be accommodated when the student misses homework, exams, quizzes, etc... It is also important to discuss instructor expectations of the student when the student misses class. In addition, professional graduate students should adhere to program's professional standards that address attendance and total hours required for clinical experiences. The key to implementing this accommodation successfully is for instructors to be very clear about expectations. The DRC is available to provide support for instructors and students regarding this accommodation. Please feel free to contact the DRC at any point in the process.

Disability Resource Center Responsibilities:

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

Student Responsibilities:

- Initiate conversation early with your instructor. Be clear in communications. Do not just email or hand your instructor your accommodation letter and expect to receive the accommodation. Discuss this accommodation with your instructor as early as possible in the semester.
- You are required to complete all coursework. When you miss class, notify your instructor as soon as possible. You are responsible for completing missed course work within a time-frame that you and your instructor agree upon.
- If you need support when discussing this accommodation with your instructor, contact your DRC Learning Specialist as soon as possible.

Instructor Responsibilities:

- Be available to discuss the accommodation with the student.
- Determine the essential functions of your course in regards to the attendance policy using the above listed OCR questions.
- If it is determined that attendance is an essential function of the course, you should document your process along with a rationale, in order to avoid discrimination on the basis of a disability.
- Be very clear in your expectations when you meet with the student. Feel free to contact the DRC for assistance with the discussion.
- Sometimes student absences become excessive. While this can be addressed first between you and the student, you are welcome to contact the DRC to help address the concern.