

Flexibility with Attendance for Students with Disabilities

Faculty determine course attendance policies. Because attendance may be integral to the pedagogic process, these policies are set by faculty at the college, departmental, or individual level.

In some cases, attendance is fundamental to course objectives; for example, students may be required to interact with others in the class, to demonstrate the ability to think and argue critically, or to participate in group projects. In other instances, faculty may determine that students can master course content despite some or many absences. Rarely, faculty may decide that students do not need to attend classes at all.

Similarly, faculty also determine policies regarding make-up work and missed quizzes and exams. Faculty are not required to lower or affect substantial modifications of standards for accommodation purposes. The United States Department of Education Office of Civil Rights, which enforces disability law in higher education, uses the following heuristic to determine if class attendance is fundamental to course participation:

- Is there classroom interaction between the instructor and students, and among students?
- Do student contributions constitute a significant component of the learning process?
- Does the fundamental nature of the course rely upon 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 does the course description and syllabus say?
- What is the method by which the final course grade is calculated?
- What are classroom practices and policies regarding attendance?

What Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) Can Do For Students

SSD can provide students with accommodation plans, i.e. written verification of their disabilities, based on appropriate medical and/or psychological documentation. This verification can address the legitimacy of absences. The accommodation plans may be distributed by students to faculty in order to initiate discussions of attendance and make-up policies and procedures. Faculty should make their policies clear so that students can make informed choices about which courses to take.

Faculty may choose to announce attendance/makeup policies on the first day of class, and to reinforce this information by including it on the course syllabus.

If faculty intend to disallow or restrict absences, they may choose to use wording similar to this: "Your presence is fundamental to meeting the objectives of this course. Consequently, there will be (0, 1, 2.....) excused absences, and (0, 1, 2...) makeup quizzes/exams."

Please call SSD at 402-472-3787 (voice) if you have any questions.