

What Does Disability-Related Absences and Assignment Deadline Extensions Mean? A Guide for Implementation for Professors and Students

We have learned that faculty and students would like more guidance regarding the accommodations “disability-related absences” and “assignment extensions.” This information is designed to help faculty in assessing how to implement these accommodations 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.

When are “disability-related absences” and/or “assignment extensions” appropriate? Some factors for faculty to consider:

Generally, students are expected to follow established classroom attendance and deadline policies. However, some disabilities are episodic in nature and as a result a student may have to miss class and/or a deadline for medical concerns. Faculty are not required to alter any essential functions of the course in the implementation of these accommodations.

What is the process?

1. The Disability Center determines that the accommodation(s) are reasonable. We explain to students that this does not mean that they can miss as many classes as they want or that they never have to submit work by the established deadline. Also, the student is responsible for completing all coursework. Finally, we explain that it is the student’s responsibility to discuss this accommodation(s) with the professor.
2. The student is responsible to initiate the conversation about these accommodations early in the semester or within a reasonable timeframe. 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 memos. 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 should assess the impact of attendance and deadlines on the class and determine what accommodations can be made. There are some classes or some assignments (e.g. group project) in which this accommodation may not be appropriate. These tend to be classes when the student learning is being assessed in the classroom. The professor and student can use the discussion points/agreement at the end of this guide to address all aspects of the course, including how attendance and deadlines can be accommodated when the student misses homework, projects, papers and exams. It is also important to discuss professor expectations of the student when the student misses class or a deadline. The key to implementing these accommodations successfully is for faculty to be very clear about their expectations.
4. The Disability Resource Center is available to provide support for faculty and students

regarding this accommodation. Feel free to contact the DRC Counselor listed on the Authorized Accommodation Letter at any point in the process.

Student Responsibilities:

- **Initiate conversation early with faculty.** Be clear in communications. The student should not just hand the professor their Authorized Accommodation Letter and expect to receive the accommodation. A conversation must occur between the student and professor; it is recommended that the conversation occur in a confidential setting such as during a professor's office hours.
- **The student is still required to complete all coursework.** When a student misses class or recognizes they will not be able to meet a deadline due to their disability, the student should notify their professor immediately via email and cc your DRC Counselor. The accommodation of disability-related absences does not mean that the student will automatically get an extension for work that is due on a day they are absent. The student should still make every attempt to turn their work in via email.
 - If the student will not be able to turn in a homework assignment or quiz/exam due to their disability, it will be their responsibility to contact the professor to make up the work according to the agreement with the professor.
- **Keep the Disability Resource Center Counselor updated and informed** if the student is missing class/deadlines. If the professor contacts the Disability Resource Center, it is helpful for the student's DRC Counselor to know about the situation. *The Disability Resource Center will not contact instructors on behalf of the student.*

Professor Responsibilities:

- **Be available to discuss the accommodation with the student in a confidential setting.**
- **Determine how essential attendance/deadlines is to the course.**
 - If it is determined, through a deliberative consideration (refer to the final section of this document), that attendance/deadlines is an essential requirement, this accommodation may not be applicable. If so, contact the DRC counselor right away.
- **Be very clear in expectations when meeting with the student.** The professor should use the discussion points at the end of this guide to assist in this conversation. The professor can contact the Disability Resource Center for assistance with this discussion.
- **Sometimes student absences become excessive.** While this should always be addressed first between the professor and the student, the professor should contact the Disability Resource Center to help address the concern and explore options should absences or extended deadlines become overly frequent.

Disability Resource Center Responsibilities:

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

Possible Scenarios/Examples:

1. In a foreign language course, a student is told at the start of the semester that the professor cannot allow much flexibility regarding attendance as much learning depends on classroom interactions. However, the professor will keep the student's accommodation in mind. Student is hospitalized for a week at the end of the semester and cannot complete a presentation. Professor allows the student to make the presentation up with only the professor as this does not essentially alter the course objectives.
2. Professor gives clicker points for attendance. Professor allows student to respond to questions via email. However, student must contact professor and answer questions within 24 hours of class.
3. Student and professor agree that student can miss class more often than classmates as long as all of the work is completed. However, it is nearing the end of the semester and student has not turned in assignments, has not been in contact with the professor, and has not attended class. In this case, the professor would not be expected to extend deadlines as student has not taken responsibility for maintaining communication and is not completing coursework.

DISABILITY-RELATED ABSENCES AND ASSIGNMENT EXTENSIONS AGREEMENT

To Be Completed Between Professor and Student

The faculty member and student outline how classroom attendance, exams/quizzes, assignment due dates, and instructor notification are to be handled in cases of disability-related absences, missed deadlines or assignment extensions due to a disabling condition.

- 1. What is the percentage of class that can be missed if in-class participation is essential to the course learning objectives?**
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Professor, consider:

- *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?*

- 2. What is the procedure for making up missed exams, quizzes, or in class assignments given on a day of a disability-related absence:**
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- 3. What is the process for turning in missed homework, assignments, or projects due to disability-related absence and the maximum number of days the assignments may be submitted after the original due date?**
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Professor, consider:

- *Would student be able to turn in work electronically?*
- *Any potential pitfalls in extending deadlines if extension is given throughout the semester?*
- *To what degree does a student's failure to submit work timely constitute a significant loss to the educational experience of other students in the class?*
- *Does the fundamental nature of the course rely on meeting deadlines as an essential component for learning?*
- *What do the course description and syllabus say? What method is used to calculate the final grade?*

- 4. How and when will students notify the instructor regarding the need for a disability-related absence and/or the need for an assignment extension or completion of a missed exam or assignment?**
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Professor, consider: Do notifications need to occur in advance of an absence or a missed deadline? How does the professor prefer to be notified?