

Disability Related Flexibility in Attendance Policy and Guidelines

- **Attendance Expectations:**

Students are expected and encouraged to attend classes on a regular basis. Faculty have the right to establish attendance policies. The number of allowable absences depends upon the interactive or participatory nature of a course, or is based on department, college, or accrediting agency rules.

Therefore, attendance policies are set by faculty at the college or departmental level.

- **What does flexible attendance mean?**

Federal law requires CMU to consider reasonable accommodations for attendance if needed to accommodate a student's disability. **The Office of Disability Resources has determined that a student enrolled in your course has a documented disability that directly impacts their ability to attend class on a regular basis.** Upon review of medical documentation and after a thorough discussion with the student, Disability Resources has determined that flexible attendance where possible and appropriate is a reasonable accommodation for this student. Students with this accommodation have disabilities which are episodic in nature with unpredictable or cyclical acute episodes, and as a result the disability may occasionally impact the students' ability to attend class.

- **Questions to Consider:**

Please consider the following questions as you determine whether flexible attendance can be reasonably granted in your course. This guidance comes from cases adjudicated by the Office of Civil Rights (OCR).

- Is attendance an essential part of the class?
- Would accommodating attendance result in a fundamental alteration of the curriculum?
- 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 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 outline?
- What are the classroom practices and policies regarding attendance?
- Which method is used to calculate the final grade?
- For ideas on how to provide accommodations based on the answers to the above questions, visit the Flexible Assignment Dates and Attendance section of the [Faculty FAQ](#) on the Disability Resources website.

- **Procedure to Request Flexible Attendance:**

- Student initiates notification of this accommodation to their faculty through Accessible Information Management (AIM), the Disability Resources online portal
- Faculty receives an email from the student's primary point of contact at Disability Resources, listing this and any other accommodations for the student
- The student will typically contact the faculty member to set up a meeting to create a written agreement around this accommodation. **Note that Disability Resources staff may facilitate this meeting instead at either the student's or faculty member's request.**

- During the discussion, student, faculty, and Disability Resources staff (if present) should clearly specify:
 - How and when the student should inform instructors they will miss class
 - How the student will make-up missed in-class assignments, hand-in projects or assignments, or receive a copy of any missed notes
 - The number of absences (beyond what any student is allowed) that would be reasonable
- Once the verbal agreement has occurred, students and faculty should collaborate to fill out the Flexible Attendance Student Faculty Agreement Form through the AIM portal. This is a written record of what has been agreed upon during the discussion. This form can be accessed and submitted by the student only. Once completed, the faculty member, student, and Disability Resources will all receive a copy via email.
- Note that if deemed most appropriate, students and faculty may summarize the agreed-upon attendance flexibility via email in lieu of completing the online form.
- Any questions that may arise during this discussion should be directed to Disability Resources at access@andrew.cmu.edu.
- **Important Information:**
 - If no one reaches out to the faculty member to discuss the accommodation and develop a written agreement, then the accommodation is not implemented into the course.
 - This accommodation is not a blanket reason to miss class.
 - Some students register for accommodations late in the term, and some wait to meet with faculty to discuss accommodations. In these cases, faculty are not expected to provide retroactive accommodations. However, it may still be helpful to have this information, even at a late point in the term and flexibility with attendance may be arranged when appropriate.
 - At no time is the student required to present the faculty member with medical documentation verifying their disability related need for this accommodation.
 - If, as the semester progresses, it appears likely that the student will exceed the number of permitted absences per the flexibility agreement, Disability Resources should be informed. This will allow staff to be of assistance in answering questions about the accommodation from both the student and the faculty member.
 - Absences that are not related to the effects of a disability are not included in this accommodation (i.e. absences due to a common illness, car trouble, etc.) and should be addressed according to the syllabus stated attendance/ absence policy. The student is responsible for following the faculty member's syllabus regarding absences due to non-disability related issues.
 - An accommodation of flexible attendance may not be reasonable if regular attendance and class participation is essential to the course and/or curriculum.
 - Faculty are not obligated to re-teach material due to a student missing class
 - Students have the responsibility for completing all class work and should be held to the same standard as all other students.

If the instructor and/or the student have any questions or concerns at any point about this process or agreement, please contact Disability Resources as soon as possible: access@andrew.cmu.edu