

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.

- **Flexible Attendance Procedure:**

- Student initiates notification of this accommodation to their faculty through Accessible Information Management (AIM), the Disability Resources online portal
- The faculty member receives the Summary of Accommodations Memorandum via email from the student's primary contact at Disability Resources, listing this and any other accommodations for the student
- The faculty member logs onto the [AIM Instructor Portal](#), navigates to the Flex Plan module, and proposes appropriate and reasonable attendance flexibility for the student using the Flexible Attendance Agreement form. Unless explicitly requested to do so by the Office of Disability Resources, the proposed attendance flexibility should only include class sessions taking place after the date the instructor received the Summary of Accommodations Memorandum listing the accommodation. It should not include class sessions that took place before this date.

- Disability Resources staff review the Flexibility Agreement proposed by the instructor and may engage in an interactive dialog with the instructor and/or student if the proposed flexibility does not appear reasonable or would not meet the student's need
 - Disability Resources staff route the Flexibility Agreement to the student for review through the AIM system, and the Flexibility Agreement appears on the student's dashboard.
 - The student reviews the proposed flexibility through the AIM portal and either requests changes or accepts the flexibility as outlined.
 - If the instructor does not propose any attendance flexibility through the AIM System's instructor portal within two weeks of receiving notification of the accommodation, default attendance flexibility will go into effect, dating back to the date the Summary of Accommodations Memorandum was received by the instructor. This default flexibility will be two additional absences beyond what is permitted in the syllabus for full-semester courses, and one additional absence for mini courses.
- **Important Information:**
- If the instructor does not propose any attendance flexibility through the AIM System's instructor portal within two weeks of receiving notification of the accommodation, default attendance flexibility will go into effect, dating back to the date the Summary of Accommodations Memorandum was received by the instructor. This default flexibility will be two additional absences beyond what is permitted in the syllabus for full-semester courses, and one additional absence for mini courses.
 - Once the Flexibility Agreement is completed, it is available for viewing in the AIM Student Portal and Instructor Portal.
 - This accommodation is not a blanket reason to miss class.
 - Some students register for accommodations or notify their faculty about their approved accommodations late in the semester. In these cases, faculty are not expected to provide retroactive attendance flexibility. The accommodation only goes into effect when the student uses the AIM system to notify their faculty of the flexibility accommodation and the Summary of Accommodations Memorandum is sent to the instructor. Attendance flexibility on any future class sessions may be arranged when appropriate.
 - At no time should the student be requested to present the faculty member with medical documentation verifying their disability related need for this accommodation.
 - If either the student or the instructor are not closely adhering to the Flexibility Agreement, or if it appears likely that the student will exceed the number of permitted absences outlined in the agreement, the student or instructor should contact Disability Resources immediately to discuss. This will allow staff to be of assistance in answering questions and provide support as needed.
 - Absences that are not related to the effects of the student's disability are not included in this accommodation (i.e. absences due to a common illness, athletic commitment, attendance at a conference, 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 or may be extremely limited if regular attendance and class participation is essential to the course and/or curriculum.
- Faculty are not obligated or expected 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