

Modified Attendance Guidelines

The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga offers a variety of course options for which attendance and obtaining information from each course are a student's responsibility. Faculty who have established an attendance policy for a course should communicate expectations in the course syllabus. Generally, students are expected to adhere to this policy for each course, but in some cases, the impact of a student's disability can result in absences.

It is the responsibility of the University, in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act of 2008, to provide reasonable accommodations for individuals with disabilities. When considering a student's request for modified attendance as an accommodation, the Disability Resource Center (DRC) will approve whether the accommodation is aligned with the impact of the disability, and in consultation with Academic Affairs, will determine whether the modified attendance accommodation will fundamentally alter the essential requirements of the course.

If a student has been approved by Disability Resource Center staff, in consultation with Academic Affairs, for an accommodation for modified attendance based on the impact of a disability, the instructor should consider whether or not classroom attendance is an essential element of their class. Instructors, in consultation with Disability Resource Center staff, are responsible for determining if modifying an attendance policy would result in a fundamental alteration of the course. The Office for Civil Rights offers the following seven questions as guidelines for determining if attendance is an essential part of a class (Case no. 09-96-2150: OCR Region IX, 1996):

1. Is there classroom interaction between the instructor and student 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?
4. To what degree does a student's failure to attend constitute a significant loss to the educational experience of other students in the class?
5. What do the course description and syllabus say?
6. Which method is used to calculate the final grade? How is attendance calculated in the final grade?
7. What are the classroom practices and policies regarding attendance?

This discussion regarding attendance as a reasonable accommodation should be an individualized, course-by course discussion based on the impact of the specific disability. It is important that this discussion occur in a reasonable timeframe and in partnership so that the student can make an informed decision regarding potential alternatives. A plan for all elements of a course (including exams, assignments, projects, etc.) that a student may miss because of a disability-related absence should be considered in the Attendance Accommodation Agreement. This accommodation should be considered as a reasonable option unless the accommodation fundamentally alters the course as offered.

Attendance Accommodation Agreement

The student must meet with the instructor for each course for which an attendance modification is requested. The student or instructor can request a DRC staff member to be in attendance to help negotiate this accommodation. This meeting should result in the student and faculty member collaboratively agreeing to the outlined terms. This interaction serves two goals:

- Determining to what extent flexibility in the given attendance policy is reasonable.
- Identifying and communicating clear expectations for the implementation of the agreement.

The Attendance Accommodation Agreement should be completed as soon as possible after the instructor has been provided the accommodation letter. The instructor and student should keep a copy for themselves, and the student should return the original to the Disability Resource Center. If the number of absences outlined is exceeded or if there are any concerns from either the instructor or student about the Agreement at a later date, Disability Resource Center staff should be informed so staff are available to provide consultation about the accommodation as necessary. In some cases, Disability Resource Center will request that the student provide additional documentation to support any further modification to a course's attendance policy.

Notes:

- Do not simply restate the policy in the syllabus for all students.
- Be as concrete and specific as possible. Use exact numbers and be clear about preferred methods of communicating.
- Please complete the form entirely and attach a separate page if needed.

1. Number of disability-related absences reasonable for this course:
2. Outline the process for the student to notify the instructor about a disability-related absence (a student cannot be required to submit documentation to verify each individual disability-related absence):
3. Identify how the student should arrange for the following course elements applicable to the course
 - Homework or assignment due on date of disability-related absence.
Timeline of completion and method of submission:
 - Exams or graded in-class assignments due on date of disability-related absence:
Timeline of completion and method of submission:

Student Name: _____

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____

Instructor Name: _____

Instructor Signature: _____ Date: _____