



AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

WASHINGTON, DC

ACADEMIC SUPPORT AND ACCESS CENTER

Flexible Attendance and Deadlines Accommodations Professor Guidance

Disability accommodations impacting attendance and deadlines can be difficult for professors to administer. The language for such accommodations is as follows:

1. “Extended deadlines on assignments when existing deadlines are not integral to the goal of the course, (Student has responsibility for communicating in a timely fashion with the professor regarding status or concerns about meeting assignment deadlines in order for reasonable adjustments to be determined.)”
2. “Opportunity to meet with professor to discuss attendance and class participation requirements that may be impacted as a result of the student’s disability.”

If you have a student receiving either or both of these accommodations, the student has presented documentation to our office that supports his or her need for the accommodation. The student is not obligated to disclose the nature of his or her disability to you. It is the student’s responsibility, however, to present his or her letter of accommodation to you. Until you have been presented with the accommodations letter from the ASAC, you should not accommodate the student.

It is imperative that the student and the accommodating faculty member have a shared understanding of the fundamental requirements of the class and the boundaries of the accommodation. It is suggested that the student and professor work together with the ASAC to record this arrangement, in writing, at the beginning of the semester, or as soon as the student provides the instructor with the accommodations letter. Accommodations are not retroactive; in other words, presenting an accommodations letter mid-semester would not reverse any of the student’s unexcused absences or missed deadlines prior to the faculty member’s receipt of the letter.

Reflection on the essential academic requirements of your course, particularly which aspects are going to be assessed or recorded as a means of assessing a student’s learning, will be necessary. Faculty members are encouraged to use creativity and empathy, without fundamentally altering the nature of the course or the measures of assessment. There is no obligation to alter the learning outcomes to meet the student’s needs.

While it may take a meeting or two to establish an effective understanding regarding either of these accommodations, doing so as early as possible will help to manage both a professor’s and student’s expectations. Our office is available to help in any way that we can and we encourage you to contact the students ASAC counselor if you have any questions.

Attached are some guidelines for you to consider in clarifying the essential learning components of your class. You may find it helpful to review these guidelines before discussing this matter with the student.

Mary Graydon Center 243

Guidelines for determining if class attendance is fundamental to course participation:

1. Is there classroom interaction between the instructor and students, and among students?
2. Do student contributions constitute a significant component of the learning process? For example, what is the nature of the course? Does it involve improvisational acting, gestalt counseling techniques, a complex lab where materials are altered or destroyed once it is over, or comparable pedagogical strategies?
3. Does the fundamental nature of the course rely upon student participation as an essential method of 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 does the course description and syllabus say?
6. What is the method by which the final course grade is calculated?
7. What are classroom practices and policies regarding attendance?
8. Is there a departmental attendance policy? If so, is your policy in sync with this?

Guidance for determining if a deadline is fundamental to the class:

1. Is the deadline integral to the progression of the work in the class?
2. Does the fundamental nature of the course rely upon the deadline being met?
3. Is the educational experience of the other students in the class impacted by the deadline not being met?
4. What do the course description and syllabus say about meeting deadlines?
5. How have you handled other students in the course not meeting deadlines?

Once you have analyzed the necessity of the attendance and/or deadline requirement for your class in light of the above, I then suggest you meet with the student and reach an understanding on the following:

1. What are a reasonable number of absences for the class in light of the learning outcomes for the class?
2. What is the plan for making up any missed work as a result of any absences, if there is any? Please note, there is no obligation to retroactively accommodate the student. Any arrangements for past assignments due are at your discretion.
3. When and how is the student to notify you of any absence?
4. How will you let the student know about the alternate deadline for submitting the assignment?
5. How and when will absences and missed deadlines caused by the impact of the student's disability be documented?