

Faculty Guideline for Flex

Disability-Related Flexibility in Attendance/Assignments Policy and Guidelines

Some disabilities are episodic in nature with random or cyclical acute episodes and as a result the disability may occasionally impact the students' ability to attend class, complete an assignment or take an exam/quiz at the scheduled time. In cases such as these, flexibility with attendance and/or assignments/testing deadlines may be considered an appropriate accommodation. The number of allowable absences and length of assignment extensions depends on the interactive or participatory nature of a course, or is based on department, college or accrediting agency rules.

The Office of Civil Rights (OCR) provide the following guidelines to be used in considering whether attendance is an essential element of a course and should be explored:

- What is the course attendance policy? What are the learning objectives of the course?
- What methods are used to calculate the final grade? (attendance, assignments, projects, participation, exams, etc.)
- Are the course attendance/assignments or missed exam policies applied consistently? Are there exceptions to policies made for extenuating circumstances, such as athletic travel or religious observation and how are those exceptions handled?
- How much interaction is there between the professor and students and among students? Is group work required?
- Do student contributions constitute a significant component of the learning process?
- Does the design of the course rely on student participation as a significant method for learning?
- Is content offered in class only?
- To what degree does a student's failure to attend class or do an assignment on time compromise the educational experience of other students in the class?

Academic Support Office (ASO) has created these guidelines for RU students and faculty to help navigate this accommodation.

Attendance and Assignment Deadlines:

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 on 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 university or departmental level.

Students are expected and encouraged to meet all deadlines for assignments and tests. Faculty have the right to establish late work policies.

What does flexibility in attendance/assignments mean?

Students who may not adhere to an attendance policy or may miss an assignment deadline or test due to circumstances directly related to a disability may seek an accommodation. The process for requesting this accommodation is through ASO. All requests are considered individually.

When is flexibility in attendance/assignment deadlines appropriate?

Some disabilities are episodic in nature with random or cyclical acute episodes and as a result, the disability may occasionally impact the students' ability to attend class, complete an assignment or take an exam at the scheduled time. In cases such as these, flexibility in attendance/assignments may be considered an appropriate accommodation.

Instructors are contacted by ASO about possible flexibility in attendance/assignments as a possible accommodation, seeking an understanding of the role attendance plays in the design of the course and how assignments and exams impact the interactive or participatory nature of a course.

Specifically, we will be exploring:

- What is the course attendance policy as stated in the syllabus?
- What method is used to calculate the final grade? (attendance, assignments, exams, etc.)
- Is the attendance policy and late work or missed exams policy applied consistently? Are there exceptions to the policy made for extenuating circumstances, such as athletic travel or religious observation?
- How much interaction is there between the instructor and students and among students?
- Do student contributions constitute a significant component of the learning process?
- Does the design of the course rely on student participation as a significant method for learning? Attendance and/or their assignment (project) contributions.
- Is there content only offered in class?
- To what degree does a student's failure to attend class or do an assignment on time compromise the educational experience of other students in the class?

If an accommodation is determined to be reasonable, ASO works with the instructor and the student to clearly specify:

- How and when the student should inform the instructor that they will miss class
- How the student will make up missed assignments and/or exams
- The number of absences (beyond what any student is allowed) that would be reasonable
- If it is reasonable for online discussion expectations to be modified due to disability related reasons and under what conditions
- If it is reasonable to extend the window for completing online exams or assignments

- Whether a drop, withdraw or incomplete may be appropriate based on the student's situation

What is the process?

ASO determines that the accommodation is reasonable. We explain to students that this does not mean that they can miss as many classes as they want, and that the student is responsible for completing all coursework. It is also the responsibility of the student to inform the faculty about his/her absence through email in case of a flare up or sickness.

ASO will state the accommodation in an accommodation letter to the faculty. Any questions concerning the accommodation should be directed to ASO.

Flex Agreement

It is the responsibility of the student to inform his/her faculty about his/her absences, and to meet with faculty to come up with an agreement for a makeup of assignment/s or exam. The agreement should be shared with the student's ASO Advisor.

Tip: A general rule to consider for determining a reasonable timeframe for a makeup or postponement of an assignment, paper, exam or quiz is typically 48 hours. In certain courses, it may be appropriate to consider an alternative assignment, reading or project to make up for missed class discussions or projects. Other examples of how disability absences might be accommodated may include the ability to turn in assignment/papers late without a grade penalty or the ability to make up any assignments, quizzes or exams that have been missed without a grade penalty.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

- **This accommodation is not a blanket reason to miss class.**
- Faculty are still responsible for this accommodation even if they delay in responding to ASO. **DO NOT WAIT!**
- Some students register late in the term and some wait to request 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.
- At no time is the student required to present the faculty member with medical documentation verifying his/her disability-related absence for this accommodation.
- If the absences meet or exceed 50% of those agreed upon in the Flexibility in Attendance/Assignments Agreement, ASO should be informed. This will allow ASO to

be of assistance in answering questions about the accommodations 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 in attendance is not reasonable if regular attendance is essential to the course and/or curriculum.
- Faculty are not obligated to re-teach material missed due to not attending class.
- Not every course component can be provided an extension.
- Students have the responsibility for completing all classwork