Disability-Related Adjustments to Attendance Requirements

Policy and Procedures

In most cases, class attendance is critical to a student's mastery of the knowledge and/or skills that are taught in a specific course. Students (including students with disabilities) are expected to follow the attendance policy established by the instructor in each class. However, there may be times when a qualified student with a disability cannot attend class for disability-related reasons.

If such a student believes it may not be possible to abide by the attendance policy because of a disability, the student should contact the Disability and Learning Resource Center (DLRC) at (312) 499-4278 prior to the beginning of the semester, or as soon as possible after difficulty arises, to discuss the matter. The DLRC may determine, based on the student’s disability documentation, that flexibility with attendance is a reasonable accommodation. If this is the case, it will be noted on a letter that the student should give to the faculty member before being granted any exception to an attendance policy.

Guidance for Faculty: Deciding Whether to Grant Disability-Related Attendance Flexibility

Every effort should be made to reasonably accommodate a student's disability-related academic needs. Please note, however, that there is no obligation to waive an essential or fundamental academic requirement of a course, regardless of the nature of the student's disability.

The following questions, developed by the federal Department of Education’s Office of Civil Rights, should be considered by faculty when determining the extent to which attendance is an essential requirement of a course and whether an exception to the attendance policy may be appropriate:

a. Is there classroom interaction between the instructor and students and among the students themselves?
b. Do student contributions in class constitute a significant component of the learning process?
c. Does the fundamental nature of the course rely on student participation as an essential method of learning?
d. To what degree does a student's failure to attend class constitute a significant loss to the educational experience of other students in the class?
e. What does the course description and syllabus say regarding attendance? Each instructor may have different requirements regarding attendance.
f. By what method is the final grade calculated?
The more essential attendance is to the course requirements, the less case there is for making an exception to the policy. In the event that no decision can be reached by a faculty member using these criteria, or if questions arise regarding how to implement this adjustment, faculty should contact the Disability and Learning Resource Center at (312)499-4286 to discuss the matter further.

DLRC Contact Information

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