



Accessible Education Services

Willamette University, 900 State Street, Salem, Oregon 97301

Telephone: 503-370-6737 | Fax: 503-370-6647

Flexible Attendance, Assignments, and Exam Rescheduling Accommodations Policy and Guidelines

Overview

Students are responsible to attend class regularly and meet all deadlines for assignments and exams. Faculty have the right to establish policies to regulate attendance, assignment due dates, and tests. However, if a student has a disability or health condition that is episodic or cyclical in nature and causes random flare-ups of acute symptoms, they may occasionally miss class or fail to adhere to a scheduled deadline. In these instances, modifying attendance requirements, assignment deadlines and/or exam dates, may be considered a reasonable accommodation. The number of reasonable absences and lengths of extensions will vary and is based on the interactive or participatory nature of a course, as well as any applicable college, department, and accrediting agency regulations. The following guidelines are designed to facilitate understanding for students and instructors of their roles and expectations in navigating these accommodations.

What do Flexible Attendance, Assignment, and Exam Rescheduling Accommodations mean?

Students are responsible for attending their classes regularly and meeting all deadlines. Faculty have the right to determine attendance policies and establish assignment deadlines and test dates. Flexible accommodations for disability-related absences do not waive these rights and responsibilities, but rather are designed to provide some elasticity. Some examples of how to do this include allowing 1-3 absences beyond what would be provided to any student, or agreeing to a deadline extension or exam reschedule with no grade reduction. Faculty are not obligated to provide these accommodations retroactively, and are never required to reteach missed material. Students should never be required to provide medical documentation to a professor, and nondisability related absences are not covered by these accommodations.

The degree of flexibility that is available varies and depends on the interactive or participatory nature of a course, as well as standards mandated by college, department, and accrediting agencies. All assignments, quizzes, and exams must be completed by the last day of the final exam period, unless an incomplete has been requested by the student and granted by the professor. In some cases, flexible accommodations may not be reasonable or appropriate, even if the student has a disability or health condition that otherwise warrants flexibility, e.g. clinical practicums that are required for many graduate and professional programs.

What is the process?

The process for determining these accommodations is through Accessible Education Services (AES) and each student's case is considered individually. Students wishing to request these accommodations must register with AES and must provide documentation of a disability from a qualified professional. The documentation must verify the disability and must articulate how and why the disability impacts attendance.

In assessing the reasonableness of flexible accommodations, AES will seek to gain clarity on the role attendance plays in a course or program, and the impact extensions and rescheduled exams have on the essential learning outcomes of other participants. As guidance from the Office of Civil Rights suggests, AES will specifically explore the following elements with faculty when determining whether attendance is essential to a course:

1. What does the course description and syllabus say about attendance?
2. Is attendance factored in as part of the final course grade?
3. What are classroom practices and policies regarding attendance?
4. Is the attendance policy consistently applied?
5. Have exceptions been made for extenuating circumstances other than disability?
6. Is there classroom interaction between the instructor and students or is group work required for the class?
7. Do student contributions constitute a significant component of the learning process?
8. Does the course rely on student participation as a method for learning?
9. What is the impact on the educational experience of other students in the class?

If these accommodations are determined reasonable, the Director of AES will work with students and their faculty on the following:

- How will the student notify you they will miss class?
- How will they arrange to turn in missed work or reschedule an exam?
- What number of absences beyond what is allowed any student is reasonable?
- To what degree is it reasonable to extend the window for online exams, quizzes, discussions, and assignments?
- Is an incomplete or withdrawal appropriate for this student's situation?

In most cases, faculty will receive notification that a student is eligible for accommodations early in the semester.