

# Disability-Related Absences Guidelines

The Office of Disability Services (ODS) has created guidelines related to the disability-related absences accommodation for students as a response to faculty and student requests for more guidance. This information is provided to help faculty and students assess how to best implement this accommodation in their courses.

*\*Important Note: “Disability Related Absences” does not equate to a waiver from attendance or participation requirements – but rather a need to be flexible on top of whatever policies faculty already hold as it relates to these areas of assessment. This may also necessitate occasional deadline extensions of 24-48 hours as well as ability to make-up exams.*

Students are always encouraged and expected to attend classes, and faculty/instructors have the right to hold students to attendance and class participation requirements, with reasonable accommodation. A student who has a disability-related need for flexibility with attendance may register with the Office of Disability Services (ODS). After a thorough review of documentation and meeting with the student, ODS may approve this flexibility as an accommodation that would be listed as “Disability-Related Absences” on their accommodation letter. Students who may require this accommodation often do not go to the doctor each time they may need to miss class but instead, rely on self-care and communication with their support system. Although faculty/instructors commonly request documentation from students who miss class (i.e., doctor’s note), it may not be feasible or appropriate for students who are approved for this accommodation in your course. In many cases, these conditions are lifelong, and students are well educated on what they need to do to provide self-care; requesting a note from a provider may delay their self-care regimen or exacerbate their symptoms further. This means that a student with an accommodation for “Disability-Related Absences” may require exceptions to meeting attendance expectations in a particular course when it is educationally feasible. Faculty/instructors are required to provide approved ODS-accommodations to students; however, faculty/instructors are not required to alter the learning outcomes for their course.

## Student Responsibilities

All students who are registered with ODS have a responsibility to communicate their needs to ODS and to their faculty members to receive accommodations, including communication regarding their needs related to disability-related absences. Students need to be mindful that not every course component can be provided an extension. Students with disability-related absences are not entitled to miss an unlimited number of courses. Students with this accommodation are responsible for completing all missed tests, quizzes, and/or assignments and for meeting all the same essential standards and expectations of any other student. It is important to know that not all in-person experiences can be made up or recreated. Some things, such as guest speakers, events, field trips, labs, etc. cannot be recreated or made up; therefore, an impact to grading may be inevitable. Furthermore, should a courses

attendance be deemed essential to the course and/or curriculum, the attendance accommodation may not be reasonable. Should this arise in the conversation between student and faculty, students are encouraged to reach out to ODS as soon as possible.

All students with ODS accommodations, including disability-related absences, are responsible for:

- Providing their accommodation letter to their faculty members. Accommodations are not retroactive and take affect at the time faculty receive the Faculty Accommodation Letter.
- Completing all coursework assigned.
- Initiating a discussion regarding this accommodation with their faculty/instructor with whom they require the accommodation and reviewing ODS's guidance on absence accommodations.
- Communicating to ODS, should a concern or issue related to accommodations arise and is unable to be resolved between the student and the faculty/instructor.
- Reviewing your course syllabi and understanding the attendance and make-up policies and procedures for each of your classes.

### Faculty Responsibilities

Although this accommodation does not excuse a student from meeting course requirements, it should be understood that students who are approved for this accommodation may miss exams/quizzes, assignment deadlines, portions of class participation requirements, and group/partner in-class work. Consideration in allowing substituted and make-up work is appropriate, when educationally feasible. Deadline extensions are not intended to provide lengthy, open-ended deadlines or enable a lack of planning/preparation on a student's part. Generally speaking, ODS would advocate for 24-48 hour extensions in order to grant the student some grace when their condition impacts substantially and without warning. Please note that some circumstances may warrant additional time beyond this standard guidance and ODS is always available for consultation in these situations.

When provided with an accommodation letter by a student receiving the "Disability-Related Absences" accommodation, it is strongly advised to encourage the student to set up a time to meet (in person or remotely) with the faculty/instructor to develop a plan of expectations in the course before absences occur. Expectations surrounding communication of absences and make-up work should be made clear to the student, and an agreement between the faculty/instructor and student should be established by using the [Disability Related Absence Framework](#). If you believe a student has unrealistic expectations about what this accommodation means or problems arise in practice, it is always appropriate to refer a student back to ODS to clarify expectations and policies around their accommodations.

We ask faculty to evaluate the role of attendance and class participation within their given course prior to meeting with students. Please think through the following questions as absences usually directly affect a grade associated with participation:

- What does the syllabus state regarding attendance/participation and how can I be more flexible for students with this accommodation?
- What stated learning outcomes/objectives require participation? For example – does participation mean active discussion in open forum style conversations or merely an attendance quiz or some other attendance related evaluation.
- Is attendance factored in as part of the final course grade?
- Is there classroom interaction between the instructor and students, and/or among students which is evaluated and incorporated into a student's final grade?
- Do student contributions constitute a significant component of the learning process? Are there alternate ways in which a student could contribute?
- Does the course rely on student participation as a method for learning?
- What is the impact on the educational experience of other students in the class?
- Is there content only offered in class?
- Are assignments used as class content when they are due? For example – the assignments are used to generate class discussion the day they are due?
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ODS understands that each course is different, and that each faculty/instructor has unique learning outcomes that are intended for all students enrolled in a particular course. The ODS is available to consult with faculty/instructors for questions. Frequently asked questions involving this accommodation are related to decisions of whether there is a way to make up class participation requirements or a particular in-class activity/assignment (e.g., peer review, group discussions, etc.). **It is strongly recommended to proactively contact the ODS with any questions to avoid potential compounded issues from arising.**

The Office of Disability Services is available to consult with faculty/instructors about whether there is a fundamental alteration to a course due to the provision of an accommodation. A determination of fundamental alteration due to provision of an approved ODS accommodation to a course should not be the sole decision of a faculty member/instructor. Prior to engaging in the [Fundamental Alteration Determination Process](#), the faculty member/instructor should consult with ODS.

### **Guidance on Make Up Work**

When a disability-related absence occurs, faculty are responsible for determining reasonable alternative and equivalent ways in which students can successfully complete essential course requirements without compromising course standards. ODS recommends a review of the learning outcomes of each course to determine alternatives to the preset class activities and assignments in which may be available.

Recommended methods to be considered include:

- Altering timelines for coursework and tests.
- Allowing students to attend repeat lectures/labs given at other course sections.
- Assign comparable questions or essays around class discussion topic.
- Give students an incomplete grade to allow an opportunity to fulfill course requirements.
- Talk with the student prior to drop or withdrawal deadlines to determine whether this would be beneficial.
- Consult with ODS about options for support of students.

- Discuss a plan and set timeframe for makeup exams/quizzes (i.e. within 1-2 days). Be mindful that each student is different, and absences associated with a disability may require more or less time.

#### Contacting ODS

Please do not hesitate to contact ODS, by emailing [disability@louisiana.edu](mailto:disability@louisiana.edu) or calling (337) 482-5252, if there is any difficulty with reaching an agreement between faculty/instructor and student related to disability-related absences accommodation. At times, it can be challenging to understand how an accommodation may be implemented in certain situations, and we are happy to help.