

What Faculty Need to Know About Attendance and Students with Disabilities

In some cases, a student who is registered with *the Office of Academic Skills* may qualify for consideration for class absences. This accommodation is most frequently granted for a student who has a documented chronic health problem which occasionally causes them to be absent from class. Faculty set their own attendance policies; the accommodation is simply a request for some flexibility in the policy. The amount of flexibility will depend on the nature of the class and whether class participation is a factor in the final grade. Students who are eligible for this accommodation are responsible for completing all coursework. This accommodation is not a "blank check" which allows students to miss a large number of classes for any given course. A student with excessive absences in a class should consult with the instructor about dropping the course with a passing grade or receiving an incomplete grade where appropriate.

Office of Civil Rights Cases

1994: determined that requests for accommodations for absences due to a disability should be considered on an individual basis. The accommodation should be provided unless the accommodation threatens the integrity of the course as offered. If a course grade is dependent on attendance it is important that the student and faculty member discuss the issue so that the student can then make an informed decision about alternatives.

1996: The following six factors should be used in considering if attendance is an essential element of a course:

- 1) Are there classroom interactions between the instructor and the students and among students?
- 2) Do student contributions constitute a significant component of the learning process?
- 3) Does the functional nature of the course rely on student participation as an essential method for learning?
- 4) To what degree does a student's failure to attend constitute a significant loss to the educational experience of the other students in the course?
- 5) What do the course description and syllabus say?
- 6) What are the classroom practices and policies regarding attendance?

Cc: Services for Students with Disabilities, Lamar University (lamar.edu)