

# Q & A with the ODA: Attendance Accommodation Update



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# Office of Disability Access

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## Mission

- It is the mission of the Office of Disability Access to engage and collaborate with faculty and other campus partners to
  - ensure students with disabilities at the University of North Texas have access to all university programs, services, and activities;
  - promote equity and inclusion for students with disabilities; and
  - provide a platform for accessible pedagogical innovation

## Purpose

Providing leadership in the areas of equal access and advocacy for students with disabilities.

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## Legal and Policy Mandates

### Federal Policy

Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Sections 503 and 504)  
Americans with Disabilities Act (1990) / ADA Amendments Acts 2008  
Fair Housing Act

### University of North Texas Institutional Policy

UNT Policy 04.014-Reasonable Accommodations and Auxiliary Aids for People with Disabilities,  
UNT Policy 04.015 Americans with Disabilities Act,  
**UNT Policy 16.001-Disability Accommodation Policy for Students and Academic Units (UPDATED)**  
UNT Policy 16.002-Campus Access for Service and Comfort Animals for People with Disabilities

# Accommodations and Services

- **Student Registrations and Accommodation Determination**
- **Student Access**
  - Coordinating and providing student accommodations
  - Work with campus partners to ensure access to facilities, programs and services
- **Testing Center**
  - Administer accommodated tests
- **Interpreting/CART Services**
  - Access to Lecture (via audio recording, note-taker, live-scribe pen, taking own notes laptop)
  - Captioning
- **Assistive Technology and Alternative Formats**
  - Books
  - Assistive software
- **Education and Outreach**
  - Programming
  - Professional Development/Presentations



# Current: ODA Accommodation Details

**Accommodation name:** Allowance for medically-related absences

**Guidance:** ODA website: [www.disability.unt.edu/details](http://www.disability.unt.edu/details)

**Accommodation name:** Occasional Extensions of Deadlines or Due Dates up to 48 hours

**Guidance:** per ODA website: [www.disability.unt.edu/details](http://www.disability.unt.edu/details)

## **INTERNAL REVIEW FINDINGS:**

- The information on our website was not sufficient to guide students and instructors toward a seamless (and less complicated) implementation of these accommodations.
- Faculty needed guidance on how to make key decisions surrounding how these accommodations should be implemented in a specific course.
- Students needed to better understand how the accommodation works as well as its limitations.
- ODA Coordinators needed a standard list of considerations to provide direction and feedback to both faculty and students.
- Needed a document designed to reduce confusion for students and faculty by setting up parameters as soon as the faculty receives the student's Letter of Accommodation (LOA).

# Important Notes on the Attendance Accommodation Moving Forward

- New name: **Modification of Course Attendance Policy**
- The accommodation DOES NOT provide for unlimited absences – only a reasonable number above the number of absences posted in a course attendance policy.
- Parameters can be set regarding the timetable to turn in missed work after an absence.
- We will be transitioning to a better name for the accommodation in a “modification in a course attendance policy.” If a course has not attendance policy or penalties related to attendance, then the need for the accommodation is moot.
- You can designate a set number of absences for language courses allowed for ODA students. Please make sure it is not discriminatory.

**COMING FALL 2019**

Proposed guidance from ODA on  
Attendance Accommodation –

**“Modification of Course Attendance  
Policy Guidance and Memorandum of  
Understanding”**

# Guidance Document Includes:

- Introductory information
- Determination of whether attendance is essential
- Evaluating the role of class participation
- MOU/Agreement
  - Completed by faculty and student (assistance available from ODA)
  - Content includes:
    - Steps to determine reasonable number of additional absences
    - Timeline and method to notify faculty if a disability-related absence occurs
    - Parameters regarding
      - missed assignments, exams, quizzes, etc.
      - Missed Attendance Points/ Participation Points/ Group Discussion Points (if applicable)
      - What to do if agreement becomes ineffective

# Introduction

- Federal law requires colleges and universities to consider reasonable modification of attendance policies if needed to accommodate a student's disability that impacts attendance.
- The disabilities covered under this accommodation are typically chronic or episodic in nature and may impact class participation as well as the ability to complete assignments, exams and quizzes.
- A disability-related absence as defined by the Office of Disability Access (ODA) is when a student is absent due to the symptoms associated with the student's documented disability.
- This accommodation does not apply to absences for other reasons.
- The student is not required to present the professor with medical documentation verifying his/her disability-related absence.



- To facilitate this discussion, the ODA has created a form, **Memorandum of Understanding and responsibilities (MOU)**, for guidance as well as an understanding of how this accommodation would work in individual courses.
- This MOU should be reviewed and completed to clearly set out expectations. *Students and or faculty can request ODA Coordinators' assistance in facilitating the completion of this MOU.*
- This accommodation allows for a reasonable amount of additional absences and the ability to make up missed assignments, exams and quizzes within a specified timeframe.
- **Limitations of this accommodation assert the following:**
  - Unlimited and excessive absences are unreasonable.
  - Use of this accommodation is not permitted for seasonal illness and disabilities not documented by the ODA.
  - This accommodation may not alter the essential component of the course (i.e., where class attendance or participation is considered to be an essential component of the course).

# Assessing Whether Class Attendance is Essential

- Professors may also review the guidelines provided by the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) to assess if attendance is an essential component of their course:
  - Is there classroom interaction between the instructor and students and among students?
  - Do student contributions in class constitute a significant component of the learning process?
  - Does the fundamental nature of the course rely on student participation as an essential method for learning?
  - To what degree does a student's failure to attend constitute a significant loss to the educational experience of other students in the class?
  - What do the course description and syllabus say?
  - What method is used to calculate the final grade?
  - What are the classroom practices and policies regarding attendance?

# Evaluating the Role of Class Participation

Our focus in this accommodation is on the essential element of participation. With that in mind please review the following questions below, as ODA may need this information. These questions are designed to help identify the role in-class participation has toward students meeting course outcomes/objectives. If concerns come up, or agreements are not able to be reached, contact ODA:

- What does the syllabus state regarding attendance, participation, and deadlines? Have exceptions been made in the past? What is the role of these policies as it relates to the course?
- What stated learning outcomes/objectives require participation?
- Is attendance factored in as part of the final course grade? If yes, how? What is the percentage of the grade? Is this a course, department, or college policy?
- Is there classroom interaction between the instructor and students, and/or among students?

# Evaluating the Role of Class Participation

- Is the format of instruction primarily lecture or interactive? Does instruction and learning rely on specific elements from the previous session or assignment?
- 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?
- Do student contributions constitute a significant component of the learning process? (e.g. discussion, presentations, role play)? What is the impact on the educational experience of other students in the class if a student is absent or misses a deadline? Are assignments used as class content when they are due? (e.g. problem sets reviewed as the first lecture on that content)

# Proposed MOU/Agreement Content

## **Disability Related Absences – what is a reasonable number?**

- If in-class participation is essential to the course, instructor must state below the **percentage or number of absences that can be permitted according to attendance policy** in course syllabus.
- Instructor, using the OCR Guidelines, please **detail the maximum amount absences allowable in this course.**

## **Notification of Absences – How do you want to be contacted when student cannot attend class?**

- Student will be responsible for notifying the instructor of a disability related absence. **Within what time frame and method of notification?**

# Proposed MOU/Agreement Content

## B. Assignments/Examinations – Definitions and Parameters

- A disability related absence can impact the student's ability to turn in homework, assignments, or projects due the day of a disability related absence. The disability may also impact the student's ability to complete exams or quizzes at the designated time. The section below will help detail a reasonable plan of action to submit/make-up missed assignments or exams within a specified timeframe.
- **(Please note:** Disability related absences are not intended to be used to provide extensions on long-term assignments. For short-term assignments (assignment with a 3-day turnaround or less) students experiencing a disability related absence should be permitted to turn in work late without grade penalty. In these situations, a general rule to consider for determining a reasonable make-up timeframe would be the amount of time equivalent to that which was missed. In some courses, it may be appropriate to consider an alternative assignment, reading or project to make up for missed class discussions or projects.)
- If due to a disability related absence, Student is responsible for submitting **missed assignments, homework, or projects** to instructor. **Within what notification time frame, submission parameters, and method of notification?**

# Proposed MOU/Agreement Content

## **C. Attendance Points/ Participation Points/ Group Discussion Points**

- Instructors are asked to consider points and assignments connected to attendance. If applicable, detail the following:
  - Procedure for making up attendance points missed due to a disability related absence.
  - Procedure for making up participation points missed due to a disability related absence.
  - Procedure for making up group discussion points missed due to a disability related absence.

# MOU/Agreement Conclusion and Memorialization

This is a **Memorandum of Understanding** between the student and instructor regarding the expectations of the attendance flexibility accommodation in this class. The student and/or instructor **should contact the ODA at 940-565-4323** to request the student's ODA Coordinator if:

- Terms of agreement are not being met
- Questions or further guidance is needed
- Absences meet or exceed 50% of those agreed upon

Please send the completed form back to the Office of Disability Access ([Apply.ODA@unt.edu](mailto:Apply.ODA@unt.edu)) and keep copies for each person.



# Further Considerations

- If attendance can be justified as an integral part of how the course is taught and/or how learning is to be demonstrated and measured, there can be a point at which disability-related absences cannot be reasonably accommodated.
- If at any point, the instructor and/or the student have any questions or concerns about this process, the **Memorandum of Understanding and Responsibilities**, and/or the provision of this accommodation, the Office of Disability Access should be notified as soon as possible so they can address the concerns and work to resolve them.
- If the maximum number of allowed absences is exceeded during the semester, the student and instructor must meet to discuss an appropriate course of action (such as: student will be granted an incomplete; student will be advised to withdraw from the course; the number of absences allowed will be reviewed, etc.; penalties outlined in syllabus will apply).
- The Office of Disability Access should be informed as soon as possible so they can work with the instructor and student to come to a reasonable solution.

**COMING FALL 2019**

**ODA's New Database Management System  
(AIM)**

**It will include a faculty portal which will make accommodation management much easier regarding how you**

- receive Letters of Accommodation;
- complete testing agreements and provide exams to test center;
- see the accommodations of students enrolled in your courses; and
- complete Attendance Modification Agreement.

Any Questions?



Thank you!!