Flexibility About Class Attendance

UNC-Chapel Hill expects full participation in class, laboratory periods, and tests/examinations of all students; however, due to the nature of a student's disability, it is possible that some lectures/seminars may be missed due to ill-health or medical appointments. Students who have this accommodation identified have submitted medical evidence from a consultant or specialist of a disability or significant ongoing illness. While this accommodation cannot act as an open ended medical certificate it should alert staff to the fact that regular absences may be inevitable and necessary and that agreement should be sought as to what level of absence can be reasonably be accommodated. This should be done on a case by case basis taking into account the course requirements, the principle of reasonable accommodation and the nature of the student's disability.

On one hand, based upon the nature of the medical condition or disability, it may be known in advance that absences could occur. On the other, some students could experience unexpected hospital or outpatient treatment, illness, pain, fatigue, severe anxiety, etc. Regardless of the medical condition or disability, the student remains responsible for fulfilling the essential requirements of the course, including meeting the faculty member's attendance expectations.

Some faculty members have high attendance expectations and build severe penalties into their grading rubric for absences; however, the accommodation should be provided unless the accommodation threatens the integrity of the course as offered. It is important that the student and course instructor discuss the issue so that the student can then make an informed decision regarding alternatives. Requests for accommodations for absences due to a disability should be considered on an individual and course-by-course basis.

Essential Course Requirements

In relation to every class and program, the instructor identifies and defines the essential course requirements and measures whether they have been met. In addition, the instructor determines the acceptable number of excused absences in light of these requirements. Generally, instructors clearly state essential course requirements and the course attendance policy on their syllabi. Instructors are neither expected to compromise the essential course requirements nor to fundamentally alter the course regardless of the student's medical condition. If students need clarification or further information about essential course requirements or attendance policies, they should contact their instructor immediately.

ARS can verify the student has a disability which may impact attendance or the ability to meet
deadlines and where this is known in advance will do so via the Instructor Notification emails. Please know that ARS will not include absence information in the instructor notification email unless the documentation warrants it.

If needed, students are responsible for requesting an additional absence or a deadline extension from instructors. This verification is intended to provide confirmation of a demonstrated need as instructors determine whether the requested absence or deadline extension compromises the course requirements. When attendance or deadlines are not essential to course requirements, please make reasonable considerations. If absences or deadline extensions are believed to affect course integrity, instructors should consult with ARS to determine what course-specific accommodations may be applicable.

To help in your consideration of a student's request for absence considerations

- Is there classroom interaction between the instructor and students and among the students themselves?
- Do student contributions in class constitute a significant component of the learning process?
- Does the fundamental nature of the course rely upon student participation as an essential method of learning?
- To what degree does a student’s failure to attend class constitute a significant loss of the educational experience of other students in the class?
- What does the course description and syllabus say regarding attendance?
- What is the method by which the final course grade is calculated?

Course Design

Although instructors should not compromise academic standards, they are asked whenever possible to design courses that include multiple, flexible options to allow all students to participate. The Center for Faculty Excellence can assist instructors seeking ways to minimize course disruption when students miss classes through the use of technological solutions such as learning management systems, online conferencing tools, discussion boards, blogs, etc.

Making Up Work

In most cases, when a medical / disability related absence occurs, instructors have agreed to reasonably alternative but equivalent ways for students to successfully meet essential course requirements without compromising course standards. This is usually best accomplished by the student, instructor and ARS working together as a team. Some methods that may be used and considered include:-

- Assigning comparable make-up work.
- Altering timelines for coursework and tests.
- Allowing students to attend repeat lectures given at other course sections.
Giving students permission, when possible, to enroll in cable, Internet or video sections of the course.

Giving students an incomplete grade to allow an opportunity to fulfill course requirements through independent study or by attending class lectures the following semester.

Allowing students to withdraw from the class so they can repeat the class during another semester when their medical condition has stabilized.

Requests must be timely and reasonable. Instructors need to be informed with enough time to provide the adjustment.

ARS staff are available to consult with instructors and students about possible adjustments; however ultimately, the instructor of the course determines which, if any may be used.

Students Should

- Register with ARS by providing current documentation regarding their medical condition / disability. Students should ask medical providers to include information about class attendance in the documentation.
- Register for courses as early as possible. We strongly advise students to meet with instructors to investigate attendance policies and course requirements as they choose their courses.
- Plan for individualized needs when choosing courses and sections. For example, scheduling classes at a certain time of day, scheduling breaks between classes etc.
- Issue notification emails to their instructors.
- Carefully review the syllabus for each course to learn the essential course requirements and the attendance policy for the course. Then, students are advised to schedule an appointment with each instructor to discuss and clarify their attendance policy in regard to meeting the essential course requirements.
- Students are advised to take an active part in working with the instructor to identify adjustments that are equitable and maintain course standards. ARS is available to assist students and instructors as needed.

When absent due to the medical condition / disability, students should

- Stay in contact with their medical provider to discuss treatment and recommendations.
- Cooperate and follow through with all medical treatment to allow for optimum functioning.
- When able, contact instructors to inform them of the absence and their expected date of return to class.
- If not able to contact instructors, students or designated individuals should Contact ARS [1] and we will contact instructors on the student's behalf.
- At the first opportunity, contact the instructor to discuss the possibility of making up the missed work.

Notes

- ARS will not include absence information in the instructor notification email unless the
documentation warrants it.

- Students should not assume that their absence will be excused just because they are registered with ARS. Students must follow ARS procedures and issue the notification email each semester to those instructors they wish to have informed and follow-up by discussing this accommodation in detail with each instructor.
- Unless authorized by the instructor through advance negotiation, students are responsible for adhering to all scheduled deadlines for class assignments and tests.
- Any absence not due to the documented medical condition / disability is excluded from the above procedures.

Source URL: https://ars.unc.edu/accommodations/flexibility-about-class-attendance

Links
[1] https://ars.unc.edu/about-ars/contact-us