

## ADJUSTED ATTENDANCE AND ASSIGNMENT ACCOMMODATION

*Both the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 are federal laws that require colleges and universities to consider reasonable adjustment of attendance policies if required to accommodate a student's disability. In making this determination, two questions must be answered:*

- 1. Does the student have a documented disability that may impact class attendance?*
- 2. Is attendance or in class participation an essential element of the course?*

### WHEN ARE ADJUSTMENTS IN ATTENDANCE AND ASSIGNMENTS AUTHORIZED AS AN ACCOMMODATION?

Some students may experience absence from class due to a temporary or permanent medical condition. Occasionally, based upon either the medical documentation or the nature of the disability, it may be known before the semester begins that one or more absence could occur. Other times, students could experience unexpected hospital or outpatient treatment, illness, pain, fatigue, severe anxiety, etc. Students most likely to request adjusted attendance policies as an accommodation are those with serious health or mental health-related disabilities that flare up episodically. This includes, but is not limited to, students with autoimmune disorders such as lupus, multiple sclerosis, or rheumatoid arthritis; Celiac disease, Crohn's disease or ulcerative colitis; sickle cell anemia; seizure disorders; other forms of arthritis; and/or conditions requiring debilitating treatment such as cancer/chemotherapy or dialysis.

The attendance accommodation is in place to support the occasional absence for incapacitating disability symptoms, and is an accommodation that is used infrequently. This accommodation is considered on a case by case basis and is considered an occasional exception and adjustment to policies and procedures when educationally feasible. For more information on Santa Rosa Junior College policy regarding accommodations for students with disabilities, [policy 8.1.1P](#) provides additional details.

### WHEN IS AN ADJUSTED ATTENDANCE POLICY NOT REASONABLE?

To be considered reasonable, an accommodation must be an appropriate response to the disability related need without compromising academic standards. Careful consideration must be given to students being able to meet academic standards through a different modality or method. Courses that involve significant in class participation as an essential method of learning, or in which student learning is directly assessed in person, may limit what adjustment options are available. Examples include:

- Classes that rely on group, project based learning.
- Lab courses that involve hands on learning with course material.
- Studio art classes in which faculty provide ongoing feedback as work progresses.
- Clinical practicum classes.

Extended and /or excessive absences that will limit workable adjustment options may not be reasonable. Accommodations are not considered reasonable if they create an [administrative burden](#) to the college.

*Here are some helpful questions to determine if attendance is an essential part of a course:*

- *What does the course description (Course Outline of Record) and syllabus say regarding attendance, making up missed tests, and/or accepting late work?*
- *What elements of the class experience are used to calculate the final grade?*
- *What is extent of the classroom interaction between the instructor and students, and between students enrolled in the course?*
- *Does the fundamental nature of the course rely upon student in class participation as an essential method for learning?*
- *To what degree does the student's failure to attend class constitute a significant loss of educational experience for other students in the class?*

In making determinations regarding if an attendance accommodation is reasonable, instructors can consider the following:

- What potential barriers exist relative to the design of the course and the nature of the specific disability limitations?
- Does the fundamental nature of the class rely upon student participation as an essential method of learning?
- What are the attendance and deadlines requirements as listed in the COR and syllabus?
- How is the final grade calculated?
- Is the assignment [deadline](#) integral to the progression of the work in the class?
- Does the fundamental nature of the course rely upon the deadline being met?
- How and when will the student need to tell the instructor if they have to miss class or an assignment/test?
- What is a reasonable number of absences for the class in light of the COR learning outcomes?
- If an assignment is missed due to a medical flare up, it is reasonable to be made up? If so, how and by when?

## THE PROCESS OF IMPLEMENTING AN ADJUSTED ATTENDANCE AND ASSIGNMENT ACCOMMODATION

### **Responsibilities of the Disability Resources Department:**

1. Through the interactive process, determines eligibility for and authorizes accommodation if the student has a disability that may impact attendance.
2. Informs and consults with the class instructor regarding adjustments to attendance policy for the class. Examines both Course Outline of Record and course syllabus.
3. Consults with colleagues.
4. Mediates accommodation concerns on the behalf of both the student and the instructor.

5. In most cases (sans temporary attendance accommodations), creates a written agreement that represents the agreed upon accommodation. The written agreement should include:
  - The agreement regarding attendance and participation.
  - The agreement regarding tests, quizzes and assignments.
  - The agreement regarding the expected communication between student and instructor should the accommodation be needed due to a medical episode.

**Responsibilities of the student:**

1. Speaks with a Disability Specialist at the earliest point possible to assure appropriate accommodations are in place.
2. Carefully reviews the syllabus for each course and becomes aware of the requirements, including those regarding attendance, making up missed work, and submitting late work.
3. Notifies the instructor of eligibility for Adjusted Attendance and Assignments accommodation.
4. Works with the Disability Specialist and the instructor to create an agreement that will assure student learning outcomes can be met.
5. Notifies instructors promptly when medical episodes occur, and when accommodation will be needed.
6. Follows the parameters noted in the written agreement to arrange to make up missed work.

**Responsibilities of the Instructor:**

1. Works collaboratively with the Disability Specialist and student to consider adjustments to a class attendance policy to assure that adjustments would not constitute a fundamental alteration to the course design or essential components.
2. Discusses the written agreement with the student.
3. Implements the agreed upon parameters when notified of the occurrence of a medical episode.

Regardless of the modification of the attendance policy, the student is required to meet all of the academic course requirements and to complete all assignments and examinations. It is the student's responsibility to obtain the material and notes from missed classes. The student will be graded according to the criteria stated in the class syllabus. If a student is not doing well in the class due to extended absences, the student is urged to consider options such as dropping the class, withdrawing from the class or taking an incomplete. It is important for the student not to abuse the modification of the attendance policy. Modification of the attendance policy does not mean that unlimited absences will be permitted. The number of absences permitted will be determined on a case-by-case basis. Absences for non-disability related reasons will not be excused by the modification.

We look forward to working collaboratively to support overall success for students. For additional information and/or support, please contact the Disability Resources Department and request a conversation with a Disability Specialist at our [Santa Rosa, or Petaluma Office](#).