



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**TENNESSEE**  
KNOXVILLE

## **Limited Adjustment to the Attendance Policy**

Generally, attendance is a critical component to master the objectives of a specific course. Students at the University of Tennessee are expected to attend all of their scheduled classes in accordance with the attendance policy established by the instructor for each course.

However, some students have health-related disabilities that may impact attendance. Some of these disabilities include, but are not limited to, gastrointestinal diseases, seizure disorders, diabetes, mental health conditions with acute symptoms, autoimmune disorders, and conditions requiring specialized treatments. In such cases, Student Disability Services (SDS) may approve an accommodation for Limited Adjustment to the Attendance Policy (LAAP), which will appear on the student's Faculty Accommodation Letter. This means SDS has deemed that the student's disability may lead to absences, and instructors should consider reasonable modifications to the attendance policy. The LAAP accommodation does not permit unlimited absences, and students remain accountable for all academic activities (i.e., assignments, assessments, required readings, etc.) and evaluation standards specified in the syllabus. The number of allowed absences will be determined on an individualized, case-by-case, course-by-course basis.

The LAAP accommodation is determined based on a review of appropriate documentation from a qualified medical or mental health professional and through an interactive process with the student. While this accommodation verifies a demonstrated need, instructors are encouraged to contact SDS to discuss how many absences may be appropriate in their particular course. This determination is made collectively with each instructor, as SDS does not excuse absences irrespective of course requirements. It is not reasonable for the university or individual instructors to fundamentally alter, waive, or lower essential course requirements, academic standards, or educational experiences when attempting to accommodate absences.

Student Disability Services  
915 Volunteer Blvd/100 Dunford Hall, Knoxville, TN 37996-4020  
865-974-6087 (p) 865-974-9552 (f) 865-622-6566 (vp)  
sds.utk.edu

## Determining Essential Course Requirements

When absences are believed to affect course integrity, instructors should consult with SDS to determine what adjustments may be applicable. Generally, adjustments are more limited for courses that involve substantial in-class participation, or whose content mastery is reliant on attendance. Examples of these courses include labs, internships, foreign language courses, and public speaking courses. The Department Head or other academic administrators may provide additional guidance in determining essential course requirements.

**The Office for Civil Rights (OCR) has provided the following general guidance for determining if an accommodation request constitutes a fundamental alteration.**

In coordination with the disability services office, such a decision should be made through a meaningful, informed, interactive, and collaborative process on a case-by-case basis:

- by a group of people who are trained, knowledgeable, and experienced in the area;
- after consideration of a series of alternatives as essential requirements;
- with a careful, thoughtful, and rational review of the academic program and its requirements; and
- in consideration of a specific student.

**OCR has also provided the following questions to help determine where it may be reasonable to allow a LAAP:**

- What does the course description and syllabus say regarding attendance?
- To what extent 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 elements of the course are used to calculate the final course grade, and how is attendance calculated in the final grade?

### **Options to Consider**

Instructors can often find reasonable and equitable options for students without compromising course requirements. Some options to consider as reasonable adjustments for an absence include but are not limited to:

- Reasonable extension of a due date for an assignment or test that occurred during the absence
- No deduction of attendance points or lowering of letter grade for the sole reason of an absence
- Allowing the student to attend a repeat lecture or lab in another section of the course
- Reviewing missed materials with the student during office hours, if feasible

### **Student Process**

- Students must request the Faculty Accommodation Letter notifying their instructor of their eligibility for the LAAP.
- Students must notify their instructor and SDS as soon as possible if they must miss a class due to their disability.
- Students must contact SDS if they are approaching the number of absences allowed without penalty by the instructor. Through consultation with the instructor and discussion with the student, an adjustment to the attendance policy will be determined.

### **Instructor Process**

- Upon receipt of a Faculty Accommodation Letter indicating this accommodation, instructors may contact SDS for guidance on their particular course.
- Instructors may determine in advance how many absences will be permitted beyond the scope of the course attendance policy. In this case, instructors must notify SDS and, after review, SDS will communicate the information to the student. The student may discuss any concerns with SDS.
- Alternatively, instructors may provide this accommodation as each absence occurs. Instructors must contact SDS if they feel the number of absences begins to affect the student's ability to meet the learning objectives of the course.

*Please note that this accommodation is not intended to be retroactive. Further, it does not apply to seasonal illnesses (.i.e. colds, flu, etc.), temporary impairments, health conditions not on record with SDS, or other non-disability related absences. Students experiencing these attendance concerns may contact the Dean of Students office for guidance. Students may also complete an [absence notification form](#) with the Dean of Students Office.*