

Guide to Assessing Requests for SDS Accommodations for Deadline Extensions and Attendance Policy Modifications¹

Some students with disabling conditions experience unpredictable acute episodes that may require them to miss a class or deadline. Cornell Student Disability Services (SDS) verifies whether a student has such a disability, thus making them eligible for reasonable accommodations in the form of deadline extensions and/or modifications to course attendance policies to ensure equitable access to their courses.

SDS may find that a student is eligible for one or both types of accommodation, depending on the nature, severity, and chronicity of the condition. A SDS notification letter to an instructor serves as sufficient documentation of a student's eligibility. However, as the pedagogical expert, it is the faculty's role to determine what, if any, SDS accommodation would be reasonable in the context of their course, considering course structure/format (e.g., course meeting pattern), course learning objectives, and the nature of the class and/or assignment at issue.

Once a faculty member determines what would be a reasonable accommodation for an individual student, the faculty should apply this same finding to all students in the course who SDS has determined are eligible for these accommodations, not just the individual student.

Deadline Extensions

As a rule of thumb, it is reasonable to afford: **(1) an extension of one to two days, (2) for up to two assignments, and (3) limited to work the student completes on their own, not group work.** SDS deadline extensions should not be granted for timed, scheduled exams. But please note, this is informal guidance. Whether, and to what extent, an instructor can extend a deadline while maintaining essential course expectations may vary across courses and assignments. Faculty should use this rubric to determine what is reasonable for a specific course or assignment.

Course Analysis	Yes	No	Analyze Results
Would missing the deadline result in the student being unprepared for any class sessions?			If you answered primarily "Yes," deadline extensions would not be reasonable.
Would missing the deadline result in the student being unprepared for any subsequent assignments?			
Would the extension impact the learning experience for the student and/or classmates (e.g., team projects, class participation)?			
Is meeting the deadline itself a learning objective (e.g., drafting documents that customarily have strict deadlines)?			If you answered primarily "No," deadline extensions would be reasonable. ²
Would an additional one- or two-day extension affect your ability to grade the student consistently with other students?			

² Reasonableness may vary from assignment to assignment based upon whether you answered "Yes" or "No" for that assignment.

If you would like further assistance determining whether and/or to what extent any deadline extension would be reasonable, or if you have any questions or concerns, do not hesitate to contact SDS at sds_cu@cornell.edu or (607) 254-4545.

¹ This guide is based on a guide from the University of Chicago; text is adopted with their permission.

Attendance Policy Modifications

If you do not have an attendance requirement, students should be able to miss class without seeking permission based upon their disability.

When a student is absent due to their disability, they are responsible for the missed course material and for arranging how they will obtain this material (e.g., class notes).

As a rule of thumb, it is **reasonable to expect that a student's disability would prevent them from attending one or two classes**. But please note, this is informal guidance. It is for the instructor to determine whether, and to what extent, they can modify their attendance policy while maintaining essential course expectations. Use this rubric to make this assessment for both your course overall and for specific classes.

Course Analysis	In what proportion of your class meetings is each course analysis statement true					Analyze Results
	All	Most	Some	A few	N/A	
There is significant interaction between you and students during class (e.g., discussion, problem solving, or other types of regular interactions).						If you answered primarily "Some," "A few," or "N/A," allowing disability-related absences is a reasonable accommodation. However, you may designate specific class meetings in which attendance is essential and, therefore, an absence would not be reasonable. If you answered primarily "Most," or "All," absence from class may not be reasonable or must be minimal. Consider if the student could participate or make up for missed experiences in an alternate manner, unless the class experiences cannot be replicated sufficiently.
There is significant classroom interaction among the students (e.g., peer review, teamwork, group discussion).						
A fundamental learning objective relies on active student participation during class (e.g., lab experiments, performance work, language learning, clinical placements).						
An absence would result in a significant loss of the educational experience for the student and/or classmates (e.g., group or paired projects, performance, special events or activities, learning in class cannot be replicated outside of class) and/or would disturb course instruction.						
Course content is scaffolded so that missing a particular class (or classes) would jeopardize a student's ability to progress in the course.						

If you would like further assistance determining whether and/or to what extent disability-related absences would be reasonable, or if you have any questions or concerns, do not hesitate to contact SDS at sds_cu@cornell.edu or (607) 254-4545.