

Disability Services Resource Guide: Modified Attendance

This guide provides an overview of Frequently Asked Questions, guiding principles, templates, and examples for students and faculty regarding accommodations for extensions on assignments. Please reach out to The Chicago School Office of Disability Services at accommodations@thechicagoschool.edu if you have any questions or need any additional support.

FAQs for STUDENTS:

- **When do I need to tell professors that I have accommodations?**

- You must give your professors reasonable notice that you have accommodations so they have time to plan. We recommend that you send your accommodations letter to each of your professors at the start of each class. If you do not send your professor your accommodation letter in advance, then you technically don't have accommodations set up for the course. Once you provide the letter to your instructors, the accommodations must be honored from that point onward. Even if you've had that professor for a previous class, each class is different and it's important that you communicate to them that you have accommodations so that you can both plan for implementing the accommodations when needed.

- **Sample first contact email template:**

Dear Professor [NAME],

My name is [NAME] and I am a student in [COURSE]. I am writing to provide you with my confirmation of accommodations letter that outlines my approved accommodations for your course. I am hoping to speak with you to discuss implementing my accommodations this semester. Per the attached letter, I have accommodations for [LIST ACCOMMODATIONS].

Could we please meet to discuss a plan for the semester? I cannot always predict the need to miss class in advance and would appreciate the opportunity to meet and discuss an agreed-upon protocol for communicating when I need to use my approved accommodations. [ASK FOR ANY ADDITIONAL SPECIFIC INFORMATION NEEDED TO ACCESS YOUR ACCOMMODATIONS]

Please let me know when you're available to meet. I look forward to working together to facilitate these accommodations. If you have any questions, you can contact the Office of Disability Services at accommodations@thechicagoschool.edu.

Best,
[SIGNATURE]

- **How many classes can I miss using this accommodation?**

- The modified attendance accommodation is not designed to support a substantial number of missed classes or lengthy delays in completing course requirements for reasons beyond brief, periodic flare-ups. If you miss enough classes that your instructors cannot assess your participation or mastery of the material, you may be required to retake the course. Please meet with your instructors at the start of each semester to discuss their expectations for in-class participation and communication when using the accommodations (as a reminder, you do not need to share information about your disability or reason for the accommodations with your instructors).
- **Can I use my modified attendance accommodation when I have the flu, have doctor's appointments or when I can't attend class for reasons unrelated to my disability?**
 - No. ADA accommodations only apply to absences when you are unable to attend class due to brief, periodic flare-ups of symptoms related to your disability. The expectation is for students to schedule appointments at times when they are not in class whenever possible. Scheduling conflicts unrelated to a student's disability are never covered by the modified attendance accommodation; if you miss class for reasons unrelated to your disability, that absence will count according to the class's standard absence policy.
- **How far in advance do I have to let my instructors know that I will miss class for medical reasons?**
 - Please communicate with your professors as soon as you're aware that you need to miss class, or as soon after a medical incident as possible. We don't specify a timeframe since the reasons for needing one can vary and we understand that you may not be able to make the request in advance depending on the situation. However, absences do not automatically count under your modified attendance accommodation, and you must communicate with your instructors. Accommodations are not retroactive, so don't forget to tell your professors that you have accommodations at the start of the semester before you need to use them.
- **Do I have to tell my instructors about the medical circumstances surrounding my absence?**
 - No, you do not have to provide details of your medical condition when using your accommodations. In fact, providing too much detail can sometimes make an email unclear and detract from your request to use your accommodations. When notifying your instructor of the need to miss class, clearly state that you will be missing class for medical reasons, and ask what in-class work can be made up and how.

- **Sample modified attendance absence email template:**

Dear Professor [NAME],

I'm reaching out to inform you that I am experiencing an exacerbation of my disability and will be unable to attend class on [DATE]. Would it be possible for me to make up any in-class assignments from that day? Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns.

Best,

[SIGNATURE]

- **Will I be allowed to make up all in-class assignments, tests, and quizzes for days I use my modified attendance accommodations?**
 - When you notify your instructor that you need to miss class for medical reasons, ask about specific tests, quizzes, or in-class assignments for that day. Some in-class assignments may be structured in a way that they cannot be made up (such as role-playing activities or group work), but we encourage instructors to offer alternative assignments that allow you to demonstrate mastery of the material when possible. Please note that it is your responsibility to catch up on the material that was covered in the class you missed, so you may want to identify classmates who can share notes and plan to attend office hours. Please work with your instructors to reschedule tests or quizzes that you miss for medical reasons.
- **What if I miss an exam that cannot be rescheduled but is essential to pass the class?**
 - If the exam cannot be rescheduled due to the nature of the exam (e.g. if it is administered by an external company or faculty have to travel to administer the exam) you may have to retake the course. In these cases, the Office of Disability Services can help you work with your academic department to determine what the options are. If you're unable to complete the course requirements due to a medical emergency, you may also be able to work with your Student Support Counselor to petition for [policy exception](#) to mitigate the academic and financial impact of retaking the course.
- **What do I do if a professor denies a request to make up a missed in-class assignment?**
 - Certain in-class assignments cannot be completed made up, as in cases when group work is essential to the learning outcomes or an extension makes it so that you can't complete a following assignment. If you believe that you've been unfairly denied an opportunity to make up missed in-class work, start by asking the instructor directly why the request was denied. If you are unable to resolve the situation by communicating directly with your professor, reach out to the Disability Services Office at accommodations@thechicagoschool.edu and we can help follow up.
- **How can I make the most of my accommodation for modified attendance?**
 - **Communication is essential!** Notify your instructors in a timely manner, clearly ask about opportunities for make-up work, and confirm the instructor's expectations if anything is unclear.
 - **Plan ahead** by meeting with your instructors at the start of each semester to discuss how to use your accommodations in their course. Every course and every instructor is different and discussing it in advance can really help clarify expectations and anticipate needs. We also encourage you to identify classmates in advance who can share their notes with you if you miss a day. It is your responsibility to get notes for missed classes, so knowing who you'll ask in advance will make it easier if you do need to miss class.
 - **Guiding principles when using your modified attendance accommodations:**
 - **Be clear, concise, and avoid emotionally loaded communication.** You do not have to apologize for a disability or the need for accommodations, nor do you have to justify your request beyond confirming that it's related to your medical accommodations.

- **Do not provide unnecessary medical details.** You do not have to disclose personal health information to your instructors to access your accommodations, and this information can detract from your request.
- **Respond in a timely manner and follow up as needed.** Set reminders on your calendar or schedule periodic check-ins with your instructors as needed to make sure you're an active participant in the accommodations process.

FAQs for FACULTY:

- **Can I ask students for a doctor's note or documentation that their absence is disability related?**
 - No, faculty should not request medical documentation or ask for details of the medical reason for the student's absence when they are using their accommodations for modified attendance. If they are approved for accommodations for modified attendance, it is because the Office of Disability Services has reviewed their medical information and determined that this is the best accommodation to increase access for them. If a student sends you a doctor's note, please do not open it and delete it from your inbox. Please refer students who have any concerns about their accommodations to the Office of Disability Services at accommodations@thechicagoschool.edu.
- **Am I required to allow students who miss class for medical reasons to make up all in-class assignments?**
 - Some in-class assignments may be structured in a way that they cannot be made up (such as role-playing activities or group work), but we encourage you to offer alternative assignments that allow the student to demonstrate mastery of the material when possible. When determining whether a student who has used their modified attendance accommodation can make up missed in-class work, consider what the assignment is intended to assess. Is group work or live interaction essential to assessing the student? Or is there an alternate assignment that the student could complete to meet the learning objectives?
- **What should I do if students does not communicate that they are using their modified attendance accommodations for an absence?**
 - The expectation is for students to communicate with their instructors when an absence is disability related. However, it is not unusual for students to reach out to instructors at the last minute if a sudden flare up/medical emergency happens, so we encourage you to be patient with students notifying you. If a student does not communicate that they missed class for reasons related to their disability, then the absence may be counted per the class's standard attendance policy. If you deduct points for unaccommodated absences, clearly explain to the student why and what the impact will be on their grade.
- **How many classes can a student miss using this accommodation?**
 - The modified attendance accommodation is not designed to support a substantial number of missed classes or lengthy delays in completing course requirements for reasons beyond brief, periodic flare-ups. Because each course and each student's

situation are different, we do not set a specific number of days. Please meet with students at the start of the term to discuss your expectations for in-class participation and attendance, and how best they can communicate about using their modified attendance accommodations. We encourage you to review your course syllabi in advance and determine how much class a student could miss before it impacts your ability to assess the student's learning. If you are unsure, please consult with your Department Chair. If you are concerned that a student is missing too much class to be able to reasonably assess their mastery of the learning outcomes, please consult with your Department Chair to determine next steps. Working with the Department Chair, the Office of Disability Services can provide support around communicating with the student and determining next steps for their registration.

- **How can professors support students with accommodations for modified attendance?**
 - **Be compassionate and patient.** It can be difficult for students to ask for accommodation, and many have encountered disability stigma and ableism in previous educational experiences that may make them anxious to ask for what they need.
 - **Set clear deadlines** when communicating with students about make up work. Explain why you approved or denied the request. If you don't explain why, it can feel arbitrary to the student.
 - In advance of the semester, **go through the course syllabus and identify whether make up work or alternative assignments would be feasible for each assignment.** You do not need to provide this review of the full syllabus to students, but planning ahead will help you be prepared to respond to inquiries before they arise.
 - When students provide their accommodations letters, **meet with them to discuss your expectations for communication** regarding using their accommodations. This can be a good opportunity to remind students that they must let you know when they are using their accommodations.
 - Work with students to request [incomplete grades](#) when they experience medical emergencies or request disability-related extensions at the end of the semester.
 - **Guiding questions to ask before denying an accommodation:**
 - What is the rationale for denying the request? Don't forget to share this with the student.
 - Is there a reasonable compromise between what the student proposed and denying the request completely?
 - Is there an alternative accommodation that could help promote access for the student?