

Alternate Attendance Accommodation

What is the purpose of this accommodation?

The purpose of this accommodation is to provide, when reasonable and appropriate, a student with a documented diagnosis/disability additional excused absences (above the number of excused absences provided for by each of the students' instructors in the relevant instructors' syllabi) in the event the student's diagnosis/disability (or disability-related symptom) results in the student being unable to attend class/clinical/field placement on any given day. A student may utilize the absences provided for by this accommodation **only** when the student has a medical need to do so due to the student's documented disability (or symptom of the documented disability).

Class attendance is a student responsibility; students are expected to attend class and follow the course attendance policy. However, some students with diagnoses/disabilities may need an accommodation due to their medical need to be absent from class in a manner that could conflict with an instructor's attendance and/or class participation policies.

This accommodation is authorized only extremely rarely and only when a student has a documented functional need. This accommodation is authorized on an individual, case-by-case basis.

To achieve clarity for the student and the student's instructors, it is important for the Office of Accessibility Services (OAS), the student, and the instructor to discuss the parameters and expectations of this accommodation once it is authorized for the student. Faculty will receive an *alternate attendance worksheet* which will enable them to provide OAS with an alteration to the attendance policy that does not fundamentally alter the course.

A student's absences taken under the student's authorized Alternate Attendance accommodation shall be considered excused absences and shall not impact on the student's grade for absences and/or participation in any course.

How do students apply for the Alternate Attendance accommodation?

A student seeking the accommodation of having additional excused absences (above the number of excused absences designated by their instructor(s) in the instructors' syllabi) based upon their documented disability should [submit a request for this accommodation](#) to the OAS immediately upon registering for their classes each semester or as soon as is reasonably possible thereafter.

When during the semester may a student request this accommodation?

A student may request this accommodation through the OAS at any time during the semester. Note: since **accommodations are applied on a prospective basis, and students are not entitled to have accommodations applied on a retroactive basis**, students needing this accommodation should apply for this accommodation as soon as they register for their classes each semester or as soon as is reasonably possible thereafter.

How does the OAS evaluate a student's request for the Alternate Attendance accommodation?

1. Upon receipt of a student request for the Alternate Attendance accommodation, the OAS reviews all relevant supporting documentation and information the student has provided to the OAS to confirm there exists a clear link between the student's functional limitations and the student's stated need for the Alternate Attendance accommodation.
2. Once a clear link is established, the OAS contacts each of the student's instructors (as designated by the student) to address with each instructor how the student's accommodation request can be reasonably and appropriately applied to that instructor's course, if at all. As part of this analysis, each instructor will be responsible for determining how many absences is allowable for their respective course (above and beyond the number of excused absences provided for in the instructor's syllabus for the general class body) before the course would be fundamentally altered.

A student is approved for the Alternate Attendance accommodation. Now what?

1. The OAS e-mails to the student an Academic Accommodation Authorization document by secure e-mail that confirms the student's eligibility to utilize the Alternate Attendance accommodation.
 - A. The Academic Accommodation Authorization document will state **Alternate Attendance** as **pending** until OAS has communicated with faculty and received back a completed *alternate attendance worksheet* from faculty.
 - B. Once the *alternate attendance worksheet* is completed between OAS and the faculty, the student will receive a copy of the alternate attendance for each course.
2. The student delivers their Academic Accommodation Authorization document to each of their instructors, as applicable. Students are advised to have a conversation with their instructor(s) about how the accommodation will be implemented in the course. In advance of use, students should confirm the plan for communicating (email optimal) with their instructor for if/when they may need to utilize the alternate attendance accommodation pursuant to their approved accommodation. Students are not required to present instructors with evidence or justifications regarding their need for an approved accommodation.
3. If/when the student needs to utilize an alternate attendance accommodation due to a medical need relating to the student's documented disability (or symptom of the documented disability), the student shall communicate with the relevant instructor as soon as reasonably possible after the need arises that the student will be using the alternate

attendance accommodation. OAS recommends use of email as the primary communication tool. The student must “cc” the OAS on this e-mail at access@simmons.edu. Note: In some instances, “as soon as reasonably possible” means the student may email the instructor after the absence has taken place, based upon the circumstances relating to the need for the absence (such as, the student was seen in the Emergency Department on the day of the missed class).

IMPORTANT NOTES:

The student is not entitled to simply be absent the maximum number of days listed in the Academic Accommodation Authorization document- the student shall only use an absence provided for by the accommodation when taking the absence is necessary due to student’s medical need (relating to the student’s documented disability or symptom of the disability).

Remember: Simmons students are bound by the Student Code of Conduct, including that portion relating to academic integrity. It is the expectation of the University and the OAS that students will attend class and follow the course attendance policy in accord with their approved accommodation.

Examples

Example 1: *Jordan has Chron’s disease, which can flare-up and cause Jordan to be unable to attend class. Jordan was authorized to have the Alternate Attendance accommodation prior to the start of the semester. According to Jordan’s Alternate Attendance worksheet, he can be absent from their psychology course up to a maximum of four days above the two excused absences provided for in the course syllabus. Jordan has a flare-up of their Chron’s disease on the same day Jordan has psychology class. Jordan e-mails their instructor to advise that they are going to utilize an absence pursuant to the accommodation. As of the day Jordan e-mailed their professor, Jordan had already utilized the two excused absences provided for in the syllabus- neither absence was taken for a reason related to their disability. Jordan’s instructor must treat the third absence as an excused absence.*

Example 2: *Chase has migraine headaches, which can cause Chase to be unable to attend class. Chase was authorized to have the Alternate Attendance accommodation prior to the start of the semester. According to Chase’s Alternate Attendance worksheet, she can be absent from her math course up to a maximum of two days above the one excused absence provided for in the course syllabus. Chase develops a migraine headache on the same day she has math class. Chase e-mails her instructor to advise that she is going to utilize an absence pursuant to the accommodation. As of the day Chase emails her professor, Chase had already absent from class on three occasions- once to take her mother to the doctor and two times due to migraine headaches. Since Chase has already utilized the one excused absence provided for in the syllabus, as well as the two absences provided for this course in her Alternate Attendance worksheet, Chase’s instructor is entitled to penalize Chase for this absence.*

Example 3: Len has a disability that involves seizures, which can cause Len to be unable to attend class. Len was authorized to have the Alternate Attendance accommodation prior to the start of the semester. According to Len's Alternate Attendance worksheet, he can be absent from his social work course up to a maximum of three days above the one excused absence provided for in the course syllabus. The day of Len's social work class, Len has a seizure. Based upon the severity of the seizure, Len is unable to e-mail his instructor that he will be utilizing an absence under the accommodation until the day after the class session he missed. Len has already been absent from class two times. Despite Len providing notice of his absence to his instructor after the class date, Len's instructor must treat the absence as an excused absence under the accommodation.

Tips for Students

- If the student experiences a change in their disability status (e.g., worsening of disability-related symptoms, acute episode of their disability, hospitalization related to their disability, etc.) which impacts their ability to attend class outside of their approved accommodation, the student should contact the OAS and their instructor immediately to request additional excused absences. The OAS will respond to the student in a timely fashion and may provide an interim plan for accommodation. However, in certain circumstances, the OAS may need to request further information from the student at that time and reserves the right to require further documentation in certain instances before granting an additional accommodation, particularly if the student has newly presented needs that are outside the scope of documentation previously submitted to the OAS. Note: the University reserves the right to deny an accommodation request if it fundamentally alters the course in question and/or creates an undue burden for the University.
- Students should complete all coursework. Alternate attendance does not mean that the student will receive an automatic extension to complete work due on the day of the student absence.
- If the student has any concerns about how the accommodation is being or will be implemented in a specific course or by a specific professor, they should contact the OAS as soon as possible.

Tips for Faculty

- Instructors who are concerned with a student's ability to be present for class sessions in accordance with the attendance requirements established by their Alternate Attendance worksheet are encouraged to discuss these concerns directly with the OAS as early as possible.
- Instructors are encouraged to include the number of excused absences permitted for the course (for the entire class body) in their syllabi in order for students to fully assess and plan for their attendance in the course.

- In determining what level of attendance is an essential requirement for the course/clinical/field placement, instructors should consider how many absences would be acceptable for the course before the course would become fundamentally altered. The following questions are helpful in determining what number of absences would fundamentally alter the course:
 - a. Is there classroom interaction between the instructor and students and among students?
 - b. Do student contributions in class constitute a significant component of the learning process?
 - c. Does the fundamental nature of the course rely on student participation as an essential method for learning?
 - d. To what degree does a student's failure to attend constitute a significant loss to the educational experience of other students in the class?
 - e. What do the course description and syllabus say?
 - f. What method is used to calculate the final grade?
 - g. What are the clinical/field placement/classroom practices and policies regarding attendance?

- Instructors may contact the OAS at any time if they have any questions or concerns.

Important Note

The University reserves the right to deny an accommodation request if it fundamentally alters the course in question and/or creates an undue burden for the University.