Occidental College Exception to Attendance Policy
Disability Services
Dean of Students Office

1. It is understood that class attendance is critical to students’ mastery of the knowledge and skills that are taught in a specific course. Students are expected to follow the attendance policy established by the instructor in each class. However, when a student has a chronic condition with unpredictable or cyclical acute episodes, modifications to attendance policies may be appropriate as an accommodation. If a student believes it may not be possible to abide by the attendance policy because of medical issues related to a disability, the student must contact Disability Services at the start of the semester, or as soon as possible after the need for an exception arises, to discuss the matter of a possible accommodation.

2. Determination of eligibility for a disability-related exception to the attendance policy is made on a case-by-case basis, through consultation with the instructor of the course and the staff of Disability Services. If necessary, the department chair or other appropriate administrator may also be included in the discussion. In every case, the proper relevant written documentation from an appropriate professional must be submitted to DS before an accommodation request can be considered. For additional information regarding documentation guidelines, please refer to Occidental College’s Disability Services webpage.

Essential Course Requirements

Occidental College makes every effort to reasonably accommodate students' disability-related academic needs. However, academic requirements are not generally waived if doing so would fundamentally alter the objectives of the course. Faculty members are responsible for identifying and defining essential or fundamental academic requirements for their courses and instructors may establish an acceptable number of excused absences in light of these essential requirements. General attendance requirements for each course may be stated on the course syllabus. If there is no stated attendance policy, the student should abide by the Exception to Attendance Policy as outlined by the instructor.

3. The following questions developed by the Office of Civil Rights need to be considered when determining the extent to which attendance is an essential requirement of a course, and whether an exception to the attendance policy may be appropriate:

- What is the stated attendance policy in the course description and syllabus?
- By what method is the final grade calculated?
- 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 on student participation as an essential method of learning?
• To what degree does a student’s failure to attend class constitute a significant loss to the educational experience of other students in the class?

4. An exception to the stated attendance policy does not mean that unlimited absences can be permitted. The number of additional absences a student may be allowed as a reasonable accommodation will be determined on a case-by-case basis for each course in consultation with the instructor, depending on the student’s individual disability, the nature of the course, and the degree to which class attendance is an essential requirement of the specific course as outlined in section 3. Attendance accommodations are not retroactive, unless an exception has been made.

5. Exception to the attendance policy does not mean exception to any of the other academic requirements of the course. Students are required to fulfill all course requirements and will be held to the same evaluation standards as specified in the course syllabus. It is the student’s responsibility to obtain the material and notes from missed classes. Absences for non-disability related reasons will not be excused by the modification.

6. Students who are approved for an exception to the attendance policy are expected to contact instructors in advance of an anticipated absence, if possible. This expectation is particularly important if the anticipated absence will result in the student missing a quiz or exam or a deadline for submitting an assignment. For emergencies or unexpected disability-related absences, students should inform instructors as soon as possible to explain their absence and to discuss make-up work, if applicable.

7. Students should be aware that although an exception to the attendance policy has been granted, absences may have a negative impact on their academic performance simply because of the content and experiential learning they may have missed by not attending class. For this reason, students should make every attempt to attend class and to observe deadlines for submission of assignments.

8. Students should be aware that exception to the attendance policy may not be possible in every course because class attendance is an essential and integral part of some courses, as discussed in section 3 of this policy. In the event that an exception is not granted, students should consult their academic advisor to discuss alternate course options.

Please contact Disability Services with questions or concerns at (323) 259-2969.
Occidental College Request for Exception to Attendance Policy Procedures

Occidental College has a specific process for requesting and documenting any exception to attendance policy for any course. Once a student has requested the accommodation and it is approved, the following form will be emailed to faculty for completion within the designated timeline: click here to access form. Disability Services staff are available to explain this process and assist with the form as needed.

This form must be completed by the professor and submitted along with the course syllabus, to Disability Services, usually at the beginning of the semester. In the case of unexpected, disability related absences, the student should begin discussing make-up assignments (including missed exams) with the instructor immediately. Students and faculty are encouraged to copy accessibility@oxy.edu when negotiating deadlines.

Once the student has received the accommodation, Disability Services will consult with the instructor for each course to help determine the degree to which absences should be excused due to a disability. The student will be contacted by Disability Services to review the number of excused absences. In some cases, it may be necessary to negotiate further with an instructor or a department head to reach a final decision on certain requests. If necessary, Disability Services will explain why the student's request could not be approved and discuss alternative solutions. The student will also be advised of appropriate procedures to appeal such a decision. In most cases, an appropriate and reasonable number of absences are determined, the form is completed and the resulting attendance plan is signed by the instructor, the student, and a Disability Services staff member. This document defines the instructor's expectations and provides a plan for the student to complete missing assignments and make-up exams.
**Student responsibilities:**

Meet with a Disability Services staff member to request an exception to attendance policy accommodation. Once approved, follow up with professors to ensure form has been received and completed.

Communicate with the instructor to coordinate make-up work, if applicable. While some flexibility in deadlines may be possible, the student should make every effort to complete all work on time as planned.

Obtain copies of lecture notes and other materials from missed classes. In some cases, materials may be acquired from the instructor. Students are strongly encouraged to work with other students in class to acquire copies of lecture notes as need.

**Additional Considerations**

Some academic programs or majors are less amenable to allowing exceptions to attendance policies than others. In some courses, exceptions are not possible at all for a variety of different reasons as noted above. There are a number of strategies students can use to avoid attendance problems in general.

- Reduced course load
- Balanced schedules
- Improved study skills

Disability Services is always happy to meet with students to discuss these strategies and others issues related to disabilities and accommodations. However, students who expect attendance to be an ongoing issue may wish to consult with an advisor in their program of study regarding the specific expectations of that program.