

Utah Tech University Policy

533: Student Accommodations and Excused Absences



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I. Purpose

- 1.1 Outline policy regarding three types of student accommodations at Utah Tech University (“the University”): schedule, content, and disability.

II. Scope

- 2.1 This policy provides guidance to all University faculty, staff, administration, and students involved in arranging accommodations for students.

III. Definitions

- 3.1 **Accommodations:** Modifications to a policy, procedure, practice, or schedule that enable students to engage in an academic activity as part of a University course or program.
- 3.2 **Content Accommodation:** An accommodation to provide an alternative to a course requirement or material that conflicts with a student’s sincerely held core beliefs.
- 3.3 **Disability Accommodation:** An accommodation for a student with a disability to be made in accordance with the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and/or the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- 3.4 **Reasonable:** Within the range of what is normally done or thought in a similar situation.
- 3.5 **Schedule Accommodation:** An accommodation granting permission to a student to be absent from class(es) and/or fulfill assignment(s) in a manner other than that which is required in the syllabus in order to

observe religious holidays, participate in University activities and events, and attend required military activities.

IV. Policy

4.1 Student Accommodations are modifications to a policy, procedure, practice, or schedule that enable students to engage in an academic activity as part of a University course or program. Reasonable requests will be considered in the form of a Schedule, Content, or Disability Accommodation.

4.1.1 An Accommodation is considered reasonable if the following conditions are met. The Accommodation:

4.1.1.1 Does not fundamentally alter the nature of the program or course.

4.1.1.2 Does not present an undue financial or administrative burden on the University.

4.1.1.3 Is within the range of what is normally done or thought in a particular instance.

4.1.1.4 Provides an adequate means of satisfying the curricular requirement.

4.1.1.5 Is fully appropriate for meeting the course objectives.

4.2 Two types of Accommodation requests may be considered for faculty based on a student's requests:

4.2.1 Schedule Accommodation requests to permit a student to be absent from class(es) and/or fulfill assignment(s) in a manner other than that which is required in the syllabus for the purpose of:

4.2.1.1 Observance of a religious holiday.

4.2.1.2 Participation in an official University event.

4.2.1.3 Attendance at a required military activity.

4.2.2 Content accommodation requests to provide an alternative to a course requirement or material that conflict with a student's sincerely held core beliefs.

4.3 An accommodation for a student with a disability to be made in accordance with the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and/or the Americans with

Disabilities Act (ADA) may be requested by a student only with written approval from the Disability Resource Center

- 4.4 All Accommodation requests must be considered in a non-discriminatory manner.
- 4.5 For the purposes of this policy, Dean's Council designates University events and activities as "official."
 - 4.5.1 Recurring events sponsored by University courses, departments, intercollegiate athletics, clubs, or organizations may be approved for multiple iterations within one academic year or over several years.
 - 4.5.2 Other events must be submitted by faculty, staff, or students to a dean for inclusion on the Dean's Council agenda.
 - 4.5.3 A current list of University activities/events approved as "official" is available through the academic deans' offices.

V. References

- 5.1 University Policy 553: Student Academic Appeals
- 5.2 University Policy 633: Faculty Rights and Responsibilities

VI. Procedures

6.1 Schedule Accommodations

- 6.1.1 Attendance at classes is an integral part of the learning process. A student who is absent from class for any reason compromises their learning opportunities. Each student is expected to regularly and promptly attend all class sessions. A student receiving specific types of scholarships and/or tuition waivers may be required to attend all scheduled class and lab sessions to maintain their eligibility.
 - 6.1.1.1 A student should register only in courses for which they have no schedule conflicts that will interfere with their ability to complete course requirements. Each instructor is expected to clearly communicate attendance requirements in the course syllabus.
 - 6.1.1.1.1 If a student misses a class session, the student has the individual responsibility to ascertain what content and/or assignments were missed.

- 6.1.1.2 Instructors are expected to make reasonable schedule accommodations when requested by a student in accordance with this policy.
 - 6.1.1.2.1 If an instructor determines there is no reasonable schedule accommodation or if the suggested accommodation is not acceptable to the student, the instructor shall inform their department chair of the request and the denial.
- 6.1.1.3 An instructor may require a student to submit coursework prior to the due date if the student will be absent when the work is scheduled to be completed or submitted.
- 6.1.1.4 An instructor may make a schedule accommodation for reasons other than those specified in this policy at their discretion but must do so fairly and equitably for all students enrolled in a course during the semester in which the schedule accommodation is given.
- 6.1.2 Religious holiday observance: a student has the right to request, in writing, a schedule accommodation for observance of a religious holiday. A student requesting an excused absence for observance of a religious holiday is encouraged to submit the request to the faculty member at the beginning of the semester.
 - 6.1.2.1 Instructors are expected to make reasonable accommodations in response to a request for observance of a religious holiday.
 - 6.1.2.2 Absences for religious holidays can always be anticipated, and an instructor has the right to insist that coursework to be missed must be completed prior to the absence.
 - 6.1.2.3 No faculty member has to honor a request for an excused absence for observance of a religious holiday submitted less than seven (7) days before the absence.
- 6.1.3 A student must request a schedule accommodation for participation in an approved official University activity.
 - 6.1.3.1 Instructors are expected to make reasonable schedule accommodations in response to a request for an excused absence to participate in an approved official University activity.

- 6.1.4 Official University activity or event: a student requesting a schedule accommodation for an approved official University activity has an individual responsibility to provide the instructor in each class with official written verification of the approved official University event and their participation and to make arrangements for any coursework that will be missed.
- 6.1.4.1 A request for schedule accommodation must be submitted in writing to the appropriate faculty member and must include the name and dates of the activity, the student's name and ID number, and the activity's sponsoring faculty or staff member.
 - 6.1.4.2 Single Event: a student requesting a one-time schedule accommodation for an event that will occur once must submit a request to the instructor of each class at least seven (7) days before the activity.
 - 6.1.4.3 Recurring or Frequent Activity: by the second day of class in a semester, a student requesting schedule accommodations for a recurrent activity must submit the request in writing, including the schedule of such absences, to the instructor of each class.
 - 6.1.4.3.1 An instructor may determine that recurring, frequent, or lengthy absences will interfere with a student's ability to succeed in the course and recommend that the student seek an alternative.
 - 6.1.4.3.2 In addition to the initial notice at the beginning of the semester, at least seven (7) calendar days but not more than 10 calendar days prior to the absence for which a schedule accommodation is requested, the student will confer with the faculty member to arrange for completing and submission of work.
 - 6.1.4.4 No faculty member has an obligation to grant a request for an excused absence for an approved or unapproved official University event submitted to them less than seven (7) calendar days before the absence, but may do so at his/her discretion insofar as such action is non-discriminatory.
 - 6.1.4.5 Absences for participation in approved University activities can usually be anticipated, and the student should be prepared to complete course work prior to the absence.

6.1.4.5.1 If a student has less than seven (7) calendar days' notice, the instructor may work with the student to accomplish the schedule accommodation.

6.1.5 Required military service: a student who is in "uniformed service" may request a schedule accommodation for short-term required military activities (deployment, activation, or mobilization) that must take place during the semester and are 14 calendar days or less in duration. If a student's absence is more than 14 calendar days in a full semester, they should consider doing a complete withdrawal from the semester. A student who is activated for military service should contact the Veteran's Coordinator in the Registrar's Office as soon as possible for assistance with issues concerning current classes, registration status, and/or educational benefits.

6.1.5.1 The student must provide instructors with a printed copy of their "orders" to request a military activity schedule accommodation.

6.1.5.2 In the event written "orders" give the student less than seven (7) calendar days from notification to the onset of the absence, instructors are still encouraged to work with the student concerning the requested schedule accommodation.

6.1.5.3 An instructor may determine that recurring, frequent, or lengthy absences will interfere with a student's ability to succeed in the course and recommend that the student seek an alternative.

6.1.5.4 A student who requires an extension to the original period of absence must contact the Registrar's Office, which will require verification of the required extension and then notify instructors, who may recommend that the student seek an alternative.

6.1.5.5 Absences for required military activities may or may not be anticipated.

6.1.5.5.1 A student with advance notice of a required military activity may be required to complete coursework prior to the absence.

6.1.5.5.2 If a student has less than seven (7) calendar days' notice (as verified by the written "orders"), the

instructor should make every effort to work with the student to accomplish the schedule accommodation.

6.1.6 A student may appeal an instructor's decision regarding a requested schedule accommodation to the department chair, who will consult with the instructor and the appropriate dean before overriding that decision.

6.1.6.1 If the department chair requires a schedule accommodation that would require additional time and/or work on the part of the instructor that the instructor does not wish to complete, the chair may not compel the instructor to complete the accommodation but will find an alternative method to fulfilling the accommodation if needed.

6.1.7 In accordance with the Confidentiality of Records policy and Federal Regulations, faculty and staff are prohibited from widespread publication in any form other than that which is specifically allowed in such policies and regulations of the names of the students participating in activities or events.

6.1.7.1 Faculty, staff, and campus entities may not communicate names of students involved in an approved official University activity unless another faculty or staff member has a legitimate educational interest, an identifiable educational relationship to the involved student, and a legitimate need to know such information in order to fulfill their professional responsibilities. This includes emails to the distribution lists.

6.2 Content Accommodations

6.2.1 Consistent with the principles of academic freedom, the faculty collectively and individually, has the responsibility for determining the content of the curriculum based on their disciplinary and pedagogical expertise and experience.

6.2.2 Each student must understand and be able to articulate ideas and theories that are important to discourse in the academic discipline of a course or program, even if those theories conflict with personal opinions or beliefs.

6.2.2.1 Personal disagreement with these ideas and theories, or the implications thereof, is not sufficient grounds for requesting a content accommodation, and accommodations requested on such grounds will be denied.

- 6.2.2.1.1 The University recognizes that a student's sincerely held core beliefs may conflict with some requirements of courses, programs, or majors, and agrees to work within the bounds of this policy to accommodate such beliefs, acting in good-faith and with reasonable consideration.
- 6.2.2.2 In addition to other syllabi content, as a courtesy to students, faculty are encouraged to include in their syllabi a description of course content requirements reasonably anticipated to conflict with student sincerely held core beliefs. Faculty are further encouraged to include in their syllabi suggested alternatives, if any, within the course or program that may avoid such anticipated conflicts.
 - 6.2.2.2.1 A faculty member may find it useful to include an explanation of the reason behind the selection and inclusion of such material and its relationship to the course outcomes so a student may make an informed decision about their ability to undertake the intellectual and personal challenge the course or program requirement may represent.
 - 6.2.2.2.2 A faculty member is not obligated to include these elements in their syllabi, as it can be difficult to anticipate what content may conflict with the varied beliefs of a diverse student population.
- 6.2.2.3 A student has the responsibility to address a perceived conflict with their sincerely held core beliefs within two weeks of the earlier date:
 - 6.2.2.3.1 Being given information about course content or requirements that conflict with the student's sincerely held core beliefs.
 - 6.2.2.3.2 Encountering course content or requirements that conflict with the student's sincerely held core beliefs.
- 6.2.2.4 If a student believes there is such a conflict, the student may choose to drop the course, or may proceed in seeking an accommodation with the understanding that faculty members have no obligation to alter or eliminate any content or requirements that conflict within the student's sincerely held core beliefs.

- 6.2.2.4.1 With this understanding, a student may request a content accommodation from the faculty member.
- 6.2.2.4.2 Faculty members are encouraged to respond to student requests with reasonable consideration.
- 6.2.2.5 A request for a content accommodation must be made in writing to the faculty member, with the student providing a copy of the request to the department chair at the same time.
 - 6.2.2.5.1 The request must articulate the burden the course content or requirement would place on the student's sincerely held core belief.
 - 6.2.2.5.2 The faculty member has no obligation to grant or respond to such requests, but is encouraged to act reasonably and with thoughtful consideration in addressing student requests and concerns.
 - 6.2.2.5.3 Faculty members who decide a content accommodation is appropriate may do so only if another reasonable means of satisfying the curricular/program requirement is available and only if the alternative is fully appropriate for meeting the course and program objectives.
- 6.2.2.6 Faculty will not be arbitrary, capricious, or discriminatory in granting or denying a request for a content accommodation.
- 6.2.2.7 If a student's request for a content accommodation is denied by a faculty member, the student may appeal that denial. The basis for such an appeal is limited to determining if the denial is arbitrary, capricious, or discriminatory and if the required course content for which an accommodation was requested is a reasonable and pedagogically sound manner of fulfilling course and program learning outcomes.
 - 6.2.2.7.1 As a first level of appeal, the student may solicit the aid of the responsible department chair to discuss the merits of the requested accommodation with the faculty member.
 - 6.2.2.7.2 If the student feels that the discussion with the chair did not fulfill the intent of this policy, they may submit a formal Academic Appeal in accordance with

University Policy 553.

6.2.2.7.3 A faculty member who is not satisfied with a department chair's decision may appeal to the Dean. A faculty member who wishes to appeal to a Dean's decision may submit an appeal to the Academic Appeals Committee or may submit a grievance under the University's Grievance Procedure.

6.2.3 Because different criteria apply to each course and because faculty members' course requirements and expectations differ, accommodations granted by a faculty member in one course will not affect decisions made by that faculty member in other courses, or by other faculty members in the same or other courses sections.

6.3 Disability Accommodations

6.3.1 Under the guidelines of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the University is obligated to provide reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities to enable them to fully participate in all University programs, services, and activities. The accommodation must be an appropriate academic adjustment and must NOT:

6.3.1.1 Create substantial change in the essential element of the course or program curriculum.

6.3.1.2 Create the demand for a substantial alteration in the manner of offering goods and services.

6.3.1.3 Create or pose a risk of significant harm to any other individual.

6.3.1.4 Create an undue financial or administrative burden for the institution.

6.3.2 Faculty members are required to inform students in course syllabi of the availability of and procedure for requesting accommodations based on a disability and that course materials can be made available in alternative format with prior request.

6.3.3 Faculty members must direct all requests for disability accommodations to the University Disability Resource Center (DRC).

6.3.3.1 A faculty member has the responsibility to ask for DRC

verification when a student requests an accommodation in their course or program.

- 6.3.3.1.1 The faculty member may discuss the requested accommodation with DRC staff.
- 6.3.3.2 A faculty member may have private discussions with a student regarding disability issues and must maintain confidentiality about any information related to a student's disability disclosed by a student or a DRC staff member. A faculty member may not request information about a student's specific disability.
- 6.3.3.3 A faculty member may not make accommodations for a student's disability without prior approval with the DRC.
- 6.3.3.4 If a faculty member makes a disability accommodation for any student without a written request from DRC, all students in that course must be offered the same accommodation.
- 6.3.4 A faculty member must require that a student with a disability meet the same academic standards as peers in the course.
- 6.3.5 A faculty member has the responsibility to provide in a timely manner a reasonable accommodation requested through the DRC that does not impact an essential student-learning outcome of a course or program.
 - 6.3.5.1 If a faculty member believes an accommodation requested through the DRC is unreasonable as detailed in University Policy 633 or if it impacts an essential student-learning outcome of a course, the faculty member should immediately inform their Chair and Dean.
 - 6.3.5.1.1 In such cases, the Chair and/or Dean will work with the DRC to assure equal access to opportunity for persons with disabilities through reasonable accommodations.
- 6.3.6 A student who wishes to appeal a faculty member's denial of an accommodation that has been suggested by the Disability Resource Center follows the procedures for appealing an academic action detailed in University Policy 553.
- 6.3.7 A student who wishes to request that a General Education or graduation requirement be waived due to a disability must do so in accordance with University Policy 553.

VII. Addenda – N/A

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Policy Steward: Assistant Vice President and Dean of Students

History:

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