

Deadline Flexibility and Assignment Extensions Policy/Procedure

Purpose

Student Accessibility Services (SAS) recognizes that, in certain circumstances, a student's documented disability-related functional limitations may impact their ability to meet assignment deadlines. When appropriate, limited deadline flexibility may be considered as a reasonable accommodation.

Deadline flexibility is not automatic and is not guaranteed. All requests are evaluated individually, on a case-by-case and course-by-course basis.

Guiding Principles

SAS is committed to providing equal access while preserving essential academic standards. Accommodations may not:

- Eliminate essential learning objectives
- Lower academic expectations
- Disrupt instructional sequencing
- Fundamentally alter the structure or integrity of a course

Each request will be evaluated in light of the specific course design and the documented functional limitations related to the student's disability.

When Deadline Flexibility May Be Considered

Deadline flexibility may be appropriate when:

- A documented disability creates a functional limitation that directly interferes with timely completion of a specific assignment.
- A disability-related flare-up, medical event, or episodic condition temporarily prevents student engagement.
- The structure of the assignment creates a barrier that can be reasonably mitigated without altering course requirements.

Advance notice of an assignment does not automatically determine whether flexibility is or is not appropriate. The key consideration is whether the disability-related limitation meaningfully affects the student's ability to complete the assignment within the established timeframe.

Course Structure Considerations

Some instructional formats rely on structured timelines that are integral to the learning process. In such cases, extended deadlines may not be reasonable.

Examples include, but are not limited to:

-Laboratory and Clinical Courses

Assignments tied to:

- Scheduled equipment or materials
- Safety protocols
- Supervised demonstrations
- Time-sensitive experiments
- Required in-person performance

Extending deadlines in these settings may not be feasible if doing so would require recreating lab conditions, altering safety supervision, or disrupting sequencing.

-Discussion-Based and Interactive Online Courses

For courses in which discussion boards or online engagement substitute for live instruction, timing may be essential to:

- Peer interaction
 - Ongoing academic dialogue
 - Instructor-moderated engagement
 - Participation-based learning objectives

If a discussion activity is structured to occur within a defined timeframe, significant or retroactive extensions may alter the essential interactive component of the assignment.

Limited prospective flexibility may be considered when it does not undermine the participation objective.

-Scaffolded or Sequenced Assignments

Some courses rely on progressive assignments where:

- Feedback from one assignment informs the next
 - Skills are developed in structured sequence
 - Timely instructor evaluation is essential

In these cases, repeated or open-ended extensions may disrupt instructional design.

Student Responsibilities

Students requesting deadline flexibility must:

- Maintain active SAS status
- Request this accommodation from the SAS counselor

- Communicate with the instructor in advance of the assignment deadline whenever possible and request flexibility prior to the due date unless a disability-related emergency prevents timely communication.
- Discuss each individual assignment for which this accommodation is requested with the instructor

Accommodations are generally not retroactive. Assignments missed prior to communication with the instructor are typically governed by the syllabus unless disability-related circumstances prevented notice.

Deadline flexibility does not permit assignments to be submitted at any time without prior arrangement.

Students are expected to utilize available supports, including tutoring, instructor office hours, assistive technology, and regular SAS counseling.

Instructor Responsibilities

SAS counselors will consult with the instructor prior to finalizing deadline flexibility accommodations. Instructors may be asked to provide information regarding:

- Course pacing
 - Assignment sequencing
 - Feedback cycles
 - Participation requirements
 - Lab or clinical constraints

If an instructor believes an accommodation would fundamentally alter the course, they should consult SAS before declining to implement it.

Scope of Adjustments

When approved, deadline flexibility is typically:

- Limited in duration
 - Determined per assignment
 - Arranged prospectively

Short extensions may be reasonable in many situations. Broader adjustments may be considered only when supported by documented disability-related need and when course structure allows.

Points considered in determining reasonableness include:

- The expected time required to complete the assignment
 - The relationship of the assignment to future coursework
 - The feasibility of early access as an alternative

- The impact on peer participation or group work
- Whether essential course components would be altered

Alternatives to Deadline Extensions

In some cases, alternatives may provide effective access without altering course structure. These may include:

- Early access to assignments
- Structured planning support
- Assistive technology training
- Modified sequencing when feasible
- Alternative formats when approved by faculty

Documentation and Communication

Clear written communication between student and instructor is strongly encouraged. Students and instructors may include SAS on relevant email exchanges for documentation purposes.