



UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI STUDENT DISABILITY SERVICES

Reasonable Modification of Policies Related to Program Requirements

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to allow course substitutions as a reasonable academic modification for students who are severely impacted by a diagnosed disability. Students should note that The University of Mississippi does not grant course waivers.

The Law

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act mandate that no otherwise qualified individual with a disability shall, by reason of that disability, be excluded from participation in or be denied the benefits of the services, programs or activities of a public entity, or be subjected to discrimination by any such entity. Subpart E of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act allows for the possibility that among the reasonable academic adjustments that may be appropriate (subsection 104.44) is a “substitution of specific courses required for the completion of degree requirement.” This subsection also states that academic requirements that the University can demonstrate are “essential” to the course of study being pursued or are directly related to “licensing requirements” do not have to be considered for substitution.

Policy

A course substitution may be considered in limited, extraordinary circumstances when a student with a disability is so severely impacted by the functional limitations caused by the disability that it inhibits his/her ability to meet course requirements or demonstrate required competencies.

The degree requirements for each program have been strenuously considered and weighed. Course substitutions will only be approved in cases where the substitution does not cause a fundamental alteration to the essential nature of the program in question. Because of this, all requests for course substitutions will involve careful consideration on an individualized, case-by-case basis.

Approved substitutions are intended to meet as closely as possible the intent of the original requirement and are restricted to courses that are approved by the Dean of the college or school that houses the student’s major course of study. Course substitutions or waivers that were granted in high school or at another institution of higher learning will not constitute automatic approval for a course substitution at The University of Mississippi.

Students should submit requests for a course substitution early in their academic career at the University of Mississippi; however, students must have already declared a major before requests can be reviewed. Students should be aware that changes in a student’s major, and therefore the essential program requirements, may result in the substitution being rescinded.

The final decision regarding course substitutions is made by the dean of the academic program or school which houses the student’s major.

Procedure for Requesting a Course Substitution

1. Students must be registered with the Office of Student Disability Services (SDS) before requesting this academic modification.
2. All requests for this modification must be submitted in writing to SDS. The following information must be included in the written request:
 - Student's name and contact information
 - Student's University ID number
 - The course requested to be substituted
 - Details, in the student's own words, regarding how the student's functioning significantly impacts and limits the student's ability to complete the course
 - Information about the student's past attempts complete the course in question
3. The student must also submit documentation which details the student's *current* functioning from an appropriate, licensed professional who has met with and is familiar with the student. The documentation must demonstrate clear and significant support for a course substitution and must include the following information:
 - The documentation should be written on letterhead and should include the professional's contact information.
 - It should include a detailed narrative indicating how the student's current functioning substantially impacts and limits the student's ability to successfully complete the course in question. For example, *requests for foreign language substitutions* should include documentation that contains information regarding listening comprehension and/or auditory processing; general processing speed; working memory; and language skills such as expressive/receptive language acquisition, syntax knowledge, decoding and phonological knowledge.
 - The documentation should clearly identify the nexus between the impact of the student's disability and the requested modification.
 - The documentation must be signed and dated by the professional who wrote it.
4. SDS will review the information submitted by the student to determine if there is a current disability-related impact that may affect the student's ability to successfully complete the course in question. If a course substitution is recommended by SDS, a committee will be convened to discuss the appropriateness of the substitution given the student's course of study.
5. The Committee will consist of the following members of the University community:
 - The Dean of the college or school which houses the major course of study or a designated representative
 - The Chair of the department which houses the student's major or a designated representative
 - The Chair of the department which houses the requested substituted course or a designated representative
 - The student's academic advisor or a faculty member chosen by the Dean
 - The Director of Student Disability Services or a designated representative

The Committee's review will include, but may not be limited to, the following information: student's personal statement, documentation of disability, severity of impact, degree requirements, expected program outcomes and competencies, previous attempts to take the course, the availability of a substitution course that gives an experience comparable to the original course, and the possibility of accommodations and/or course modifications that might assist the student should the substitution be denied.

6. Within fifteen (15) business days of the Committee meeting, the student will be provided with detailed information about the decision of the Committee. If the request is approved, the student will be given further instructions. If the request is denied, the student will be provided with information on how to appeal that decision.