



Frequently Asked Questions Related to Academic Accommodations for Pregnant Students

Pregnancy is covered under Title IX's prohibition of discrimination based on sex. Department of Education ("ED") regulations and guidance clearly state that this prohibition of discrimination means that an institution should treat pregnancy in the same manner as any short term disability.

In addition to treating pregnancy and childbirth in the same manner as any other disability when providing accommodations, Title IX regulations and guidance explicitly state that schools must excuse a student's absences due to pregnancy or childbirth for as long as the student's doctor says it is necessary and allow them to return to the same academic and extracurricular status as before the medical leave began. This includes giving the student the opportunity to make up any work missed while they were out.

The following FAQs provide information about the measures undertaken by the San Diego Community College District to provide these accommodations and otherwise ensure that it does not discriminate against students enrolled in any programs or activities based on pregnancy, childbirth, or a related medical condition. The Department of Education has provided additional information about institutions' and students' rights and responsibilities, summarized in the [*Supporting the Academic Success of Pregnant and Parenting Students*](#) guide.

How are accommodations provided at the San Diego Community College District?

Students who would like to request academic accommodations related to pregnancy are responsible for contacting the DSPS office. Students who make a request directly to faculty should be referred to DSPS. As with disability-related accommodations, the DSPS office, in consultation with the student, shall authorize appropriate accommodations and act as a liaison with the faculty and students. In order to determine what accommodations are required in a given case, DSPS faculty may need to consult with the course instructor, Instructional supervisor (i.e., Chair, Dean, etc.), and/or the student to understand applicable academic considerations. While consultation may be necessary and appropriate, the final decision regarding the appropriate accommodation is to be made by the DSPS faculty member in

accordance with Administrative Procedure, *AP 3105.1 Academic Accommodations and Disability Discrimination for Students with Disabilities*. The accommodations shall be documented by DSPS, a copy provided to the student, and the student will provide this documentation to their instructors. Students are responsible for providing professional documentation of their condition (i.e., pregnancy, childbirth, or a related medical issue) to DSPS. If the student does not have appropriate verification of their condition, contact DSPS to refer or initiate an assessment to determine and document a qualifying condition. Faculty must notify DSPS promptly of any related complaint. Complaints that cannot be resolved with the DSPS faculty will be resolved by the District Title IX Coordinator.

What accommodations are required to enable a student to return to the “same academic status” or “make up any work missed while out”?

The necessity or plausibility of a given accommodation is not governed by an individual faculty member’s class rules or policies, but by the nature of the assignments within the Course Outline of Record. Whenever the assignment is of a type that it can be completed at a later date—such as papers, quizzes, tests, and even presentations—the option must be made available to the student. The accommodation must not include any change to curriculum or course of study that is so significant that it alters the required objectives or content of the curriculum in the approved course outline thereby causing a fundamental alteration. In evaluating whether an accommodation is reasonable, consideration should include whether the accommodation is theoretically available, rather than whether it is onerous or difficult. A student’s prior knowledge of their pregnancy is irrelevant to an institution’s obligations—the District cannot decline to make accommodations by opining that the student “should have known” she was pregnant and not signed up for a given course.

What are some examples of accommodations that might be used for students experiencing medical issues related to pregnancy or childbirth?

Any of the following accommodations may be appropriate to a given situation, depending on the nature of the medical issue and the nature of the course as reflected in its outline of record:

- Permitting a student to take frequent bathroom breaks or breaks to walk around;
- Seating modification (to move closer to exit, or closer to/further from heat/cold);
- A separate table and chair;

- Permitting a student to leave class suddenly (i.e., in the event of morning sickness);
- Allowing a student to avoid prolonged standing;
- Permission to eat/drink in class;
- Opportunity to make up missed work (i.e., papers, quizzes, tests and presentations);
- Extended deadlines;
- Remote learning options (i.e., independent study, online course completion);
- Course section alterations;
- Responses to severe medical issues stemming from pregnancy or childbirth.
- Late Drops/Withdrawals without penalty; and/or
- Using a grade of Incomplete "I" to permit the student to complete missed coursework, following District policy.

What are some examples of the considerations might apply when determining appropriate accommodations for a student?

The following examples illustrate the considerations that go into determining the appropriate accommodation(s) to a given situation:

Example 1: After registering as a full-time student, the student informs the District that she is pregnant with a due date six (6) weeks following the completion of her finals.

At minimum, the student should be granted any and all accommodations relating to her physical comfort/health (i.e., permission to take short breaks, seating modification, opportunity to avoid standing, etc.) that she can then use throughout the semester as need/applicable. The student should also be granted the opportunity to make up work missed due to medical appointments and have such absences excused.

The student should be advised that she may wish to inform her instructors of the pregnancy and discuss what options may be available in the event of a medical issue arising, or if childbirth were to occur prior to the completion of the class (i.e., electronic submission of assignments, an Incomplete "I" grade assigned, etc.). Note, however, that the student is entitled to any accommodation that is not unduly burdensome, does not fundamentally alter the nature of the course, and does not disrupt the learning environment.

Example 2: A student delivers a child four (4) days prior to her final, which is scheduled for the last day of the semester.

At minimum, the student should be excused from taking the in-class final during its originally scheduled window period or before the end of the semester.

If the student is willing and able, and it is practically accomplishable, the student might be permitted to complete a final online either during the originally scheduled final window or soon after. If the student is not willing or able, the student should be granted an Incomplete and permitted to take the final once she indicates she is medically fit to do so, and has been given a reasonable period to prepare.

Example 3: A student is prescribed three (3) months of bedrest five (5) weeks into a course.

At minimum, the student should be excused from all absences resulting from the bedrest.

If the student is able to complete work online from home, and the structure of the class would support such a learning modality, the student should be given the opportunity to complete the course in that manner. If available, a transfer to an online section of the course should be explored. In all cases, including if an online option is not available (either due to the student's condition or the nature of the course), the student should be given the option to withdraw/drop from the course and receive a refund without academic penalty. The student should be readmitted to another section of the course at the next opportunity. If, due to the nature of the course, there is no academic reason for the student to repeat material she covered during the five-week period, she should not be forced to repeat such work (i.e., if during the five weeks the student was completing externship hours that do not need to be repeated under licensure rules).