

# UNH REMOTE REQUESTS

## SAS PRACTICE AND POLICY

### THE CURRENT CONTEXT

2020-2021 was unprecedented in terms of remote learning at UNH. Due to the pandemic students both with and without disabilities were able to select to learn remotely. This option was offered as a means of allowing students to make a safe choice about their level of comfort returning to campus during the pandemic. While a number of students chose the remote option, the reality was that even students who elected to come back to campus may have been learning in remote or hybrid ways. Remote learning was ubiquitous.

Related to students who specifically chose to learn remotely or made remote requests within SAS, students tended to fall into the following categories:

- ***Students who elected to learn remotely***  
Most students with disabilities who benefited from learning remotely were students who simply elected to learn remotely during the fall and the spring. Since there were not issues with them taking this option at the university and department level, SAS was often not involved in this decision. SAS only found out about students with disabilities taking this option when students requested revised accommodations or had questions about how to use their accommodations most effectively in the online context.
- ***Students approved for remote learning as an accommodation***  
There were some students who could not elect to learn remotely due to the particular courses they required for their degree. In this case, these students came directly to SAS to explore the option of learning remotely as an accommodation. Overall, there were 16 students approved for this accommodation. These were students who were not only qualified for the accommodation, but also demonstrated that they could not make effective progress towards their degrees without having this option available.
- ***Students who were able to learn remotely due to a course level faculty agreement***  
Lastly, there were a number of students who came to an agreement with individual faculty members about learning remotely within a particular class. In this case, SAS was not involved, but this was independently navigated. As with students who chose the university level option, SAS often was not aware of these cases until after the fact.

As UNH returns to a green mode of operation in the fall of 2021, UNH is faced with the challenge of determining the most appropriate way to handle student requests for remotely learning. While this may be a matter of policy for students generally, remote learning should be considered differently from the perspective of students with disabilities who may request remotely learning as part of their accommodations.

### TYPES OF REMOTE REQUESTS IN THE FUTURE

Students with disabilities are likely to continue to make requests for remote learning. There have already been multiple students who have come to SAS to ask about whether remote learning will be offered as an accommodation. These students have benefited from the flexibility offered through remote learning and would like to continue to have that flexibility available to them moving forward.

There are likely to be a wide variety of different requests for remote learning. Based on the requests SAS has received during the summer, fall, and spring, the types of requests are likely to fall into the categories below.

### FULL-TIME REMOTE LEARNING

There will be some students who will still request full time remote learning. By nature, the request for full time remote learning is more one that relates directly to university and department level policies. If a remote option is simply not available for any student (as discussed below that is more complicated than policy changes alone), then a full-time remote option does not need to be available. This request is most like requests made prior to the pandemic. However, it should be noted that successful implementation of remote learning during the pandemic has changed how this option should be considered.

Examples:

- Student with a complicated medical condition that would benefit from having more time to access care (appointments, therapies, proximity to team of professionals, proximity to testing facilities)
- Student with an immune condition who still has concerns over Covid
- Student with a health condition who has elected to take classes part time to ensure they have more time to manage their condition

### TEMPORARY REMOTE LEARNING

Students are also likely to ask for temporary remote learning as an accommodation. Students are likely to ask for remote learning for emergency situations that are temporary and of a specific duration. These requests are not necessarily related to a chronic condition but are things that arise suddenly and unexpectedly. The goal is not full-time remote learning, but to have this as a support to help the student stay current with work during a time of acute crisis. This is most like current practice when students need to quarantine for Covid related reasons.

Examples:

- Student is suddenly admitted to the hospital with an injury and would still like to access courses
- Student needs flexibility during a period of recovery from an injury

### CONDITIONAL REMOTE LEARNING

Students may also ask for remote learning as it relates to flare-ups of their condition or when their condition is temporarily more severe. While temporary requests are more often related to an acute issue that is unexpected, conditional requests are more closely related to students with chronic condition. The big question around this accommodation is related to duration and frequency of the request and what may be available. For some students in this situation, their flare-ups could last extended periods of time and could happen multiple times in a semester.

Examples:

- Student with a chronic condition has a sudden flare-up of their condition
- Student who undergoes a period of intensified symptoms
- A student with a progressive condition may experience increased symptoms during a time of medical adjustment

### COURSE SPECIFIC REMOTE LEARNING

Students may also ask for remote learning in specific courses. Unlike other requests that would apply across all student courses, this type of request is more specifically related to an individual course context. It is still related to the specific nature of a student's condition and when symptoms are more severe, but it would not necessarily be applicable across multiple contexts. Often, students in this situation can create a schedule that allows them to work around this issue, but there are also times when students have required courses that cannot be rescheduled or when students were not able to be enrolled in particular course sections (this speaks to larger concerns about how priority registration is handled).

Examples:

- A student has a condition that is more impactful during a certain time of the day
- A student requires medical treatments that can only be scheduled for specific times.
- A student's medication is less impactful at a certain time of day

## ADDRESSING FUTURE REMOTE REQUESTIONS: AN ACCOMMODATION MODEL

UNH is planning to return to green mode of operations in the fall of 2021. At that time, remote learning will only be approved as a specific accommodation for students with disabilities. As with other accommodation requests, SAS will only approve student requests if:

- The student is registered with SAS
- The student is determined to be eligible for accommodations
- The student makes a specific request for remote learning

## ACCOMMODATION LANGUAGE

Remote Learning – The student is eligible for remote learning. If SAS has not already reached out to you, SAS will reach out to discuss the feasibility of remote learning as well as necessary supports in your course.

## KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

### SAS RESPONSIBILITIES

- Determining eligibility for remote learning
- Exploring alternative supports
- Collaborating with faculty to determine
  - Feasibility of remote learning (based on essential requirements)
  - Potential limits to remote learning
  - Necessary supports for students
  - Necessary supports for faculty
- Discussing expectations with the students
- Collaborating with AT and CEITL to work on any technical or pedagogical needs
- Continued collaboration with faculty as needed

### STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

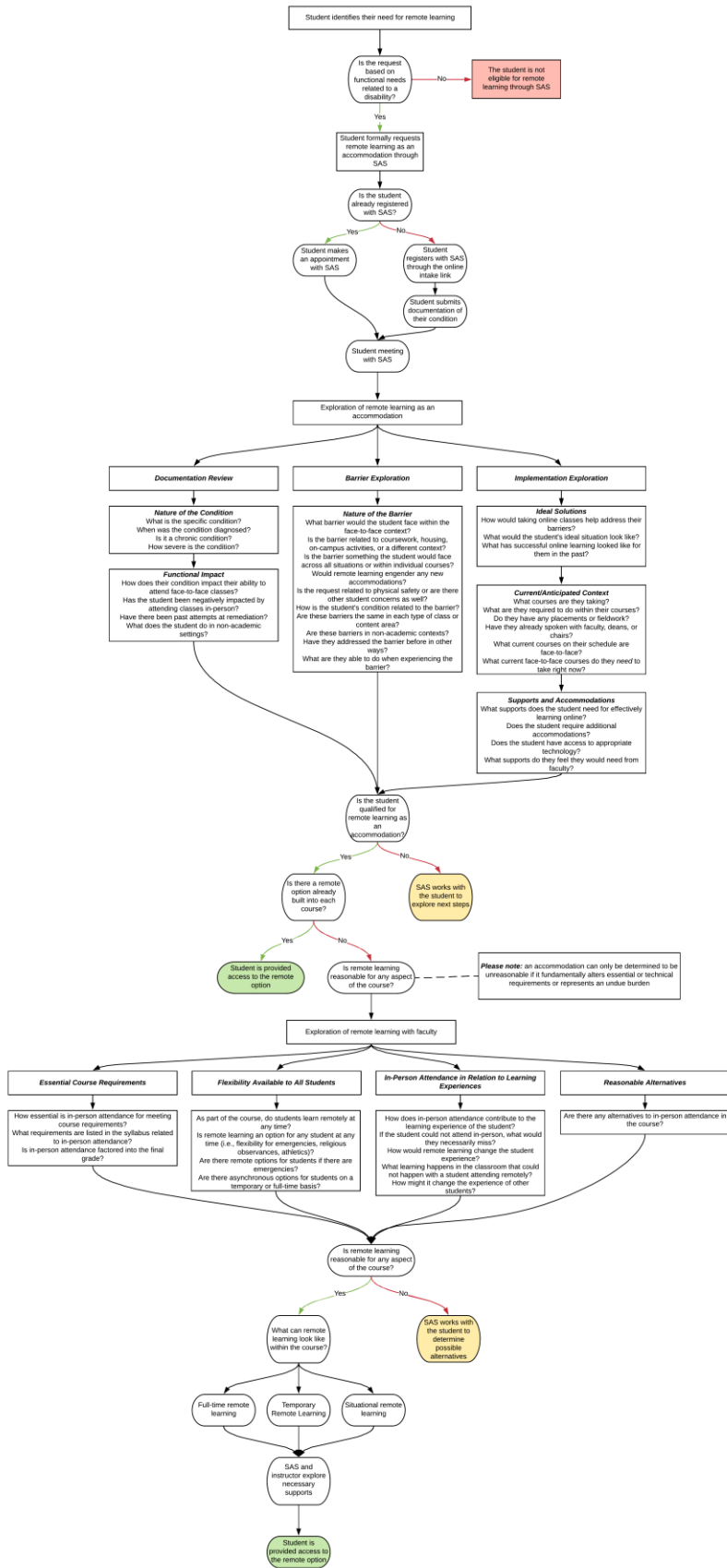
- Identifying the need for remote learning

- Providing documentation that helps establish the need for remote learning
- Communicating with SAS about
  - The need for remote learning
  - Why remote learning is necessary (explanation of why alternatives are not sufficient)
  - Changes to need
  - Issues or concern about the accommodation
- Communicating with faculty about
  - The need for remote learning
  - How remote learning will work in the specific course
  - Technical requirements
  - Expectations related to participation
  - Any changes or issues related to remote access
- Notifying faculty of the need for remote learning in a timely manner. This includes both the initial request and any on-going needs.
- Meeting all course requirements as established by the instructor

#### FACULTY RESPONSIBILITIES

- Working with SAS to determine what is reasonable for their course and if remote learning represents a fundamental alteration
- Communicating with the student about
  - The specifics of how remote learning will work for their course including any clarifications regarding policies and practices outlined in syllabus
  - Participation, attendance, and assignment requirements
  - Any on-going changes to their course
- Continued collaboration with the student
- Continued collaboration with SAS
  - Questions about how to effectively implement the accommodation
  - The need for additional supports (technical, pedagogical, logistical)

#### PROCESS OVERVIEW



## KEY STEPS

1. Student makes a request for remote learning
2. SAS conducts an analysis to determine if remote learning is necessary
  - a. Documentation review
  - b. Barrier exploration
  - c. Exploration of alternatives
    - i. In-person supports
    - ii. Alternative courses
    - iii. Policy exemptions for specific courses
3. If the student is qualified, the student is added to the remote learning tracking list
4. Professors of the relevant courses are notified of the need for remote learning
5. SAS discusses the feasibility of remote learning with the professor
  - a. Essential course requirements
  - b. Flexibility available to all students
  - c. In-person attendance in relation to learning experiences
  - d. Reasonable alternatives
6. SAS collaborates with the faculty member to help ensure remote learning is effectively implemented

## SAS ANALYSIS

As with all other accommodation requests, SAS is responsible for exploring and analyzing whether the requested accommodation is reasonable. This includes reviewing student documentation and self-report, exploring the barriers the student faces, and exploring the possible alternatives. Not all accommodations are approved, but it is the responsibility of the university to ensure that students' needs are met.

## APPROVAL OF THE ACCOMMODATION

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SAS can determine if the accommodation is reasonable based on the needs of the student. Once approved, SAS will communicate the need for the accommodation to faculty. The assumption is that faculty will provide a remote option for the student. The faculty will also be provided with additional assistance to help them successfully implement the remote option for the student.

If the faculty member feels that remote learning is not appropriate for their classroom, then additional follow-up between the faculty member and SAS is needed.

## DENIAL OF THE ACCOMMODATION

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Even if eligible for the accommodations, not all remote requests will be approved. As with any accommodation, students will be engaged in the interactive process to determine the reasonableness of the accommodation, but additionally in the case of remote learning additional exploration of the context becomes important.

Accommodations can only be denied if:

- The accommodations are deemed to be unreasonable. This occurs if the request:
  - Fundamentally alters an essential element of the university's program/activity; and/or
  - Results in an undue financial or administrative burden.
- After the documentation is reviewed, the documentation is deemed to be insufficient
- Reasonable alternatives are readily available

In the case of remote learning more specifically, the question of whether it fundamentally alters an essential element is an important one. For some classes, remote learning would not constitute a fundamental alteration, yet for others it may be based on the nature and activities of the course. These decisions need to be carefully examined in a manner that is both equitable and thorough.

## FACULTY EXPLORATION OF REMOTE LEARNING

General requests for remote learning are very different than requests for remote learning as an accommodation. When it is requested as an accommodation a more thorough analysis must be conducted. As with any other accommodation that is approved, the assumption should be that if approved the accommodation will be implemented. However, remote learning may not be possible within some courses. This determination should be made by both the faculty member and SAS. A unilateral decision is not appropriate, as if the accommodation is denied, then SAS needs to follow-up with the student and others to ensure the student need is still met.

The critical question that needs to be answered is: is remote learning reasonable for any aspect of the course? To help answer this question, the following questions should be addressed (Please note: if remote learning is feasible or already provided, then further analysis of these questions is not needed):

1. **Essential Course Requirements:** How essential is in-person attendance for meeting course requirements? What requirements are listed in the syllabus related to in-person attendance? Is in-person attendance factored into the final grade?
2. **Flexibility Available to All Students:** As part of the course, do students learn remotely at any time? Is remote learning an option for any student at any time (i.e., flexibility for emergencies, religious observances, athletics)? Are there remote options for students if there are emergencies? Are there asynchronous options for students on a temporary or full-time basis?
3. **In-Person Attendance in Relation to Learning Experiences:** How does in-person attendance contribute to the learning experience of the student? If the student could not attend in-person, what would they necessarily miss? How would remote learning change the student experience? What learning happens in the classroom that could not happen with a student attending remotely? How might it change the experience of other students?
4. **Reasonable Alternatives:** Are there any alternatives to in-person attendance in the course?

The focus of these questions is on equity and ensuring that if the accommodation is denied it is because there would be a fundamental alteration to the course. There are different potential outcomes of his analysis:

## POSSIBLE TYPES OF REMOTE LEARNING AT THE COURSE SPECIFIC LEVEL

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### FULL-TIME REMOTE LEARNING

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One possible type of remote learning at the course level is that the student is provided with a full-time remote learning option. The expectation in this case is that the student will learn for the remainder of the course in a completely remote way. The student in this case is not expected to come to campus for lectures, activities, exams, or other course related things.

### TEMPORARY REMOTE LEARNING

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If the student has a temporary condition, then temporary remote learning may be appropriate. Essentially, this acts like a full-time remote learning request, but with the importance caveat that the accommodation will only be

approved for a limited amount of time. The specific amount of time depends on the student condition and the nature of the course.

#### SITUATIONAL REMOTE LEARNING

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There may be instances in a course when full-time remote learning is not possible, but remote learning is possible in particular situations. For instance, there could be a course where there are experiential learning activities that cannot be replicated and require student attendance, but lecture components that the student could attend remotely. For many students situational remote learning is not ideal, but it could help address a need.

#### KEY NEXT STEPS