

Working With Students Who Have Reserve/Guard Duty

At MCC, we have very few students serving on Active Duty, so this handout is designed to help you understand and work with students who are in Reserve and Guard units.

What is a Reserve/Guard unit?

Each branch of the military has their own group of trained service members who can be called upon for active duty as necessary. These men and women can be “called up” to service in times of war, during a national emergency, or under a threat to national security.

How often do they serve?

The basic commitment people in Reserve and Guard units make is one weekend a month and two weeks a year, but this has changed in recent years. Some units will combine training so they might skip one weekend on a given month but then add days to the next month so that a student could have duty Thursday through Sunday, for example. The same is true for the longer training periods; instead of two weeks, some units may have up to three weeks for required training.

What does this mean for our students?

For some, it will mean they travel once a month to their drill location and spend that weekend in training. For example, you may have a student who is in the Army Reserves who drills at Fort Drum in Watertown from Friday to Sunday of each month.

It could also mean, however, that a student could get called away to serve overseas for a period of time or be deployed to a specific location for a shorter period of time to help during an emergency. The COVID-19 pandemic, environmental emergencies, Russian forces in Ukraine, and training NATO allies in the Baltics have required more units to serve for longer periods of time. In these cases, work with the student regarding a plan for completing work if that is feasible. Refer the student to the Veteran Services Office if the student needs to withdraw from your course.

What responsibilities does the student have toward the faculty?

Students who are in Reserve and Guard units should inform their faculty members of their service. While this is not required (and some will choose not to), it is helpful for instructors to know this so they can work with the student as needed. Having a statement in your course information sheet regarding military service will help some students be willing to self-identify.

What are your responsibilities as a faculty member?

When students know they have duty, they can work ahead with the syllabus so they do not fall behind. However, when something is assigned on a Friday and due on a Monday, a student who has Reserve or Guard duty will likely not be able to complete it. Please know this type of service is very different from a student who has a full-time job and works weekends. Reserve and Guard Unit service members will not have free time to do homework during their training weekends. Try to be as flexible as possible with your students in this situation.

Best Practices

- Include a statement in your course information sheet inviting students to speak to you about service requirements
- Provide details on assignments ahead of time so students can work ahead
- When possible, provide flexibility on due dates and assignments

