



## Return to Learn Policy

Sports related concussions and the impact they have on academics has become an important issue within the general sports medicine and academic learning communities over the past ten years. In an effort to ensure students receive the academic support they need during the recovery process, Transylvania University has put forth a policy based on a multidisciplinary approach recommended by the NCAA and the Centers for Disease Control.

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### Concussion management and treatment

The most important part of concussion recovery is rest, both physical and cognitive. Trying to push through symptoms or “tough it out” can make symptoms worse, prolong recovery time, and lead to further complications with possible long-term effects. Giving students sufficient time to take care of both body and brain is the best way for them to recover quickly and completely.

Students who experience a concussion should avoid strenuous activity, get sufficient sleep, eliminate drugs and alcohol, and eat a healthy diet. At the same time, care must also be taken to reduce cognitive stress. Students should be encouraged to be patient with themselves through the recovery period and find ways to return to full cognitive capacity without undue strain.

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### Diagnoses and Recommendations

#### Concussion Diagnoses

A physician treating an individual with a concussion will perform a series of cognitive tests. The results of these tests will determine the severity level of the concussion as well as the length of time the student will need accommodations. After the evaluation process is complete, a physician will then provide academic and physical recommendations. Recommendations may be listed on a sports injury

report, written up as general prescription, or in some cases, a physician may provide an academic accommodations checklist to the patient that he/she can distribute to faculty and staff. Some students experiencing symptoms from a concussion may have more specific recommendations based on their course load and extracurricular activities. These will be detailed on the physician's report. The treating physician will schedule a follow-up appointment with the patient and if accommodations need to be extended, the physician will complete a second report with updated recommendations.

All head injuries are unique in their severity and impact on the student. **Each student's recovery will be individualized.** Most concussion related symptoms resolve over the course of days, but typically take up to three weeks. There are some individuals, particularly those who have had previous concussions, who will experience symptoms for several weeks after receiving a concussion.

#### Academic & Physical Recommendations/Accommodations

The general recommendations and accommodations listed below are based on research collected by the NCAA and the medical community. The treating physician will recommend accommodations for individuals who have concussion related symptoms. **These recommendations and accommodations are not mandated by the ADA, but are strongly encouraged** to ensure full recovery.

##### 1. No Academic/Cognitive Activity:

- Full rest
- No screens (i.e., cell phones, computers, TV)
- Student athlete must check in with their athletic coach and athletic trainer daily
- Student athlete must communicate with professors

##### 2. Light Academic Activity:

- Limited class attendance (i.e., 2hrs/day)
- Student athlete can begin to focus on assigned work with incorporated break-times in place ( i.e., study for 15 mins and take a full mental break for 10 mins)
- Recommendation: no academic testing

##### 3. Increased Academic Activity:

- Increased class attendance
- Student athlete will continue to focus on assigned work with incorporated break times.
- Recommendation: no academic testing

4. Full-Time Attendance:
    - Student athlete is cleared to return to the classroom, but those with activity classes may have limitations placed on them.
    - Accommodations if needed
    - Recommendation: limit academic testing to no more than 1 test/day
  5. Return to Majority of Academic Activities:
    - Return to normal class attendance including activity classes
    - Accommodations if needed
    - Recommendation: limit academic testing to no more than 1 test/day
  6. Return to Full Learning:
    - Return to normal class attendance with participation in all aspects of learning - no limitations.
    - Continued monitoring of academic performance
    - No limitations to academic testing
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## **Notification of Academic Accommodations**

Transylvania University's Athletic Department and Disability Services are committed to providing timely notification of any accommodations a student identified as having a concussion may need. The notification process is as follows:

1. Student has been identified as having a concussion.
2. The Athletic Department assists the student in filling out an application for Temporary Disability Services.
3. A certified trainer in the Athletic Department emails the Disability Services Office with the student's application for temporary services, concussion testing results, and physician's recommendations.
4. The Disability Services Office sends out an email to the student's professors and CC's the injured student, the referring athletic trainer, and the director of the athletic department. The subject of the email will be: **DSO Temporary Disability Notification** This email notifies faculty of the student's temporary disability status and includes recommended accommodations from the referring physician.
5. The Disability Services Coordinator meets with the student, as they are able, to discuss implementation of specific accommodations and to set up note sharers, testing accommodations, etc.
6. When cleared for screen time, the student follows up with their professors about missed assignments and exams. It is the student's responsibility to discuss specific due dates of assignments and make-up exams with each individual professor.

- a. In cases of a severe concussion, the Disability Services Coordinator will act as a mediator between the student and their professor until the student has been cleared by a physician to return to full learning.
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### **Multidisciplinary Approach**

As stated previously, concussion related symptoms can vary for each individual and can last for as little as one week to as long as several months. Because of this, it is critical that the student, athletic trainers, disability services, and school faculty maintain communication during the treatment process. Maintaining communication between all individuals will help ensure the injured student recovers at a pace that is appropriate and consistent with the physician's recommendations.

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## **References**

Coppel, David. Post-Concussion Syndrome: *Mind, Body, and Sport*.

McAvoy, Karen. REAP-Remove, Reduce, Educate, Adjust/Accommodate, Pace: The Benefits of Good Concussion Management.

2014-15 NCAA Sports Medicine Handbook. *Guideline 21 - Sports Related Concussion*.