

## Religious Accommodation Guidelines

Cleveland State University values diversity in all its forms and understands religious practice as one factor enriching our campus community. CSU's faculty and administration respect the different demands that religions might make on the faithful and, therefore, support and accommodate students, faculty, and staff of all faiths so that religious observance does not negatively affect academic success.

CSU prohibits religious and all other forms of unlawful discrimination and harassment. The *Policy Against Discrimination, Harassment, Sexual Violence and Retaliation* includes religion in its list of forms of discrimination that the University strongly opposes and does not tolerate.

The Office for Protected Rights, in collaboration with the Faculty Senate's University Faculty Affairs Committee, has developed these guidelines to help members of the University community understand expectations and obligations regarding the accommodation of religious practices.

The University provides reasonable accommodations for religious practices of students, faculty and staff.

- Some examples of reasonable religious accommodations include schedule changes, excused absences, minor revisions to job duties or course expectations, exceptions to syllabi policies and classroom practices, flexible scheduling, and exceptions to workplace policies such as dress or grooming requirements.
- An accommodation is not reasonable if it: creates a direct threat to the health or safety of others or the person seeking the accommodation; disrupts instruction, learning or university operations; creates an undue hardship on the University; or requires a substantial alteration in the manner in which instruction is delivered, students are assessed, or services are provided.

Faculty and staff should request religious accommodations from supervisors, including departmental chairs, associate deans or program directors. Students should first work with their instructors for religious accommodations. If no accommodation agreement is reached, a student should reach out to the Office for Protected Rights for formal accommodations.

- Faculty should request accommodations that may involve an absence from class for holidays occurring during the semester before the semester begins. Staff should request accommodations involving an absence from work in a timely manner that will permit the supervisor to arrange coverage for the staff member's absence.

- Faculty accommodations should be reflected in syllabi (e.g. class cancellations are noted) Faculty should take their religious calendar into account when setting course schedules, especially when teaching classes that meet only a few times in the semester or for less than sixteen weeks. Faculty accommodations are not reasonable if they diminish academic standards or negatively impact instructional hours.
- Students should provide their instructors with reasonable, advance notice of their need for religious accommodation. Students should consult their instructors in the first two weeks of the semester.
- Instructors must provide reasonable accommodations. If necessary, the instructor's chair and the Office for Protected Rights may provide input and answer questions. Students dissatisfied with the outcome of discussions with the instructor may contact the Office for Protected Rights.
- Religious accommodations must be reasonable. What is reasonable for a particular student will depend on the type of class (e.g. lab, clinical or field work experience), the duration of the course (8, 10 or 16 weeks), the nature of the accommodation being requested (e.g. a single day absence vs. a three-week absence) and other relevant factors.
- Students should take their religious calendar into account when making their course schedules, especially in cases of classes that meet only a few times in the semester or for a short period of time.
- Failure of a student to provide reasonable, advance notice of the need for religious accommodation is not a basis for an instructor to refuse to provide the accommodation but might impact what accommodation is reasonable under the circumstances.

Additional examples of religious accommodations for students, that may be reasonable under the circumstances, include:

- If permitted in the facilities, allow the student to bring and consume food and/or drink in class during periods of fasting.
- Allow the student to designate a note-taker for a day on which a religious holiday requires the student to miss class.
- Alter discussion time on Blackboard so that a student has an opportunity to post at a time that is not in conflict with the student's Sabbath or a religious holiday.

Examples of adjustments to course policies that may be reasonable as a religious accommodation includes:

- Attendance policies are often adjusted to accommodate students who must be absent to observe a religious holiday. Religious observance accommodations will be counted as an excused or no-fault absence.
- Assignment due dates are often adjusted when they fall on or immediately adjacent to a religious holiday or the Sabbath. By agreement with the instructor, alternate due dates or other arrangements may require students to complete work slightly earlier or allow them to finish slightly later than other students in the class.
- By the same token, exam dates may be adjusted to accommodate students with religious observance requirements that conflict with dates on the syllabus and the academic calendar. Faculty may contact the Office for Protected Rights if they want to arrange for a student who is receiving a religious accommodation to take an exam in Testing Services.