

OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY

Religious Accommodation of Students Policy

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Table of Contents

Policy Statement 3

Procedures for Students to Request, and the University to Grant or Deny, a Religious Accommodation 4

Overview 4

Areas of Accommodation 4

Quiet Spaces 4

Dietary Requirements 5

Fasting 5

Religious Attire 5

Curriculum Content 5

Absences: Observation of Major Religious Holy Days and Celebrations 5

Grievances 6

Additional Resources 6

Campus Quiet Spaces 6

Food Options on Campus 6

Policy Statement

Oregon State University prohibits discrimination on the basis of protected status in any of its policies, procedures, or practices. Protected statuses include age, color, disability, gender identity or expression, genetic information, marital status, national origin, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or veteran's status.

With regards to religion, this policy prohibits the University, and its employees while at work or representing OSU, from taking action that promotes religion or promotes one particular religion over another. The University may not create an atmosphere which in any way suggests it favors one religion over another, or religion over non-religion. As a public university, it is equally important not to inhibit voluntary religious expression. The University's obligation is to balance these two elements -- to refrain from promoting and at the same time to refrain from unnecessarily inhibiting religion or voluntary religious expression. This policy is premised on respect for each individual's right to make personal choices regarding the nature, if any, of his or her religious beliefs and practices. All OSU employees are expected to create and maintain a culture that strives toward deepening respect for and understanding of religious differences within our community.

The University will grant students' reasonable requests for religious accommodations where doing so does not conflict with reasonably necessary University goals ("reasonable accommodation"). The Office of Equal Opportunity and Access (EOA) must be consulted in the granting and denying of all religious accommodation requests, except for the granting of holiday observance requests.

The University may limit religious practices or behavior that put public safety, health, or the human rights and freedoms of others at risk. The University may also limit religious practices or behaviors that are in violation of other University policies.

Procedures for Students to Request, and the University to Grant or Deny, a Religious Accommodation

Overview

The University may provide a reasonable accommodation based on a person's sincerely held religious belief. A reasonable accommodation is one that does not conflict with reasonably necessary University goals. The accommodation request imposes responsibilities and obligations on both the individual requesting the accommodation, the University and the instructor or program director. **The person requesting the accommodation is obligated to make the University aware of the need for a religious accommodation as soon as possible and in advance of the need for the accommodation.**

Once a request is made, the University will explore reasonable accommodations to address the person's religious belief or practice. The person requesting the accommodation is obligated to cooperate with the University's attempts to accommodate the request. When more than one accommodation is possible, the University may select any of the accommodations, provided the accommodation will effectively eliminate the religious conflict. The University may request the student to provide information to support the need for an accommodation based on the student's sincerely held religious belief.

Faculty and other OSU employees who receive any religious accommodation **requests** must contact the Office of Equal Opportunity and Access (EOA) unless it is for the granting of absences for Religious Holy Days or Celebrations. It is not necessary to contact EOA regarding absences for Religious Holy Days or Celebrations, if the request can be accommodated. EOA must be contacted prior to the **denial** of any religious accommodation requests including an absence related accommodation.

Areas of Accommodation

For many students at OSU, there are a number of areas where the practice of their religion may result in a request for accommodation. These areas may include but are not limited to the following:

- **prayer**
- **dietary requirements**
- **fasting**
- **religious attire**
- **ablution (e.g. washing of hands, face & feet)**
- **participation in daily activities and curriculum**
- **observation of major religious holy days and celebrations**

When concerns related to sincerely held religious beliefs and practices arise in the University, collaboration among students, the University and religious communities is often needed in order to develop reasonable accommodations. Building trust and mutual respect is an important aspect of faith accommodation. It is the role of all employees to ensure fairness and respect for the diverse religious beliefs and practices.

Quiet Spaces

Upon request, the University will make every reasonable effort to identify quiet spaces for reflection, meditation, study and prayer.

Dietary Requirements

Upon request, the University will make reasonable efforts to be attentive to the dietary restrictions of the various religious groups. This includes attempting to address issues related to the menus provided by the catering firms and catering for special occasions and events at the University.

Fasting

Upon request, the University will make reasonable efforts to accommodate religious practices related to fasting periods (e.g. considering allowing students to break their fast when it is required during class).

Religious Attire

Upon request, the University will make reasonable efforts to accommodate students' attire that is related to their sincerely held religious beliefs. Religious attire is not cultural/traditional dress; it is a requirement of religious observation. Religious attire may include but is not limited to:

- hairstyles
- yarmulkes/kippah (skullcaps), turbans, Rastafari headdress
- head covers (e.g. hijab)
- crucifixes, Stars of David, etc.
- items of ceremonial dress
- modesty of attire

Curriculum Content

Religious accommodation at the University is carried out in the larger context of the secular public education system. When a request is made for an accommodation that relates to the content of curriculum (e.g. wine/alcohol tasting in hospitality program), the faculty member should seek advice from the Office of Equal Opportunity and Access.

Absences: Observation of Major Religious Holy Days and Celebrations

Upon registration for a class, the student is expected to examine the course syllabus for potential conflicts with holy days and to notify the instructor as soon as possible and in advance of the need for an accommodation, of any conflicts that may require an absence (including any required additional preparation/travel time). The student is also expected to remind the faculty member in advance of the missed class, and to make arrangements in advance (with the faculty member) to make up any missed work or in-class material within a reasonable amount of time.

Examples of reasonable accommodations for student absences include but are not limited to: submitting assignments prior to the absence, rescheduling of an exam or giving a make-up exam; altering the time of a student's presentation; allowing extra-credit assignments to substitute for missed class work or arranging for an increased flexibility in assignment due dates, etc.

A reasonable accommodation, if granted, provides students the opportunity to complete appropriate make-up work that is equivalent and intrinsically no more or less difficult than the original exam or assignment. Faculty should keep in mind that religion is a deeply personal and private matter and should attempt to respect the privacy of the student when making accommodations, discussing it only with University employees who need to know and not sharing it with other students.

Students who expect to miss classes, examinations, or other assignments as a consequence of their sincerely held religious belief should meet with the instructor to address the following questions:

- What specific class accommodation(s) do you request (e.g., excused absence, rescheduling of an exam or other class requirement)?

- Explain how the requested accommodation enables you to participate in your religious practice or belief.
- State the date(s)/frequency of requested accommodation within the academic term.

The instructor and the student should discuss what a reasonable accommodation should include in a given case. Absence from classes or examinations for religious reasons does not relieve students from responsibility for any part of the course work required during the period of absence. If the student fails to satisfactorily complete any alternative assignment or examination, the instructor may apply the same grading consequences held for all students.

It is not necessary to contact EOA regarding absences for Religious Holy Days or Celebrations, if the request can be accommodated. EOA must be contacted prior to the **denial** of an absence related accommodation.

Grievances

A Discrimination Complaint may be filed with the Office of Equal Opportunity and Access and comply with that Office's procedures.

Additional Resources

Campus Quiet Spaces

A few rooms on campus are available for students to use, at no cost, for reflection, meditation, study and prayer (<http://studentlife.oregonstate.edu/main/spiritual-life-osu>).

- Student Experience Center, 3rd Floor, meditation room & foot washing station
- INTO Building, 4th floor, foot washing station
- Quiet room in each Cultural Resource Center

Food Options on Campus

Do you have special dietary needs? University Housing and Dining Services' registered dietitian and can assist you with special dietary considerations including food allergies and nutrition education (<http://uhds.oregonstate.edu/menus/nutrition>).