



**Responsible Officer:** Charles (Chas) Lopez  
**Responsible Office:** GDI  
**DRAFT VERSION XX.XX.XX**

# **RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATIONS POLICY**

## **I. Policy Statement**

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

## **II. Reason for Policy/Purpose**

All PSU faculty and staff are expected to create and maintain a culture that strives towards deepening respect for and understanding of religious differences within our community. This policy prohibits PSU and its faculty and staff, while at work or representing PSU, from taking action that promotes religion or promotes one particular religion over another. PSU 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. PSU’s obligation is to balance these two elements; to refrain from promoting and at the same time refrain from unnecessarily inhibiting religion or voluntary religious expression.

PSU may provide a reasonable accommodation based on a person’s sincerely held religious belief. The accommodation request imposes responsibilities and obligations on both the individual requesting the accommodation, PSU and the faculty or staff. The person requesting the accommodation is obligated to make PSU aware of the need for a religious accommodation as soon as possible and in advance of the need for the accommodation.

When concerns related to sincerely held religious beliefs and practices arise in PSU, 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

### III. Applicability

This policy applies to all students (including undergraduate and graduate), employees (faculty, staff and student-employees), applicants for employment or admission and members of the public and volunteers.

### IV. Definitions

#### Definitions:

1. **Religion.** “Religion” is defined very broadly. It includes traditional, organized religions such as Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism. It also includes religious beliefs that are new, uncommon, not part of a formal church or sect, or only held by a small number of people. Some practices are religious for one person, but not religious for another person, such as working on Saturday or on Sunday. One person may not work on Saturday for religious reasons; another person may not work on Saturday for family reasons. Under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, a practice is religious if the employee’s reason for the practice is religious.
2. **Undue Hardship.** Undue hardship is a significant or substantial burden taking into account all relevant circumstances.
3. **Reasonable Accommodation.** A reasonable accommodation is an adjustment in an employee’s work environment or student’s education that allows the employee/student to comply with his/her religious beliefs and is one that does not conflict with reasonably necessary PSU goals.
4. **Employee.** Employee is any faculty, staff, student employee, etc.
5. **Interactive Process.** The interactive process is an informational exchange, typically between the student, faculty and the Dean of Student Life; or the employee, manager and Human Resources.

### V. Policy/Procedures

#### 1. Introduction

Requests for religious accommodation will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. PSU is not required to accommodate a request if it poses an “undue hardship” on the university. However, alternative accommodations that may meet the requester’s need should also be evaluated.

## **2. Procedures for Requesting and Responding to Requests for Accommodations**

### **2.1 For Employees:**

Any employee needing a religious accommodation should make their request to their manager or to Human Resources. Once a manager is made aware of a request for religious accommodation, then they should contact Human Resources.

Once a request for religious accommodation is submitted, PSU will initiate an interactive process to determine if the request can be accommodated as requested and, if not, what, if any, alternative accommodations can be made. PSU may request the student employee, faculty, or staff to provide information to support the need for an accommodation based on the faculty or staff’s sincerely held religious belief.

The person requesting the accommodation is obligated to cooperate with his/her instructor, manager, HR, and/or DOSL’s attempts to accommodate the request.

Faculty and staff who receive an employee’s religious accommodation request should contact Human Resources (HR) to obtain assistance with the interactive process, unless the employee is requesting time off for Religious Holy Days or Observances. It is not necessary to contact HR regarding time off for Religious Holy Days or Observances, if the request can be accommodated.

The Office of Equity and Compliance (OEC) must be contacted prior to the denial of any religious accommodation requests. If the proposed denial has not been vetted through the chain of command and/or HR, then OEC will send the matter back for further discussion prior to reviewing the proposed denial. Proposed denials that have been fully vetted will then be reviewed by OEC.

### **2.2 For Students:**

Any student needing a religious accommodation must first make a reasonable effort to contact their instructor, the department head and the academic dean in an effort to agree upon a religious accommodation. If the student does not satisfactorily obtain a religious accommodations the student shall contact the Office of the Dean of Student Life.

Once a request for religious accommodation is submitted, PSU will initiate an interactive process to determine if the request can be accommodated as requested and, if not, what, if any, alternative accommodations can be made. PSU may request the student to provide information to support the need for an accommodation based on the student's sincerely held religious belief.

The person requesting the accommodation is obligated to cooperate with his/her instructor, Chair or Dean and/or DOSL's attempts to accommodate the request.

The Office of Equity and Compliance (OEC) must be contacted prior to the denial of any religious accommodation requests.

Faculty and 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 faculty member may apply the same grading consequences held for all students.

When a request is made for an accommodation that relates to the content of curriculum, the faculty member should seek advice from the OEC.

### **3.0 Types of accommodations may include, but are not limited to the following:**

- a. **Religious Holy Day:** Upon request, PSU will allow for time off for observance of 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.
- b. **Fasting:** Upon request, PSU will make every reasonable effort to accommodate religious practices related to fasting periods
- c. **Dietary Restrictions:** Upon request, PSU will make reasonable efforts to be attentive to the dietary restrictions of the various religious groups.
- d. **Religious Attire:** Upon request, PSU will make reasonable efforts to accommodate students' attire that is related to their sincerely held religious

beliefs. Religious attire is not cultural dress; it is a requirement of religious observation. Some examples of religious attire may be the following; hairstyles, yarmulkes/kippah (skullcaps), turbans, Rastafari headdress, head covers (e.g. hijab), burqa's, crucifixes, Stars of David, etc., items of ceremonial dress, modesty of attire. (PLEASE NOTE THIS IS NOT AN EXHAUSTIVE LIST.)

- e. **Providing Space for Prayer/Religious Practices:** Upon request, PSU will make every reasonable effort to identify quiet spaces for engaging in religious rituals during work time and/or at PSU facilities (e.g. ablution (e.g. washing of hands, face and feet) request for quiet spaces for reflection, meditation and prayer, etc.).
- f. For many students at PSU, there are a number of areas where the practice of their religion may result in a request for accommodation. Examples of accommodations include, but are not limited to: submitting assignments prior to the absence; rescheduling of an exam or giving a make-up exam in the learning center; altering the time of a student's presentation; allowing extra credit assignments to be substituted for missed class work; arranging for increased flexibility in assignment due dates for all students; and requesting breaks at certain times of the day for prayer.
- g. **Student Requests for Accommodations:** A reasonable accommodation, if granted, provides students with 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 PSU 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 beliefs should meet with the instructor to address the following questions:

- What specific class accommodations(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 student should discuss what reasonable accommodation should be included 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.

**Resolving Disagreements/Filing a Complaint.** If a student or employee disagrees with the determination and/or proposed accommodation after engaging in the interactive process, then the person may contact the Office of Equity & Compliance. Anyone who wishes to file a complaint involving prohibited discrimination and/or harassment based on religion (or any other protected class) may also contact the Office of Equity & Compliance at 503-725-5919 or complete an on-line complaint at [https://diversity-pdx-advocate.symlicity.com/public\\_report/](https://diversity-pdx-advocate.symlicity.com/public_report/)

## **VI. Links To Related Policies, Procedures or Information**

<http://www.pdx.edu/diversity/office-of-equity-compliance>

## **VII. Contacts**

**For questions, concerns and assistance in resolving a disagreement or to file a complaint:**

OEC, Suite 830, Market Center Building, 1600 SW 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Telephone: (503) 725-5919; E-mail: [diversity@pdx.edu](mailto:diversity@pdx.edu)

## **VIII. History/Revision Dates** [use this date format: ]

**Adoption Date:**

**Revision Date:**

**Next Review Date:**

## **IX. Policy Adoption/Reaffirmation/Revision Approvals**

Approved \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
PORTLAND STATE UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT

Approved \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
PORTLAND STATE UNIVERSITY GENERAL COUNSEL