

RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATIONS POLICY

I. Policy Statement

Portland State University acknowledges each individual's right to make personal choices regarding the nature, if any, of their religious beliefs and practices and provide a pathway for religious accommodations that are reasonable and practicable.

II. Reason for Policy/Purpose

The PSU community is enriched by individuals of many faiths that have various religious observances, practices and beliefs. 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. In affirming this diversity, it is PSU policy and practice to provide religious accommodations for students and employees (faculty and staff) unless the accommodation would create an undue hardship.

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

1. **Religion.** "Religion" is defined very broadly. It includes traditional, organized religions such as Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism and other wisdom traditions. It also includes religious/spiritual beliefs that are new, uncommon, or unaffiliated with a traditional sect or community, 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 requesting the accommodation so indicates.

2. **Undue Hardship.** Undue hardship is a significant or substantial burden taking into account in 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.

V. Policy and 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 considered.

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 in advance of the need for the accommodation, when possible within 10 working days.

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

Portland State University (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.

2. Procedures for Requesting and Responding to Requests for Accommodations

I.1 For Employees:

Employees needing a religious accommodation should make their request to their manager/supervisor or to Human Resources. Managers/Supervisors who receive an employee's religious accommodation request should contact Human Resources (HR) to obtain assistance with an 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.

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 faculty, staff, or student employee to provide information to support the need for an accommodation based on the employee's sincerely held religious belief.

Employees requesting the accommodation are obligated to cooperate with their instructor, manager, HR, and/or DOSL's attempts to accommodate the request.

I.2 For Students:

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

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.

Students requesting the accommodation are obligated to cooperate with their instructor, Chair, Dean and/or DOSL's attempts to accommodate the request.

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 may seek advice from the Office of Global Diversity & Inclusion (GDI).

3. Types of accommodations may include, but are not limited to the following:

- **Religious Holy Day:** Absent undue hardship, PSU will allow students and employees to take time off for observance of religious holy days and celebrations.
 - **Students:** 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, as agreed upon by the faculty member.

- **Employees:** See Section, 2.I.1 above
- **Fasting:** Upon request, PSU will make reasonable efforts to accommodate religious practices related to fasting periods.
- **Dietary Restrictions:** Upon request, PSU will make reasonable efforts to be attentive to the dietary restrictions of the various religious groups.
- **Religious Attire:** Upon request, PSU will make reasonable efforts to accommodate students' and employees' 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), burqas, crosses, crucifixes, Stars of David, etc., items of ceremonial dress, modesty of attire. (PLEASE NOTE THIS IS NOT AN EXHAUSTIVE LIST.)
- **Providing Space for Prayer/Religious Practices:** Upon request, PSU will make 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.).
- **Privacy:** Faculty and staff 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.

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 within the Office of Global Diversity and Inclusion. Anyone who wishes to file a complaint involving prohibited discrimination and/or harassment based on religion (or any other protected class) may contact the Office of Equity & Compliance within the Office of Global Diversity and Inclusion at 503-725-5919 or complete an on-line complaint at: <http://www.pdx.edu/diversity/office-of-equity-compliance>

The Vice President for Global Diversity & Inclusion is delegated the authority to adopt procedures related to the provision of appropriate religious accommodations, so long as such procedures are consistent with this policy.

VI. Links To Related Policies, Procedures or Information

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

VII. Contacts

If you have any questions regarding this policy, please contact Office of Global Diversity & Inclusion at (503) 725-5919 or diversity@pdx.edu

VIII. History/Revision Dates

Adoption Date: February 8, 2017

Next Review Date: February 8, 2022

IX. Policy Adoption/Reaffirmation/Revision Approvals

Approved



PORTLAND STATE UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT

Date

2/8/17

Approved



PORTLAND STATE UNIVERSITY GENERAL COUNSEL

Date

2/8/17