



## University of Denver Religious Accommodation Policy

### Rationale:

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

Many of these religious observances are related to holy days, or days of observance. Faculty, staff, student organizations and other programming groups are strongly urged to be mindful of major holy days in their scheduling. A list of the most-frequently observed religious holidays can be found at: <https://www.du.edu/studentlife/religiouslife/events-activities/calendar.html>. Please note that this list is meant to be inclusive (although not necessary exhaustive), but that religious holidays have no official status at DU.

### Policy:

#### Students

University policy grants students excused absences from class or other organized activities for observance of religious holy days, unless the accommodation would create an undue hardship. Faculty are asked to be responsive to requests when students contact them IN ADVANCE to request such an excused absence. Students are responsible for completing assignments given during their absence, but should be given an opportunity to make up work missed because of religious observance.

Once a student has registered for a class, the student is expected to examine the course syllabus for potential conflicts with holy days and to notify the instructor by the end of the first week of classes 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. The student is to be trusted that he/she will observe the holy day as promised; no proof will be expected.

Examples of reasonable accommodations for student absences might include: rescheduling of an exam or giving a make-up exam for the student in question; 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; releasing a graduate assistant from teaching or research responsibilities, etc. The student must be given the opportunity to do appropriate make-up work that is equivalent and intrinsically no more difficult than the original exam or assignment. Faculty should keep in mind that religion is a deeply personal and private matter and should make every attempt to respect the privacy of the student when making accommodations (for example, it is not appropriate to announce to the class that a student is doing a presentation or making up an exam at a later date because of their religious observance).

If a student and course instructor cannot agree on an accommodation, the student may bring the matter to the Department Chair for a decision. Additional resources in resolving disagreements over accommodations include the University Chaplain, the Center for

Multicultural Excellence, and the Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity. If there is still no agreement, the student may bring the matter to the school or college dean's office, where a final decision will be made. Students who believe they have been discriminated against on the basis of religion by the denial of a requested religious accommodation may contact the Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity to learn about filing a discrimination complaint.

## Staff

Staff members must notify their supervisor for permission to take time off no less than one week in advance of their desire to observe a religious holiday. This time may, at the option of the employee, be taken off without pay, or charged to the vacation accumulation, or with the supervisor's permission, be made up through an alternative work schedule. It is expected that the time off be granted by the supervisor, unless such accommodation would create an undue hardship. The employee is to be trusted that he/she will observe the holy day as promised; no proof will be expected.

In those cases where a request for a religious accommodation is denied a staff person by the supervisor, the staff member may pursue a grievance under the grievance process outlined in the *Employee Handbook*. Additional resources in resolving disagreements over accommodations include the University Chaplain, the Center for Multicultural Excellence, Human Resources, and the Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity.

Employees who believe they have been discriminated against on the basis of religion by the denial of a requested religious accommodation may contact the Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity to learn about filing a discrimination complaint.

## Faculty

Faculty should notify their department chair (or otherwise appropriate person within their department) of any such absences that will occur as a result of this policy and explain alternative accommodations that will be made for missing a class (such as holding a make-up class, a guest speaker, etc.). The faculty member is to be trusted that he/she will observe the holy day as promised; no proof will be expected.

If a faculty member's request for a religious accommodation is denied by the department head, the faculty member may appeal the decision to the dean and ultimately to the Provost.

Employees who believe they have been discriminated against on the basis of religion by the denial of a requested religious accommodation may contact the Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity to learn about filing a discrimination complaint.