

COLUMBUS STATE UNIVERSITY

Policy Name:	Religious Observance Policy
Policy Owner:	Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs and Academic Innovation
Responsible University Office:	Office of Human Resources/ Academic Affairs
Approval Date:	January 12, 2024
Effective Date:	January 12, 2024
Revisions:	
Related Policies:	BOR 3.4.3 & BOR 2.1

I. PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF POLICY

Columbus State University (CSU) supports the rights of faculty, staff, and students to observe religious holidays that do not coincide with the university's regular holiday schedule. As a public institution, CSU neither promotes any religion nor discriminates against students, staff, or faculty based on their religious viewpoints. This policy describes procedures for faculty and staff to request an absence for a religious holiday and for students to request a class or other activity absence for a religious holiday.

II. DEFINITIONS

Religious Holiday - Refers to a recognized holiday of any faith.

Reasonable Religious Accommodation - Any adjustment to the work or academic environment that will allow the individual to practice his/her religion unless the accommodation would impose an undue hardship.

Undue Hardship: a practice, procedure, or financial cost which unreasonably interferes with business operations at the university.

III. POLICY SECTION

In accordance with applicable Board of Regents Policies, CSU recognizes the diverse traditions represented among its campus community and supports the rights of faculty, staff, and students to observe according to these traditions. All University offices are asked to be sensitive to the needs of faculty, staff, and students who are observing a religious holiday when scheduling meetings and events. Supervisors are asked to be supportive of staff members who request

vacation or personal time to observe a religious holiday and to make every effort to avoid scheduling meetings or events at times that would exclude such staff members from participation.

IV. PROCEDURES

Faculty/Staff

- Employees should inform their supervisor in advance, specifically requesting an adjusted work schedule related to religious purposes. In order to ensure compliance with CSU's Credit Hour and Course Level Policy, suitable arrangements should be made to compensate for instructional time the faculty member will miss. This might include arranging a substitute instructor, offering asynchronous instruction, adding an out-of-class assignment, or making other appropriate arrangements, with approval by the department head. Depending upon business needs, you may be able to work on a day that is normally observed as a holiday and then take time off for another religious day. Also, planned absences for such requests may be taken as paid vacation leave (if applicable); as time off without pay; or be permitted as alternative work hours at a time and manner agreed upon by the employee and the responsible supervisor or manager. The hours worked in lieu of the normal work schedule may be scheduled before or after the religious observance within the workweek, so as not to create any entitlement to premium pay (including overtime pay). An employee's request for time off should not be granted without simultaneously scheduling the hours the employee will work to make up the time, in order to provide a clear record of the employee's adjusted work schedule. If an employee is absent when he or she is scheduled to perform work to make up for a planned absence for a religious observance, the employee must take paid leave, request leave without pay, or be charged absent without leave, if appropriate. These are the same options that apply to any other absence from an employee's basic work schedule.
- In instances where a religious holiday occurs when classes are in session, department heads will work with faculty to facilitate personal leave for the purpose of observing religious holidays. Department heads are encouraged to support personal leave requests for this purpose. In the situations described above, authorization by the employee's supervisor must be granted in advance via the appropriate leave request procedures.
- Faculty and supervisors should consider all reasonable religious accommodations if it does not present undue hardship. Though not exhaustive, individuals can consult a resource such as the [Interfaith Calendar](#) for a comprehensive list of religious observances as well as for specific dates of each holiday.

Students

- Students who wish to be absent to observe a religious holiday during scheduled class times must make arrangements no less than 10 business days in advance with their instructors. Students must provide instructors with written notice of the dates of religious holidays on which they plan to be absent, along with any supporting documentation the instructor requests. Faculty members should consider all requests to observe these holidays, if it

does not present undue hardship. When religious accommodation is granted, students must be given an equivalent opportunity to make up missed work according to an agreed-upon schedule. Such accommodations might include rescheduling an exam or giving the student a make-up exam, allowing an individual or group presentation to be made on a different date, letting a student attend a different section for the same class that week, adjusting a due date, or assigning the student appropriate make-up work that is no more difficult than the original assignment. Absence for a religious reason should be counted as an excused absence and included within the allotted excused absences permitted by the instructor. Should a complicated situation arise related to religious accommodations (for example, clinical rotations), faculty should contact the department chair, dean’s office or the Office of Legal Affairs.

V. APPEALS

If an employee wishes to appeal a decision regarding a religious accommodation request, the employee must complete the Religious Accommodation Appeal Form and submit it to the Director of Human Resources within five (5) calendar days. The appeal form must be completed in its entirety and within the deadline for consideration.

Within ten (10) calendar days of receipt of the appeal form, the employee will receive a final written decision from the Director of Human Resources. Extenuating circumstances may extend the timeframe beyond the ten (10) calendar days.

Students wishing to appeal a decision regarding a religious accommodation request are encouraged to seek an informal resolution by speaking with those closest to the problem - the faculty member, department chair, and/or dean of the college in which the course was offered. Students uncomfortable pursuing this route, or if their efforts do not prove fruitful, they may seek mediation or file a formal grievance by completing the [Academic Grievance Form](#).

VI. QUESTIONS

All questions regarding observance of religious holidays should be directed to Human Resources.

VII. RELEVANT LINKS

[Office of Human Resources at Columbus State University](#)

DocuSigned by:
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APPROVED: _____
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Dr. Stuart Rayfield, President

DATE: 1/12/2024 | 1:04 PM EST
