

# RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATION POLICY

Office of Equal Opportunity

***Purpose:*** To establish uniform guidelines to promote a work and educational environment at Tufts University respectful of people's religious beliefs and to ensure university compliance with federal and state laws pertaining to religion and creed.

**Revised:** September 2023

***Applicability:*** This policy applies to students, employees, patients, visitors, third parties, and other community members.

## **Policy Statement**

Tufts University is committed to providing an academic and work environment respectful of the religious beliefs of its students, employees, community members, patients, visitors and third parties. As part of this commitment, Tufts will provide reasonable religious accommodations to students, employees, patients, community members, visitors and third parties (“Requestor”) who have sincerely held religious beliefs which conflict with a University policy, procedure, or other academic or employment requirement unless such an accommodation would create an undue hardship.

## **Definitions**

Religion or Creed: Includes traditional, organized religions and religious beliefs, as well as those that are new, uncommon, and/or not part of a formal church or sect. All aspects of religious belief and observance that are sincerely held will be considered as part of this policy.

Religious Accommodation: A reasonable change in the work or academic environment which enables a student, employee, patient, community member or visitor to practice or otherwise observe a sincerely held religious practice or belief without causing undue hardship on the University. A reasonable religious accommodation may include, but is not limited to, time allocated for prayer during a workday, the ability to attend religious events or observe a religious holiday, vaccine exemptions, specialized housing requests, or any necessary modification to University policy, procedure or other requirement for a student’s or employee’s (or prospective employee’s) religious beliefs, observance or practice, provided that such an accommodation is reasonable and does not cause undue hardship.

Undue Hardship: Significant difficulty and expense based on the University’s resources and circumstances in relationship to the cost or difficulty of providing a specific accommodation. Undue hardship may refer to financial difficulty in providing accommodation(s) that are unduly expensive, substantial, disruptive, or would fundamentally alter academic requirements, the nature or operation of the University’s business, or the essential functions of a job. Accommodations which interfere with the safe and efficient operation of the workplace or campus or with a bona fide seniority system will often present an undue hardship.

## **Procedures for Seeking Religious Accommodation**

Requestors may request a religious accommodation by contacting the Office of Equal Opportunity (OEO) Accommodations Team at [Accommodations.OEO@tufts.edu](mailto:Accommodations.OEO@tufts.edu).

Accommodation requests will be evaluated individually on a case-by-case basis taking into account factors including, but not limited to, the fundamental requirements of the applicable academic program and/or related technical standards, essential functions of an individual’s job, duties of others in the department or job group, requirements

of the department or major, potential impact of the accommodation, duration of the accommodation request, and the availability of alternative accommodations.

As part of the interactive process, the Requester will meaningfully engage with OEO via written or spoken communication to explain the nexus between their sincerely held religious belief and the requested accommodation. During the interactive process, OEO may seek additional information regarding the individual's sincerely held religious belief and/or may request an in-person, zoom or phone conversation to fully understand the nature of the request. Information may be supplied directly by the Requestor, by the Requestor's religious or spiritual leader, or by another qualified individual who can help the Requestor articulate their need for accommodation based on a particular belief, practice or observance. OEO will then meaningfully engage with the Requestor and the relevant university official or department to discuss the accommodation request in order to further evaluate and/or implement the accommodation. Approvals or denials will be provided in writing to the Requestor whenever possible. The [Accommodations Policy](#) is the umbrella policy and includes the interactive process OEO follows in order to evaluate all accommodation requests.

Employees who anticipate being absent from work because of a religious observance must submit their request for time off in advance and as soon as they become aware of the need or at least ten (10) business days in advance. Please note that Accommodations cannot be granted retroactively.

### **Absences - Students**

Students who anticipate being absent from classes because of a religious observance must provide faculty or appropriate designee with **advanced** notice of their absence in accordance with their School or Program Student Handbook processes.

Students involved in a clerkship or internship program must also provide advance notice to their clerkship/internship supervisor prior to any absence. Students should understand that if an accommodation is granted, missing time from a clerkship or internship may require the student to make up work or repeat the clerkship at a later time.

Make up/Extension: If examinations or assignment deadlines are scheduled on the day(s) of a religious observance, any student who provided advance notice of absence will have the opportunity to make up the examination or extend the assignment deadline and will not be penalized for the absence.

Being absent from class or other educational responsibilities does not excuse students from keeping up with any information shared or expectations set during the missed class(es). Students are responsible for obtaining the materials and information provided during any class(es) missed.

## Absences – Employees (including Faculty and Staff)

The University will make reasonable efforts to accommodate an employee’s requests for absences to the extent possible by allowing flexible arrival and departure times, floating or optional holidays, flexible work breaks, or considering schedule substitutions with colleagues of substantially similar qualifications which may need to be arranged by or with the assistance of the requesting employee.

The University is not required to accept a requested preferred accommodation if there is more than one alternative that eliminates the religious conflict.

The University also has a religious/spiritual calendar listing of holy days for educational and community reference:

<https://students.tufts.edu/registrar/courses-and-calendars/academic-calendar>

## Religious Attire, Dress, Grooming and other Requirements

Upon request, the University will make reasonable efforts to accommodate the attire of students, employees, patients, visitors, and community members related to their sincerely held religious beliefs which conflict with any University requirement(s). Religious attire is not cultural or traditional dress, rather it is a requirement of religious observance. Religious attire may include, but is not limited to:

- Hairstyle or beard: Sikh hair and beard, Rastafarian dreadlocks, Jewish peyes;
- Yarmulkes, turbans, headscarves (hijab), Rastafari headdress;
- Crucifixes, Star of David, or other items of ceremonial dress.

## Quiet Spaces and Prayer

Upon request, the University will evaluate, and where reasonable and available, provide access to quiet, private spaces for meditation, study and/or prayer consistent with the sincerely held religious belief and with the requirements of this policy. These spaces can be found in the grid below as well as on the Chaplaincy website: [Sacred Spaces on Campus - Tufts University Chaplaincy](#)

## Current Sacred Spaces at Tufts

Space	Address	Reservation options	Hours
Goddard Chapel	3 The Green, Medford, MA 02155	Chaplaincyreservations@tufts.edu 617-627-3427 There is also a prayer space in the balcony, open and available whenever the Chapel is open (unless there is a program being held in the Sanctuary)	Monday – Friday, 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Tufts Interfaith Center	58 Winthrop Street, MA 02155	chaplaincyreservations@tufts.edu 617-627-2294	
Curtis Hall Prayer Room (Musallah)	Curtis Hall, 474 Boston Ave, Medford, MA 02155	Access with Tufts ID Card Chaplaincy@tufts.edu Reserve on <a href="https://chaplaincy.tufts.edu/on-campus-sacred-spaces/">https://chaplaincy.tufts.edu/on-campus-sacred-spaces/</a>	
Fletcher School Multifaith Prayer and Meditation Room	Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Cabot 107, 160 Packard Ave, Medford, MA 02155	Access with Tufts ID Card Chaplaincy@tufts.edu	
Cummings Prayer Room	JCC, 177 College Ave, Medford, MA 02155  Located on the lower level	Open whenever the JCC is open; no reservations required.  Chaplaincy@tufts.edu	Sunday: 12 p.m.-12 p.m.  Monday-Thursday: 8 a.m. -8 p.m.  Friday: 8 a.m. -6 p.m.  Saturday: 12 p.m.-8 p.m.
Granoff Family Hillel Center	220 Packard Ave. Medford, MA 02155	617.627.3242  <a href="mailto:Hillel-Center@tufts.edu">Hillel-Center@tufts.edu</a>	Monday-Friday 9 a.m.- 11 p.m.  Saturday 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.  Sunday 1 p.m.- 11 p.m.
Marjorie Hanna Cleveland Meditation Room (Boston Campus)	Tufts Medical Center, 755 Washington Street, 6th Floor, Boston, MA 02116	Chaplaincy@tufts.edu	Open daily 6 a.m. - 8 p.m. Muslim Prayer Grp, Fridays 12-1 Catholic Mass, Sundays 4:30-6:00pm

Posner Hall Lounge, 201 (Boston Campus)	200 Harrison Avenue, Boston, MA 02111	Access to building with ID Card	Jummah Prayers on Fridays from 12:30-1:30 p.m.
Medical Education Building Room 704 (Boston Campus)	145 Harrison Avenue, Boston, MA 02111	Access to building with ID Card	Open during building hours

### Appeals Process

Students, employees, and applicants who disagree with the outcome of their request for an accommodation(s) may address their concerns with Katherine Vosker, Accommodations Manager and 504 Officer at [Katherine.vosker@tufts.edu](mailto:Katherine.vosker@tufts.edu), or Jill Zellmer, the Executive Director and Title IX Coordinator of OEO at [jill.zellmer@tufts.edu](mailto:jill.zellmer@tufts.edu).

### Retaliation

Tufts **prohibits retaliation** against Requestors for requesting a religious accommodation, participating in an approved accommodation, or otherwise engaging in protected conduct under this policy. Any person who violates this non-retaliation provision may be subject to disciplinary and/or corrective action.

### Policy Questions

Individuals with questions about this policy and/or its application may contact the OEO Accommodations Team at [Accommodations.OEO@tufts.edu](mailto:Accommodations.OEO@tufts.edu). The Office of Equal Opportunity is located at 196 Boston Avenue, 4th floor, Suite 4000B, Medford, MA 02155.