

RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATION POLICY

Office of Equal Opportunity

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

Revised: May 2019

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

RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATION POLICY

Policy Statement

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

Definitions

- A. Religion or Creed: Includes traditional, organized religions and religious beliefs, including those that are new, uncommon, 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. Tufts University Office of Equal Opportunity (OEO) is required to confirm the sincerely held religious belief with a leader of the religion or creed.
- B. Religious Accommodation: A reasonable change in the work or academic environment that enables a student, employee, patient, community member or visitor to practice or otherwise observe a sincerely held religious practice or belief without undue hardship on the University. A reasonable religious accommodation may include but is not limited to time for prayer during a work day, the ability to attend religious events or observe a religious holiday, 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.
- C. 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 an accommodation or accommodations that are unduly expensive, substantial, disruptive, or that 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

A student Requestor may request a religious accommodation by emailing their faculty member or contacting the Office of Equal Opportunity (OEO) Accommodations Specialist, Amin Fahimi Moghadam at Amin.Fahimi_Moghadam@tufts.edu or the Compliance Specialist, Nadra Sultan at Nadra.Sultan@tufts.edu or call them at 617.627.3298. Other Requestors, (employees, patients, visitors or community members) may request a religious accommodation by contacting the Office of Equal Opportunity (OEO) Accommodations Specialist, Amin Fahimi Moghadam at Amin.Fahimi_Moghadam@tufts.edu or the Compliance Specialist, Nadra Sultan at Nadra.Sultan@tufts.edu or call them at 617.627.3298.

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.

Accommodation requests will be evaluated 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, the duties of others in the department or job group, the requirements of the department or major, any impact of the accommodation, the duration of the accommodation request, and the availability of alternative accommodations.

The University will endeavor to protect the Requestor's privacy in evaluating and implementing the accommodation requested to the extent possible. Tufts is required to confirm the sincerely held religious belief with the Requestor's religious leader following receipt of the request and will engage in an interactive dialogue with the Requestor and relevant university official or department. Tufts will discuss the accommodation request as necessary with the Requestor (student, employee, patient, visitor or community member), and with select others in order to further evaluate and/or implement the accommodation with as much discretion as possible. Approvals or denials will be provided in writing to the Requestor whenever possible.

Individuals with questions about this policy and/or its application may contact

Fahimi Moghadam, Accommodations Specialist, at 617-627-6363 or by email at: Amin.Fahimi_Moghadam@tufts.edu or Jill Zellmer, Director of the University's Office of Equal Opportunity and Title IX/504 Coordinator at: 617-627-3298 or by e-mail at: jill.zellmer@tufts.edu. The Office of Equal Opportunity is located at 196 Boston Avenue, 4th floor, Suite 4000B, Medford, MA 02155.

A. Absences - Students

Notice: Students who anticipate being absent from classes because of a religious observance must provide faculty or appropriate designee with advance notice of their absence in accordance with their Student Handbook.

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.

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

C. Religious Attire, Dress, Grooming and other Requirements

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

D. 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 the sincerely held religious belief and with the requirements of this policy.

E. Retaliation is Prohibited

The University 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 anti-retaliation provision may be subject to disciplinary and/or corrective action.