



NOTRE DAME
OF MARYLAND
UNIVERSITY

Religious Accommodation Policy

Policy Statement

Notre Dame of Maryland University (“NDMU” or “the University”) is committed to providing a welcoming and inclusive living, learning, and working environment. As part of this commitment, the University will make good faith efforts to accommodate a student’s or employee’s sincerely held religious practices or beliefs that conflict with a University policy, procedure, or other academic or employment requirement, unless such an accommodation would create an undue hardship for the University.

Any student who is unable to attend classes on a particular day or days or at a particular time of day because of the tenets of a sincerely held religious practice or belief may be excused from any academic activities on such particular day or days or at such particular time of day. Excused absences do not alter the academic requirements for the course. Students are responsible for information and material missed on the day of absence. Students are within reason entitled to receive any materials provided to the class during the absence. Students are responsible for making provisions to determine what course materials they have missed and for completing required exercises in a timely manner.

The University will make a reasonable effort to protect the requesting student’s or employee’s privacy in evaluating and processing the accommodation. However, following receipt of the request, the University may speak with a student’s faculty and/or other relevant individual(s), or an employee’s supervisor and/or department in order to further evaluate and/or implement the religious accommodation. The University may suggest an alternative accommodation it deems reasonable to accommodate a request. If there is more than one option, the University will balance a student’s or employee’s expressed preference with operational or academic considerations.

Definitions

Essential Function: A fundamental job duty of an employment position for staff and faculty, or a fundamental academic element of a course or program of study for a student.

Religious Accommodation: A reasonable change in the work or academic environment that enables a student or employee to practice or otherwise observe a sincerely held religious practice or belief without unduly compromising the student’s ability to satisfactorily complete the course requirements or undue hardship on the University. A 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 such accommodation is reasonable and does not cause undue hardship.

Undue Hardship: A substantial burden in the overall context of the operation of the University. For example, an accommodation may be considered an undue hardship if it would interfere with the safe or efficient operation of the workplace or learning environment and/or would result in the inability of the employee or student to perform an essential function of the position or course of study. The University will not be required to cause a lack of necessary staffing; jeopardize security or health; or expend a significant amount of time or money. The determination of undue hardship is dependent on the facts of each individual situation, and will be made on a case-by-case basis.

Procedures for Students

- The University grants students excused absences from class or other organized academic activities for observance of a sincerely held religious practice or belief as a religious accommodation, unless the accommodation would unduly compromise the student's ability to satisfactorily complete the course requirements or create an undue hardship on the University.
- Students requesting a religious accommodation should make the request directly to their instructor with as much notice as possible. Students anticipating an absence or missed coursework due to a sincerely held religious practice or belief should use best efforts to inform their instructor in writing during the add/drop period.
- 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. The student can work with the instructor to determine a schedule for making up missed work in a timely manner.
- Other types of religious accommodation requests from students (e.g., regarding dining, housing, etc.) should be directed to the Associate Vice President of Student Life & Dean of Students (AVPSL).
 - The request should include the specific religious belief or practice that is the basis of the request, as well as the requested accommodation or modification to policy, procedure, or other academic requirement. The AVPSL will then gather the necessary information to consider the request. In some cases, the AVPSL may need to obtain additional information and/or documentation about the student's religious practice(s) or belief(s). The AVPSL may need to discuss the nature of the religious belief(s), practice(s), and accommodation(s) with a student's spiritual leader (if applicable) or religious or philosophy scholars to address the request for an exception.
 - The AVPSL will discuss the request with relevant individuals and make a decision in consultation with the Director of Mission & Ministry and the Title IX/504/ADA Coordinator.

Procedures for Faculty / Course Instructors in Responding to Student Requests

- Course instructors are strongly encouraged to make reasonable accommodations in response to student requests to complete work missed by absence resulting from

observation of religious holidays. Such accommodations should be made in ways that do not dilute or preclude the requirements or learning outcomes for the course.

- Course instructors should not ask a student for proof that their religious practices or beliefs are sincerely held or for determining a religious accommodation.
- Examples of religious accommodations include: rescheduling of an exam or giving a make-up exam for the student in question; altering the time of a student's presentation; or arranging for an increased flexibility in assignment due dates.
- The student should be given the opportunity to complete appropriate make-up work that is equivalent and intrinsically no more difficult than the original exam or assignment. Students who receive an exemption on religious grounds cannot be penalized for failing to attend class on the days exempted. The instructor may, however, appropriately respond if the student fails to satisfactorily complete any alternative assignment or examination.
- If there are concerns about the requested accommodation, the instructor should consult their department chair or Dean for assistance and a determination of whether a reasonable accommodation can be provided. If an agreement cannot be reached after consulting with the department chair or Dean, the department chair will advise the Dean and refer the matter to the Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs or designee, who will make the final determination in consultation with the Director of Mission & Ministry and the Title IX/504/ADA Coordinator.

Procedures for Faculty and Staff Requesting Religious Accommodation

- Employees requesting a religious accommodation should make the request directly to their supervisor or the Office of Human Resources. Employees may be required to use paid time off time as part of the religious accommodation. The supervisor will consult with the Office of Human Resources to evaluate the request. Reasonable accommodations will be determined on a case by case basis.
- The request should include the specific religious belief or practice that is the basis of the request, as well as the requested accommodation or modification to policy, procedure, or other employment requirement. The Director of Human Resources will then gather the necessary information to consider the request. In some cases, the Director of Human Resources may need to obtain additional information and/or documentation about the employee's religious practice(s) or belief(s). The Director of Human Resources may need to discuss the nature of the religious belief(s), practice(s), and accommodation(s) with an employee's spiritual leader (if applicable) or religious or philosophy scholars to address the request for an exception.
- The Director of Human Resources will discuss the request with the supervisor and other relevant individuals and make a decision in consultation with the Director of Mission & Ministry and the Title IX/504/ADA Coordinator.

Approved By: President's Cabinet

Approval/Revision Date: August 31, 2022; July 7, 2023

Related Policies: [Non-Discrimination Policy](#) & Procedures; Student Attendance Policy (FHB)