

# POLICY ON RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS

## FAQ

### **1. Why did SU adopt a new policy? Doesn't the University already accommodate students who observe religious holidays?**

Yes, the University has a longstanding practice of reasonably accommodating students who seek adjustments in their academic classes and programs due to the observance of religious holidays.

In the 2019 legislative session, the Washington State Legislature passed and Governor Inslee signed into law [Substitute Senate Bill 5166](#) that amends [RCW 28.10.039](#) and requires colleges and universities to adopt policies requiring faculty to reasonably accommodate students who, due to the observance of religious holidays, expect to be absent or endure a significant hardship during certain days of the academic course or program. The amendments to state law are effective on July 28, 2019.

The University's "Policy on Religious Accommodations for Students" is consistent with RCW 28.10.039.

### **2. Is there a list of major religious holidays?**

Yes, Campus Ministry has prepared a list of major religious holidays for the 2019-2020 academic year and posted a copy online at: <https://www.seattleu.edu/campus-ministry/about/holidays/>.

### **3. Do I have to approve the accommodations requested by a student?**

Each request should be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

Under the policy and state law ([RCW 28.10.039](#)), the University is required to reasonably accommodate students who, due to the observance of religious holidays, expect to be absent or endure significant hardship during certain days of the academic course or program. The University, however, is not required to implement a requested accommodation if it (a) fundamentally alters the academic course or program or (b) creates an undue hardship on the University. To determine whether a requested accommodation fundamentally alters the academic course or program, faculty may evaluate the impact on the standards or structure of the course or program. Prior to determining the existence of an undue hardship, faculty should consult with their dean.

The Office of Institutional Equity can assist faculty in reviewing accommodation requests.

### **4. Are faculty required to notify students of the policy?**

Yes, faculty are required to notify students of the policy by including a copy of the policy or a link to the policy in their course syllabi. This is a specific requirement under the amended statute.

The following is a sample notice that can be included in course syllabi:

**“Notice Regarding Religious Accommodations**

It is the policy of Seattle University to reasonably accommodate students who, due to the observance of religious holidays, expect to be absent or endure a significant hardship during certain days of their academic course or program. Please see, *Policy on Religious Accommodations for Students* (<https://www.seattleu.edu/media/policies/Policy-on-Religious-Accommodations-for-Students---FINAL.PDF>).”

**5. Who do I contact if I have questions about the policy?**

Please contact the Office of Institutional Equity at (206) 296-2824.