

FAQ FOR INSTRUCTORS

Policy For Students On The Accommodation Of Religious Observances ([PRVPA-1](#))

Office of the Provost and Vice-President, Academic Affairs

Last Updated – October 2023

- Q: Concordia University is a secular institution. Why should we recognize religious holidays?
- A: The law obliges us to do so.
- Q: What is actually meant by “accommodation” and how should I provide it?
- A: Rescheduling, changing the weight of other academic obligations, providing students with the opportunity to do supplemental work, etc. Please remember, however, that none of the alternatives should put students at an academic disadvantage.
- Q: A student failed to inform me before the deadline that he/she could not attend an in-class examination and finally did inform me only a few days before the exam. Am I obliged to accommodate this request?
- A: A request that forces the instructor to draft a completely different exam within a very short period of time may be considered unreasonable. Even in cases where a request for accommodation is tardy, if an accommodation can be made without undue hardship, it must be provided.
- Q: A student has informed me that he/she will not be able to attend scheduled group activities (such as performance rehearsals or group presentation) that are a fundamental part of the course because of religious holidays. What can I do?
- A: If this activity is a fundamental part of the course and rescheduling cannot take place, the request is unreasonable. As mentioned above, students must consider whether they are in a position to meet course requirements when choosing courses.
- Q: A student has informed me that he/she cannot attend class for a whole month because of religious observances. Am I obliged to accommodate this request?
- A: This would not be considered a reasonable request because it affects the integrity of the course. Students who cannot, for whatever reason, attend and/or participate regularly in a course should reconsider their course selections.

Q: A student informs me of a religious holiday from a religion I have never heard of. What should I do?

A: Though not impossible, this request is improbable. 98% of requests we are aware of come from either the Jewish, Muslim or Christian faith. In other cases, please refer to the Interfaith Calendar. <http://www.interfaith-calendar.org/>

If, after consulting the Interfaith Calendar, you still have questions, you may consult either the Ombudsperson or the Coordinator of the [Multi-Faith and Spirituality Centre](#) Chaplaincy.

Q: Accommodating students is all well and good but how about taking into account some accommodation for instructors' increased workload when such demands are made?

A: The law clearly states that reasonable accommodations MUST be made and that students should not have to choose between religious observances and academic demands, unless such demands cause "undue hardship" to the University. Courts have set the bar for "undue hardship" very high. Essentially, accommodation must be made as long as it does not cause financial hardship to the University as a whole.

For any questions with respect to the *Policy for Students on the Accommodation of Religious Observances* ([PRVPA-1](#)), please contact the Ombudsperson.