

Senate Policy

Academic Accommodations for Religious Observances

1.4

Description:

This policy outlines options for academic accommodations for required religious observances.

Approvals:

Approved by Academic Standards Committee: May 18, 2006

Approved by Academic Council: May 23, 2006

Date Effective: September 1, 2006

Revised by Academic Standards Committee: December 12, 2012

Approved by Senate: February 25, 2013

Date Effective: May 1, 2013

Approval Authority: Senate

Signature: Archie Graham, Chair

Preamble

OCAD University values the pluralistic nature of its community and is committed to supporting equity, diversity, inclusion and dignity of all its members. This includes providing a supportive and respectful environment for people from diverse faith communities. The university is committed to human rights in accordance with the accommodation principles of the *Ontario Human Rights Code*. In particular, this policy is concerned with accommodations for students with respect to religious observances.

Policy:

OCAD University will offer reasonable academic accommodations to students on the grounds of religion (creed).

While OCAD University works to create an environment that is free from religious discrimination, the university will limit practices or behaviour which may put safety, health or human rights at risk or that are in violation of other university policies.

A schedule of principal holy days for the entire academic year is posted on the OCAD University website.

Curricular Program Requirements

Where there is an alleged conflict with a religious requirement in relation to the content of curriculum or teaching methods, OCAD University will endeavour to meet individual requests for accommodation if such accommodations do not violate other OCAD University policies or core academic requirements. Students may refer to the on-line Program Guides and course descriptions to determine if a specific program or course is suitable for them.

Class Attendance Requirements

Students who experience a conflict between a religious obligation and scheduled tests, mid-term examinations, or requirements to attend class and participate in project presentations or critiques may request accommodation from their instructor. The type of accommodation will vary depending on the nature, weight and timing of the work for which accommodation is sought.

The request for alternative arrangements normally must be submitted to the instructor in charge of the course within 10 business days of the distribution of the course outline at the beginning of the semester. Request forms are available on-line or from the Office of the Registrar. The instructor has a responsibility to provide reasonable alternative arrangements that do not put the student at an academic disadvantage.

In the case of a conflict with a final examination or final critique, the instructor must direct the student to the Office of the Registrar to submit a Request for Deferred Examinations/Critiques.

If a student is not satisfied with the accommodation offered by the instructor, the student may consult as appropriate: the Chair of the program offering the course, the Associate Dean for Liberal Arts & Science courses, the Associate Dean for Graduate Studies courses. Decisions of the Chair may be appealed to the Associate Dean of the Faculty.

A student who remains dissatisfied with the outcome of a request for accommodation may seek the assistance of the Office of Diversity & Equity to facilitate a resolution.

Instructors who anticipate a conflict between a required religious observance and scheduled course responsibilities should discuss the situation with their Dean/Associate Dean.

Implementation

1. Program requirements are clearly articulated in Program Guides.
2. The Academic Considerations for Religious Observances policy, outlined in the Faculty Handbook, is to be communicated to faculty and students at the outset of each semester.
3. All course outlines are to contain the following wording, which should be brought to the attention of the students:
“A student who foresees a conflict between a religious observance and any scheduled class assignments must notify the instructor in writing using the Request for Accommodation form within 10 business days of the first class. In the case of conflict with final examinations and critiques, the student must submit a Request for Deferred Examinations/Critiques form to the Office of the Registrar within 10 business days of publication of the Final Examination/Critique schedule. Late requests for an examination or critique deferral are subject to a fee.”