

VII-5.2 Religious and Faith-Based Observance Policy – University of Baltimore

Approved: August 23, 2023

[A] It is the policy of the University of Baltimore to provide reasonable academic accommodations for students to practice sincerely held faith-based or religious beliefs. This policy outlines the way students may request and receive such accommodations, including excused absences to observe faith-based or religious holidays or participate in organized religious activities. This policy also outlines how a student may request and receive reasonable alternate accommodations for missing an examination or other academic requirements due to an excused absence for sincerely held faith-based or religious reasons. A grievance policy for challenging accommodation denials or policy non-compliance is also set forth herein.

[B] An accommodation requested under this policy will be deemed reasonable and shall be granted if it is required for the student to practice a sincerely held faith-based or religious belief and it does not impose an undue hardship upon the University or fundamentally alter the essential nature of the course or program (a “Reasonable Accommodation”).

[C] Unless noted below, a student who wishes to request a Reasonable Accommodation must make the request to the faculty member for the course in which an accommodation is requested. All requests should be made, in writing, as soon as possible and whenever feasible at least three weeks in advance of the requested accommodation. Requests should indicate the sincerely held faith-based or religious beliefs that serve as the basis for the accommodation request and outline the specific accommodation(s) requested (including any requests relating to missed work).

Law School Students: For Law School student Religious Accommodation requests that involve a class absence or alternate arrangements for in-class assessments or assignments, students should email requests to the faculty member for the course in which the accommodation is requested and also copy the Law School Office of Academic Affairs (OAA) (ublawacadaff@ubalt.edu). OAA will work with faculty to consider and respond to such requests in keeping with the principles outlined below. For requests involving Law School final exams, requests should be made only to OAA (exams@ubalt.edu) and will be handled by OAA in keeping with the principles outlined for requests below.

[D] Faculty shall consider all accommodation requests made under this policy. Faculty shall engage with the student in considering the request and must make reasonable adjustments that would not present an undue hardship or fundamentally alter the essential nature of the course or program.

1. Assuming the required three weeks advance notice has been given, the faculty member shall reply within one calendar week of receiving the request. If one calendar week is not possible due to the timing of the request, faculty shall respond as soon as possible.

2. A faculty member may wish to consult with Student Support (for University student requests), Office of Academic Affairs (for School of Law student requests), or the Office of the Provost with respect to whether a requested accommodation meets the definition of a Reasonable Accommodation or to discuss alternate options the faculty member wishes to present.

[E] The faculty member and the student should engage interactively to determine a Reasonable Accommodation. A faculty member may decline a requested accommodation, if it is deemed to present an undue hardship or fundamentally alter the essential nature of the course or program, but must suggest another reasonable solution. Different faculty members may suggest different accommodations based on differing course or program requirements.

[F] *Excused absences under this Policy shall be counted toward the number of excused absences permitted by applicable policy, but should not impact participation grades or other measures of course assessment.* Note that it may be a Reasonable Accommodation to increase the number of generally allowed absences, in compliance with any outer limits established by applicable policies, regulations, or curriculum or program requirements, to accommodate faith-based or religious practices. Such increases may require approvals within the Dean's Office.

[G] Students with accommodations under this policy shall be given an opportunity to make up within a reasonable time any academic assignments or tests that are missed due to an excused absence under this policy. Whenever possible, arrangements should be made to make up missed assignments or tests in advance of the faith-based or religious observance. Students should also discuss with their faculty member ways to best gain access to any missed class material, including any class recording, if available.

[H] If a student objects to the response to an accommodation request or believes the University has otherwise failed to comply with this policy, the student may petition in writing to the dean of the college in which the course is offered.

1. Such a petition must be made within one calendar week of when the request was denied or the non-compliance issue arose. The petition must include the original request and the response or a description of how the University failed to comply with this policy.

2. The dean or the dean's designated associate or assistant dean will review the matter and will provide a decision within a week from when the petition was received. The decision of the dean (or designee) is final. Whenever possible, the dean (or designee) will attempt to issue a decision in advance of the requested accommodation implementation date.

[I] The University is also committed to providing students space at the University to accommodate faith-based and religious practices. The University will at all times maintain at least one space on campus to accommodate student faith-based or religious practices. For more information regarding the Interfaith Room, please visit: [Interfaith Room - University of Baltimore \(ubalt.edu\)](https://www.ubalt.edu/interfaith).