

NOTE:

Subsequent to UCAP approving a modification of the Religious Observance Policy, Dr. Banks indicated that it is current practice to have the policy in the Academic Programs reflect the policy in the Faculty Handbook. Unfortunately, at the time of UCAP's discussions the policy, as stated in the Academic Programs had not been updated to reflect that in the Faculty Handbook. Therefore, it became necessary to bring UCAP's recommendation in line with what was stated in the Faculty Handbook. Below you will find a) the policy as it is currently stated in the faculty handbook and b) the policy as it would be reworded based on the recommendations from UCAP. The primary difference lies in the fact that the sentence referring to faculty/instructors needed to remain in place.

POLICY ON RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE

A. Current Policy Statement

It has always been the policy of the University to permit students and faculty to observe those holidays set aside by their chosen religious faith.

The faculty and staff should be sensitive to the observance of these holidays so that students who absent themselves from classes on these days are not seriously disadvantaged. It is the responsibility of those students who wish to be absent to make arrangements in advance with their instructors. It is also the responsibility of those faculty who wish to be absent to make arrangements in advance with their chairpersons, who shall assume the responsibility for covering their classes.

As Michigan State University has become increasingly multicultural, the incidence of conflicts between mandatory academic requirements and religious observances has increased. In the absence of a simple and dignified way to determine the validity of individual claims, the claim of a religious conflict should be accepted at face value. Be aware that some degrees of observance may have a more extensive period of observance. Instructors may expect a reasonable limit to the number of requests by any one student. Some instructors attempt to cover all reasons for student absences from required academic events such as quizzes or exams with a blanket policy, e.g., allowing the student to drop one grade or two quizzes without penalty. If this is meant to extend to religious observances, the instructor should state this clearly at the beginning of the term. If instructors require make-up exams, they retain the right to determine the content of the exams and the conditions of administration, giving due consideration to equitable treatment.

B. Policy Edited with UCAP Recommendations

It is the policy of the University to permit students and instructors to observe those holidays set aside by their chosen religious faith.

Instructors must be sensitive to those who absent themselves from class in order to observe religious holidays. It is the responsibility of students who wish to be absent to make arrangements in advance with their instructors. It is also the responsibility of those instructors who wish to be absent to make arrangements in advance with their chairpersons, who shall assume the responsibility for covering their classes.

In the absence of a simple and dignified way to determine the validity of individual claims, instructors generally should accept of religious conflict at face value. Instructors may expect a reasonable limit to the number of absences by any one student. If it is the practice of an instructor to cover reasons for student absences from required academic events such as quizzes or exams with a blanket practice, e.g., allowing the student to drop one grade or two quizzes without penalty, this practice does not apply to the university policy on religious observance. If instructors require make-up exams, they retain the right to determine content and conditions of administration, giving due consideration to equitable treatment.

Hearing procedures for violations of the religious observance policy are those in place for the Code of Teaching Responsibility.

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