



Policy Name:	Mercy University Religious Accommodations Policy		
Associated Form(s):	Accommodations Intake Form: https://mercyaccommodate.symplicity.com/	Policy Number:	2026-18
Reviewed:	Non-Academic Policy Committee	Approved:	September 18, 2026
Approval Authority:	President <i>Susan Parish</i>	Adopted:	September 19, 2026
Responsible Executive(s):	1. Provost 2. Vice President of Human Resources	Revised:	Previously part of accommodations policies for students and employees
Responsible Office:	1. Office ACCESSibility 2. Office of Human Resources	Contact:	1. Director of ACCESSibility 2. Associate Director of Human Resources

I. Policy Statement

Mercy University is committed to providing an academic and work environment respectful of the religious beliefs of its students, employees, community members, contractors, vendors and visitors. As part of this commitment, Mercy will provide reasonable religious accommodations to students, employees, contractors, vendors and visitors who have sincerely held religious beliefs which conflict with a University policy, procedure or other academic or employment requirement unless such an accommodation would create an undue hardship.

II. Definitions

- Religion or Creed: Includes traditional, organized religions and religious beliefs, as well as those that are new, uncommon and/or not part of a formal church or sect. All aspects of religious belief and observance that are sincerely held will be considered as part of this policy. May also include the intersectionality of religious identities.
- Religious Accommodation: A reasonable change in the work or academic environment which enables a student, employee, patient, community member or visitor to practice or otherwise observe a sincerely held religious practice or belief without causing either undue hardship on the University or a fundamental alteration to an essential job function or program requirement. A reasonable religious accommodation may include, but is not limited to, time allocated for prayer during a workday or school day, the ability to attend religious events or observe a religious holiday, vaccine exemptions, specialized housing or dining requests, or any necessary modification to University policy, procedure or other requirement for a student's or employee's (or prospective employee's) religious beliefs, observance or practice, provided that such an accommodation is reasonable and does not cause undue hardship or a fundamental alteration to an essential job function or program requirement.
- Administrative Burden/Undue Hardship/Fundamental Alteration: There is significant difficulty and expense based on the University's resources and circumstances in relationship to the cost or difficulty of providing a specific accommodation. Undue hardship may refer to financial difficulty in providing accommodation(s) that are unduly expensive, substantial, disruptive, or place an undue burden on others to perform. A fundamental alteration would be if a request fundamentally alters academic requirements, the nature or operation of Mercy University business, or the essential functions of a job. Accommodations which interfere with the safe and efficient operation of the workplace or campus or with a bona fide seniority system will also often present an undue hardship.

III. Procedures for Seeking Religious Accommodation

A. Requests

1. **Students** requesting a religious accommodation should contact the Office ACCESSibility, who will engage in an interactive process with the student with the goal of finding an acceptable accommodation.
2. **Employees and applicants** requesting a religious accommodation should contact the Office of Human Resources. The Associate Director of Human Resources or their designee and the employee/applicant will engage in an interactive process with the goal of finding an acceptable accommodation.
3. **Intake Form.** Individuals requesting accommodations may be required to submit an intake form. The interactive process may include a consideration of a variety of factors, such as the individual's religious practices and the functions and requirements of the job. Reasonable accommodations may include, but are not limited to, flexible arrival and/or departure times, leave or assignment changes, time and/or space to pray, or an accommodation relating to appearance or dress.
4. **Inquiry.** Mercy generally will not question whether a request for religious accommodation is based on a sincerely held belief. However, if Mercy has genuine reason to doubt that a belief qualifies as religious, or is sincerely held, Mercy may make a limited inquiry, asking for supporting documentation. The documentation submitted may include the requestor's first-hand explanation, or explanations from others, such as a religious official or clergy member, who are aware of the religious practice or belief.
5. **Grant or denial.** A grant or denial of the request will be made as soon as practicable, taking into account the urgency of the request, and sent in writing to the individual making the request, either stating the accommodation, or for denials, the reason(s) the request was denied.

B. Absences

1. **Students** who anticipate being absent from classes because of a religious observance must provide faculty or appropriate designee with advanced notice of their absence in accordance with their School or Program Student Handbook processes. Please note that accommodations cannot be granted retroactively. Consistent with New York State Education Law Section 224-a, students who are absent from school because of a

religious belief will be given the equivalent opportunity, without any additional fee charged, to register for classes or make up any examination, study or work requirements missed because of such absence on any particular day or days. Note, however, that being absent from class or other educational responsibilities does not excuse students from keeping up with any information shared or expectations set during the missed class(es). Students are responsible for obtaining the materials and information provided during any class(es) missed.

- a. Students involved in an internship/clinical program must also provide reasonable advance notice to their internship/clinical supervisor prior to any absence. Students should understand that if an accommodation is granted, missing time from an internship/clinical may require the student to make up work or repeat the internship/clinical at a later time. It is also important to note that off-campus clinical rotations are outside of Mercy's jurisdiction, and those locations/entities may not honor a reasonable religious accommodation approved or in place at Mercy. Any student who is seeking a reasonable religious accommodation for an off-campus clinical rotation should work with their respective program director and the Office of ACCeSSibility in advance of beginning the rotation or externship. The Office of ACCESSibility will then engage in the interactive process with the program and site to determine the reasonability of the student's religious accommodation request in relation to the site's business operations or requirements. If a particular site is not able to approve a student's religious accommodation request, the program will seek to identify potential alternative accommodations or identify a different site for the student.
2. **Employees (including Faculty and Staff).** Mercy will make reasonable efforts to accommodate an employee's requests for absences to the extent possible by allowing flexible arrival and departure times, floating or optional holidays, flexible work breaks, or by considering schedule substitutions with colleagues of substantially similar qualifications which may need to be arranged by or with the assistance of the requesting employee. Employees who anticipate being absent from work because of a religious observance must submit their request for time off in advance and as soon as they become aware of the need or at least ten (10) business days in advance. Please note Accommodations cannot be granted retroactively.

IV. Appeals

Employees, students, and applicants may appeal a denial of their accommodation request by filing a complaint with the Director of Title IX and Title VI/Equity Compliance. The Director of Title IX and Title VI/Equity Compliance or their designee will mediate to try

to resolve the issues between the individual and the University to find an acceptable accommodation. If a mutually acceptable accommodation cannot be determined, then the Director of Title IX and Title VI/Equity Compliance or designee, will investigate the complaint and make a recommendation to the Provost if the requestor is a student or the Vice President of Human Resources if the requestor is an employee or applicant. The Provost or Vice President of Human Resources will make the final determination concerning the complaint. If the employee is covered by a collective bargaining agreement, the employee may discuss the matter with a union representative and exercise any rights available under such agreement.