

TCU Policy for the Religious Observances and Holidays

Policy

“Students who are unable to participate in a class, in any related assignment or in a university required activity because of the religious observance of a holy day shall be provided with a reasonable opportunity to make up the examination or assignment, without penalty, provided that it does not create an unreasonable burden on the University.”

Guidelines for Implementation

- That students notify faculty or staff the first two weeks of the semester of their intention to be absent from class or the required event on their day(s) of religious observance;
- That faculty and staff extend to these students the courtesy of absence, without penalty for lack of attendance, on the day(s) of religious observance;
- That faculty and staff extend to these students the opportunity to make up examinations and assignments where applicable;
- That prior to each fall semester a three-year schedule of university-recognized religious holidays most frequently observed will be distributed to faculty by The Office of Religious & Spiritual Life.
- The policy and calendar of observances be posted on appropriate websites, including, but not limited to Registrar’s Office, Office of Religious and Spiritual Life website, Office of Diversity & Inclusion, the Koehler Center and Campus Life.
- That the administration conveys this policy to students by including it on the university’s website and other places deemed appropriate. Colleges and Schools are also highly encouraged to post the policy online and include it in appropriate faculty, staff and student resources.

Guidelines for Students

1. That students notify faculty in writing during the first two weeks of the semester of their intention to be absent from class on their day(s) of religious observance.
2. That faculty will continue to extend to students the courtesy of absence without penalty on these occasions, including permission to make up examinations, quizzes or other assignments.
3. That student members of other religious groups not listed in the calendar are also entitled to the same courtesies and consideration.
4. That students with general concerns or questions about this policy and its implementation contact The Office of Religious and Spiritual Life or the Provost’s Office.
5. That students with concerns about the policy’s implementation in a particular class contact the chair of that department.

Guidelines for Faculty

1. That faculty include the Religious Holidays policy in their syllabi and/or the information on TCUOnline.
2. That faculty continue to extend to students the courtesy of absence without penalty on these occasions, including permission to make up examinations, quizzes or other assignments.
3. That faculty will extend to student members of other religious groups not listed in the calendar the same courtesies and consideration.

Policy Background

Federal and state laws have addressed religious discrimination, accommodation and inclusion in public universities and colleges for decades. More recently, private higher education is embracing their own policies that enable students to participate fully in university life while also fully expressing their religious traditions.

Currently at TCU, students, particularly those in underrepresented communities, wishing to observe their religious holiday make arrangements individually on a case by case basis with faculty with mixed success. Other times they chose to be absent with a possible penalty. As these approaches lack equity, we have both the opportunity and the responsibility to create an environment where students from all religious backgrounds can thrive.

In the past three years, The Office of Religious and Spiritual Life, along with support from students in Hillel, the Muslim Student Association, the Religious Advisory Council and Student Government Association have researched, developed and revised the proposed policy. More recently, collaboration and support from the Provost's Office and the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion have moved the process forward significantly.

The Goal

The goal is for the university to implement a simple, accessible policy that supports the religious practice of all students, while simultaneously honoring the academic mission of the university. This fits well with our university priorities and strategic plans as "TCU strives to be a home for a diverse range of perspectives and backgrounds essential to rigorous learning" and we seek "to promote a community where individuals feel welcomed, respected, valued and supported..."¹

¹"Vision & Mission." *Diversity Equity Inclusion*, www.inclusion.tcu.edu/about/vision-mission/.