

Accommodations for Religious Observances
(By Action of the Bloomington Faculty Council: February 15, 2000)

Introduction:

It is the policy of Indiana University, ~~as it is also federal law,~~ that instructors must reasonably accommodate students who want to observe their religious holidays at times when academic requirements conflict with those observances. ~~Past practice has been to circulate a memo to faculty and instructors at the beginning of the fall semester, in order to alert them to the need to schedule exams and other requirements around the holidays or to make an accommodation for those students who request alternate arrangements because of their religious observances. This practice has not been effective; each year, especially during the fall semester, Indiana University receives many complaints of noncompliance. Therefore, the Bloomington Faculty Council Affirmative Action Committee and the Bloomington Campus Calendar Committee recommend adoption of the following policy and procedures. This policy is intended to ensure that both faculty and students are fully aware of their rights and responsibilities in the accommodation of students' religious observances.~~

Policy:

Indiana University respects the right of all students to observe their religious holidays and will make reasonable accommodation, upon request, for such observances.

Procedures:

1. ~~The Dean of the Faculties Office~~ **Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty and Academic Affairs** will prepare, **for guidance**, a list of dates ~~for~~ of the major religious holidays (as specified by leaders of the local religious communities). This list will be included each semester in the *Schedule of Classes* along with this policy and with a note to the effect that students wanting accommodations for observance of other religious holidays should contact their instructors. **This list, policy, and a note to the effect that students wanting accommodations for observance of religious holidays must contact their instructors, will be brought to the attention of both students and faculty.** ~~The Dean of Faculties Office will send out, well in advance of any given semester, the dates of those same holidays, with the added information that detailed descriptions of the major holidays and of what is or may be involved in the observance of them is available on the IU web pages.~~ **The Vice Provost for Faculty and Academic Affairs** will write regularly to the various deans and chairs, indicating that they, in turn, are to inform the faculty (including associate instructors **under their supervision**) concerning this policy and of the importance of observing it. ~~The Dean of the Faculties Office will alert department chairs and scheduling officers to religious holidays at least one year in advance so that they can avoid scheduling examinations for multi-section classes on religious holidays.~~
2. If a conflict with a religious observance exists, a student must make a request **to the instructor** for a reasonable accommodation for that observance by the end of the second week of the course. **Any relevant change to the course calendar affords a new opportunity to make such a request in a timely manner.** ~~The request is to be made in writing. The Dean of the~~

~~Faculties Office will develop~~ on a standardized form to be used for this purpose, and copies of that form will be made widely available.

3. The instructor and the student should discuss what a reasonable accommodation should include in a given case. Generally, it is insufficient to require a student to forego taking an exam or doing some other major assignment even if the instructor agrees to average the remaining exams or other assignments. The student must be given the opportunity to do appropriate make-up work that is intrinsically no more difficult than the original exam or assignment.

4. If the instructor and student agree on the accommodation, the plan should be carried out.

5. If after discussion there is no consensus on the accommodation, either party or both ~~should seek advice of the Dean of the Faculties~~ **Office may ask the Vice Provost for Faculty and Academic Affairs to mediate. The VPFAA will confer with both the instructor and the student, and may seek advice from anyone else who could provide helpful information. If the instructor and student still cannot reach consensus over the accommodation, the VPFAA will then make a determination about the appropriate accommodation.**

6. Either the instructor or the student may appeal the VPFAA's decision to the Office of Affirmative Action. Final authority for determining the outcome rests with the Provost.

~~6. If after seeking such advice the student and the instructor are still not in agreement, the student has the right to appeal the decision to the Dean of the Faculties. The Dean of the Faculties will confer with both the instructor and the student and may seek advice from anyone else that could provide helpful information. The Dean of the Faculties will then make a determination concerning the appropriate accommodation.~~

~~7. Either the instructor or the student may appeal the VPFAA's decision to the Office of Affirmative Action within ten business days of the determination by the Dean of the Faculties.~~

~~8. This policy is to be fully implemented in time for it to go into effect in Fall 2001. Partial implementation of it will begin as soon as possible.~~

Recommendations:

1. ~~We recommend that~~ **T**the policy and procedure above **are to** be printed in the *Code of Student Rights, Responsibilities, and Conduct: Procedures for Bloomington Campus* ~~and, perhaps, elsewhere as well.~~

2. All instructors are encouraged to include on the syllabus and to announce at the beginning of the semester the policy and procedure as it applies to religious holidays.

3. ~~We recommend that~~ **O**rientation programs for new students **will** inform incoming students about this policy and urge them to check for conflicts before the deadline for informing their instructors. ~~This is particularly important for foreign students.~~ **Particular attention should be paid, in this matter, to the orientation of foreign international students.**