

RESOURCE GUIDE FOR SUPERVISORS
ON ISSUES RELATED TO RELIGION



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The following resource guide is provided to supervisors to provide guidance in the scheduling of events and dietary considerations when ordering food for various events. When making these plans one needs to be sensitive to the various religious holidays as well as religious practices and beliefs.

University statements on religion:

University Administration has issued the following statement on religion:

In preparing the calendar for an academic year, the University makes every reasonable effort to avoid conflicts with religious holidays. However, when conflicts are unavoidable, efforts are made to make accommodations for the employees and students affected.

The University Affirmative Action Office has a statement in the Affirmative Action Plan that states:

The University has, and will continue to implement, a policy of non-discrimination based on religion and national origin. Recruitment for faculty and administrative positions includes national advertising and contacts with universities with substantial enrollments of students from various religious and ethnic groups.

The University accommodates the religious observances and practices of employees or prospective employees except when such accommodations cause an undue hardship on the conduct of the University's operations. The extent of the obligation is determined by considering numerous factors including, but not limited to, business costs and expenses and resulting personnel problems.

Policy Accommodating Religious Observances of Students

Admissions/Registration

The University's admissions process provides ample opportunity for admission and registration activities without conflicting with religious holidays and observances. However, students may receive another appointment when an appointment for admission counseling, or an appointment for academic advisement, or an appointment for registration for classes falls on a date or at a time that would conflict with the student's observances of major religious holidays. The individual student must notify in writing the appropriate admissions officer or academic adviser of the conflict with the student's observance of the religious holiday. That notification shall be made

immediately after the student's receipt of the appointment or at least five work days prior to the appointment time, whichever is later.

Class Attendance

Students absent from classes because of observances of major religious holidays will be excused. Students *must notify the instructor at least three regular class periods in advance of an absence from class for a religious holiday* and must take the responsibility for making up work missed.

Examinations

Instructors are requested not to schedule class examinations on dates that would conflict with major religious holidays. In the event an examination must be scheduled on a date that conflicts with a student's required observance of a religious holiday, the student should be given reasonable opportunity to make up the examination. It is the student's responsibility to notify the instructor of the class when the examination will be missed. That notification must occur at least three regular class meeting periods in advance of the absence or at the time the announcement of the examination is made, whichever is later.

Grievance Procedure

A student who believes that he or she has been unreasonably denied an educational benefit due to his or her religious belief or practices may petition in writing as follows:

Cases involving class attendance or class examinations that are unresolved at the class instructor level may be appealed by the student by filing a petition in writing, within thirty calendar days of the incident being appealed, to the chair or coordinator of the department or program in which the course is offered. In the event the case is not resolved to the student's satisfaction at the department/program level within five working days after the chair's receipt of the petition, the student may petition in writing to the dean of the school of college to which that teaching department or program reports. The student's petition to the school or college level must be filed with the dean within five working days of the decision at the department level. Should the case not be resolved to the student's satisfaction at the school or college level within five working days of the petition filing at that level, the student may petition the Provost and Vice Chancellor. If the student is still not satisfied at that level within the five working day time period, he or she may petition to the Chancellor within another five working days. Decisions of the Chancellor may be appealed to the President, and to the Board of Trustees if necessary, in accordance with Bylaws of the Board of Trustees.

In cases involving admissions, *the grievance process should follow the time frames described above*, with the initial petition being filed with the Director of Admissions and Records, which is the only filing point prior to the Provost and Vice Chancellor.

The five basic religions covered in the resource guide are Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism.

BUDDHISM

RELIGION - Buddhism is the religion without a God. The Buddhist faith centers on the Buddha who is revered not in the sense of Buddha as God, but as an example to us of a way of life. The Buddhist believes that the essence of Buddha is within oneself. If one wants to become Buddha, one must realize Buddhahood within, through prayers, purification, retreats, and virtuous conduct, such as the practice of generosity.

PRAYER - There is great emphasis on meditation to relax the mind and body in order to see life in its true perspective. The Buddhist believes in meditating on one's death while still in good health and this is practiced daily by most monks at the monastery. The technique they use for meditation is called Anapanasali. It is a widely used meditation technique whereby one composes the mind by focusing attention on the inhalation and exhalation of breath.

DIETARY- As Buddhists are found in countries with a wide range of climates, diets vary. Many Buddhists are vegetarian because the eating of meat entails suffering to the slain animal. Some may even consider that an animal contains a reincarnated human spirit. An awareness of the possible need for a vegetarian diet is important for those of Buddhist faith.

CHRISTIANITY

RELIGION - Christians believe that Jesus, born about 6 BC in Bethlehem in Judea, was the messiah, or Christ, promised through the previous millennia through the Hebrews to the world by their God, Yahweh. This messiah was to be God in human form. This Jesus is God from eternity. The death experienced by Jesus was the means of atonement whereby men and women may experience the forgiveness of God and be restored into a personal relationship with God.

PRAYER- Prayer varies and is private, public and communal in nature.

DIETARY- Generally, for most Christians there are no obligatory dietary restrictions. However, some may personally practice abstinence and fasting. A few exceptions to be noted are the following:

Seven Day Adventist: Ban the use of tobacco and alcohol; the use of coffee and tea is discouraged. Modified vegetarian diet is recommended.

Church of Latter-Day-Saints (Mormons): Alcohol, tea, coffee, tobacco and cola drinks are to be avoided. Meat is eaten sparingly.

Catholics: Fast and abstain from meat on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday; fast on Fridays during Lent. Some fast as preparation for communion.

HINDUISM

RELIGION - Hinduism is an intricately woven philosophy that comprises the lifestyle of over 700 million people throughout India and the world at large today. Not strictly a religion, the tradition is referred to as *Sanatana Dharma*, or Code of Life. Thus, it is a philosophically inclusive tradition, or simply, a way of thinking. Hinduism is a very tolerant tradition that recognizes different ways of getting to know God. No single central authority governs Hinduism, but rather, many texts and scholars that allow for many paths to *moksa*, or salvation. These include Paths of Devotion, Knowledge, and Action. The many gods of the Hindu pantheon are divine manifestations of the Ultimate, worshipped as a means of getting to know an impersonal *Brahman*, or the Supreme Being.

One tenet of Hinduism is reincarnation, or rebirth. Hindus believe the soul is eternal, and may take many lives to achieve *moksa*, which is actually a union with *Brahman*. The many lives are necessary for the soul to be purified and rid of its *karma*, or consequences of past actions. Hinduism has no distinct ritual, but adherence to a lifestyle complying with these beliefs makes one Hindu.

PRAYER/DIETARY - As there is no prescribed Hindu ritual, there are no definite 'Hindu rules' regarding diet and prayer. Many Hindus are vegetarian, following a philosophy of non-injury to all creatures, yet many are not, making them no "better" or "worse" of a Hindu. *Puja* is the act of worshipping god, characterized by devotion to the divine as an icon, often a statue, with a *tilak*, or mark on the forehead, along with offerings of prayers, flowers, food, and a small flame. Divinity is seen in every and all aspect of the world, making Hinduism a beautiful tradition that encompasses heart and mind, body and soul.

Source: Rupal Shroff, Undergraduate Student, Northwestern University, Major: Religion.

Hindu Holidays

Because of regional differences in the practice of Hinduism, religious holidays also differ by region. Government of India (national) Hindu holidays are Dassera and Diwali. Other major Hindu holidays are Ganesh Caturthi and Krishna Janmashtami.

Please also note that because India is a secular country, its Government of India national holidays include holidays for other major religions practiced in India: Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, Jainism, and Sikhism.

ISLAM

RELIGION - Islam means Peace, Purity, Acceptance and Commitment. To the Muslim, Islam is life; it is submission to God. Muslims believe that everyone is accountable to God for what one does on Earth. When death comes, the Muslim will be judged and rewarded or punished in the life thereafter.

PRAYER - Prayers are said five times a day, at daybreak, noon, mid-afternoon, after sunset and early into the night. A ritual cleansing called "wudu" always precedes prayer. In prayer, the head must face toward the Ka'bah, which is located in Mecca. The Ka'bah is the house of worship that was built by Prophet Abraham and later re-established as the prayer center by Prophet Muhammad.

DIETARY- Food regulations are strict, and pork and alcohol are prohibited. Some Muslims are vegetarian outside the home as meat must be ritually prepared.

JUDAISM

RELIGION - It is one of the most ancient of living religions. Jews tend to represent Conservative, Orthodox, Reconstructionist or Reform Judaism.

PRAYER - For some Jews, prayer, three times daily facing east, is part of their normative practice. Jewish symbols, prayer shawls, and prayer books are helpful at prayer.

DIETARY - Dietary customs have deep spiritual meaning and signify more than the physical act of partaking of certain foods and abstaining from others. Those who uphold the special dietary laws refer to the provision of kosher food -special slaughtering and preparation of meat, separation of milk and meat foods, forbidden food, etc. In the period of Passover, avoidance of all leaven and the provision of unleavened bread is essential.

OTHER- The Sabbath is Saturday, sunset on Friday to sunset on Saturday. The Jews have major religious observations, for example, Rosh Hashanah (New Year), Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement), etc.