G1.12
Reasonable Accommodation of Religious Observances for Students and Employees

Effective Date: 02/06/2015

POLICY STATEMENT

Northeastern Illinois University (Northeastern or the "University") has an enduring commitment to supporting equality of educational and employment opportunity by affirming the values of diversity and inclusiveness. This commitment includes embracing religious diversity. The University reasonably accommodates students and employees with respect to their fulfillment of their religious observation requirements. This policy adopts the concept of "Reasonable Accommodation of Religious Observances" for all students, faculty and staff with regard to employment obligations, admissions, class attendance and the scheduling of examinations and other academic work.

PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

Northeastern, as a public institution, does not observe religious holidays, only legal holidays. However, it has been the University’s long-standing policy that every reasonable effort should be made to help students avoid negative academic consequences when their religious obligations conflict with academic requirements and help employees avoid negative employment actions when their religious obligations conflict with their work obligations. This "Reasonable Accommodation of Religious Observances" policy advances the University’s values of diversity and inclusiveness, and reasonably limits the impact of student and employee absences on University functions.

WHO IS AFFECTED BY THIS POLICY

All members of the University community, including students, faculty and staff.

REGULATIONS

Section 1: Students

Pursuant to Illinois Public Act 84-212, a state law prohibiting public school districts and institutions of higher education from discriminating against students for observing religious holidays, Northeastern establishes the following regulations. When religious obligations make it impossible to attend classes on a particular day or at a particular time of day, a student shall be excused from undertaking any academic work assignments on such days or times. Absence from classes or examinations for religious obligations does not relieve students from responsibility for any part of the course work required during the period of absence. Students who expect to miss classes, examinations or other assignments as a consequence of their religious observance shall be provided with a reasonable alternative opportunity to complete such academic responsibilities. Faculty may require that students who plan an absence for religious purposes to provide written notice of the intended absence. Such a notice requirement must be listed on the course syllabus.

It is the responsibility of all students who also are employees of the University to notify their department to make arrangements to fulfill their obligations to the University in advance of any absence, and/or to utilize accrued leave (if applicable) during the absence (See Section 2).
No fees or penalties may be imposed against the students or employees who exercise such opportunities.

Section 2: University Employees

This policy shall be construed as to University employees in accordance with Illinois and federal statutes and relevant University policy, collective bargaining agreements, rules and regulations. Pursuant to the Illinois Human Rights Act, University employees may take time off from work in order to observe religious practices. The law does not require payment to employees who take time off from work for this purpose. However, the law requires that if operational needs permit, work hours lost without pay for religious reasons be replaced as needed.

All employees who plan to take time off from work for religious purposes must provide written notice to appropriate supervisors ten calendar days prior to the intended absence. Employees may:

   a) Charge the absence to accrued leave by the use of vacation days or personal days under a collective bargaining agreement if an accrued leave balance is available; or
   b) Request an unpaid leave of absence.

PROCEDURES

Should disagreement arise over any aspect of this policy with respect to students’ religious observation, the parties involved should contact the Department Chair. In addition, a student or employee who feels that the University has unreasonably denied an educational or employment benefit due to religious beliefs or practices should directly contact the University’s Director of Equal Opportunity, Affirmative Action and Ethics Compliance (Director of EO). Such reporting may be initiated by filing a complaint form with the Director of EO (see Appendix A). The Director of EO will counsel the reporting individual (the Complainant) and assist with filing a complaint.

A complaint under this policy against the Director of EO should be filed with the President, who will appoint a neutral party to fulfill the role of the Director of EO. Such a complaint against the President or the General Counsel should be filed with the Director of EO, who will engage an outside investigator to ensure that an appropriate, independent investigation is undertaken.

AUTHOR REFERENCE

Illinois Human Rights Act (IHRA)
Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI)
Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VII)
Cornell University, Religious Accommodation

University of Michigan, Religious Holidays
Western Illinois University, Reasonable Accommodation of Students and Employees Religious Observance Policy

HISTORY

Formerly Administrative Memorandum No. 29: Observance of Religious Holidays by Students and University Employees

APPENDIX

Appendix A, Discrimination/Harassment Complaint Form
Appendix B, Equal Opportunity and Nondiscrimination Policy and Grievance Procedure
CONTACT INFORMATION

Please direct questions or concerns about this policy to: Office of the President

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<tr>
<th>Contact</th>
<th>Phone</th>
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<td>President</td>
<td>(773) 442-5400</td>
<td><a href="mailto:askus@neiu.edu">askus@neiu.edu</a></td>
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DISCLAIMER

The University reserves the right to modify or amend sections of this policy at any time at its sole discretion. This policy remains in effect until such time as the Responsible Officer calls for review. Requests for exception to any portion of this policy, but not to the policy statement, must be presented in writing to the Responsible Officer.