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## **STUDENT RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATIONS FOR EXCUSED ABSENCE POLICY**

**Date of Initial Approval:** 03/18/24 Draft

**Date Revised:**

**Category:** 4.0 Students & Student Affairs

**Responsible Department:** Office for Inclusive Excellence

**Stakeholders Involved in Review:** VP of DEI, Leadership Council, Provost Advisory Council

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### **PURPOSE & SCOPE**

Rocky Vista University (RVU) aims to provide a reasonable accommodation for the sincerely held religious beliefs of a student if the accommodation would resolve a conflict between the individual's religious beliefs or practices and an educational requirement unless doing so would create an undue burden for RVU.

### **POLICY**

RVU will make determinations about religious accommodations and attendance/excused absences on a case-by-case basis considering various factors and based on an individualized assessment in each situation.

RVU strives to make determinations on religious accommodation requests expeditiously and will inform the individual once a determination has been made. If there are questions about an accommodation request, please contact the Vice President for Inclusive Excellence, in the Office for Inclusive Excellence.

The Office for Inclusive Excellence is responsible for the administration of this policy. Questions regarding this policy or questions about religious accommodations that are not addressed in this policy should be directed to the Vice President for Inclusive Excellence.

- i) Students are strongly encouraged to submit all religious accommodation requests for the entire academic year via the iNET form during the first week of the semester. Requests may require up to two weeks to process. Please be aware that failure to submit requests in a timely manner may delay the implementation of any approved accommodations.
- ii) Students should understand that if accommodation is granted, missing time from an internship or clinical placement may require the student to make up work or repeat the internship or clinical placement at a later time, potentially delaying progress in the program and/or graduation.
- iii) Make up/Extension: If examinations or assignment deadlines are scheduled on the day(s) of a religious observance, any student who provided advance notice in accordance with program policies and procedures will have the opportunity to make up the examination or extend the assignment deadline and will not be penalized for the absence.
- iv) Being absent from class or other educational responsibilities does not excuse students from meeting all expectations set during the missed class(es). Students are responsible for obtaining the materials and information provided during any class(es) missed.

- v) The Vice President for Inclusive Excellence will consult with religious experts in considering the religious accommodation.

No Retaliation

Individuals will not be retaliated against for requesting accommodation in good faith. Rocky Vista University expressly prohibits any form of discipline, reprisal, intimidation, or retaliation against any individual for requesting accommodation in good faith.

Rocky Vista University is committed to enforcing this policy and prohibiting retaliation against students who request accommodation in good faith. If students feel that they may have been subjected to conduct that violates this policy, they should report it immediately to the Senior Manager of Compliance.

Please note that accommodations granted by the University are not applicable retroactively and will not affect past administrative or academic actions, or past performance evaluations and examinations.

**ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES**

<b>Vice President for Inclusive Excellence</b>	Oversight and approvals for religious accommodation requests
<b>Students</b>	Responsible for requesting religious accommodation at least a week in advance for an excused absence via the Religious Accommodation Request form on the iNet. Responsible for ensuring missed work is made up and/or exams rescheduled
<b>COM Directors of Preclinical Education (DCPE), Director Physicians Studies, Director, MSBS, Director Clinical Education</b>	VP for Inclusive Excellence informs Program Director of approved excused absences to disseminate to course directors or those with a legitimate educational interest in the information

**RELATED PROCESS/PROCEDURES**

- Appendix 1 – **Requesting a Religious Accommodation**

**POLICY REVISION HISTORY**

03/18/24      First approval by Leadership Council

## **Appendix 1**

### **Requesting a Religious Accommodation**

If a student believes they need an accommodation because of their religious beliefs or practices or lack thereof, the student is strongly encouraged to request an accommodation from the Office for Inclusive Excellence during the first week of the semester. Students must make the request in writing by completing the Religious Accommodations for Absences Request form on the iNet and must include relevant information, such as:

- A description of the accommodation the student is requesting.
- The reason the student needs an accommodation.
- How the accommodation will help resolve the conflict between a student's sincerely held religious beliefs or practices or lack thereof and one or more of their educational program requirements.

The request for accommodations must be made utilizing the form found on the INET portal at: [\(link here\)](#). After receiving the request, RVU's VP for Inclusive Excellence will engage in a dialogue with the student to explore potential accommodations that could resolve the conflict between their religious beliefs and practices and the educational requirements. RVU encourages the student to suggest specific reasonable accommodations that they believe would resolve any such conflict. However, RVU is not required to make the specific accommodation requested by the student and may provide an alternative, effective accommodation, to the extent any accommodation can be made without imposing an undue hardship on RVU.

Students will be notified via e-mail about their religious accommodations request within 60 days of application.

### **Supporting Information**

Rocky Vista University may ask the student to provide additional information about their religious practices or beliefs and the accommodation requested. A letter or official document from a religious official (e.g., Rabbi, Minister, Priest, Pastor, Imam) attesting to a student's need for an accommodation may be required.

If the student fails to provide the requested information, the request for an accommodation may be denied.

### **Appeals Process**

Students who are not approved for a Religious Accommodation may appeal decisions within three business days in writing to the President/CEO of RVU. Appeal decisions will be made within five business days of receiving the request.

### **Appeal Considerations**

Requests for appeals must be made in writing and sent directly to the President via email or delivered to the President's Executive Administrative Assistant in person. The appeal must come in writing within three business days of receipt of the initial decision by the Vice President for Inclusive Excellence.

The appeal must be based on one or more of the following: 1) a significant error in fact that materially impacted the outcome; 2) evidence of demonstrated prejudice by the initial decision maker; or 3) new material information or evidence that was not available at the time of the consideration of the matter or was not available and could not be made available to the decision maker at the time of their decision. Any new material or evidence must be submitted with the appeal.

Once an appeal is decided, the outcome is final.