

Allegany College of Maryland  
**STUDENT & LEGAL AFFAIRS**

**FIRST AMENDMENT RELIGIOUS FREEDOM POLICY**  
**ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS**

**Guiding Principle:**

The *policy* codifies the College's compliance with Maryland law (**Accommodations at Public Institutions for Religious Beliefs**) as well as standing federal mandates prohibiting discrimination on the basis of religion with the accompanying requirement to provide reasonable accommodations for faith-based or religious practices/observances. A reasonable accommodation is an adjustment to a College rule or requirement that will allow the student or employee to meet their sincerely held religious beliefs\* without creating an undue hardship upon the College. This document provides guidance for providing such accommodations to students.

\*Beliefs, practices, and observances that are theistic in nature or non-theistic moral or ethical beliefs as to what is right and wrong that are sincerely held. A religion may or may not be a traditional organized faith. Religion is not social, political, or economic philosophies or personal preferences. "Sincerely held" means the professed belief is genuine to the individual or group with literature, practices, observances, or other indicia that aligns with the professed belief.

**Faculty/Academic Programs must:**

- Excuse absences for a student to observe faith-based or religious holidays or participate in organized religious activities and
- Allow an alternative if a student misses an examination or other academic requirement pursuant to an absence excused under this policy.

**Faculty/Academic Programs may not:**

- Pass judgement upon a student's faith-based or religious beliefs.
- Deny a request for accommodation *unless* there is an objective basis to question its authenticity and the faculty/program has consulted with Student & Legal Affairs.
- Penalize a student for being absent or missing an exam, activity, or course content.

**Students must**

- Be aware of the College calendar as well as the course syllabi to know in advance\* if/when scheduled classes/activities will conflict with their faith-based or religious observances (ie., holidays or restrictions on activities). Plan ahead.
- Request an accommodation in advance\* so there is reasonable notice of an absence or need for an alternative academic requirement due to an absence.
- Comply with any alternate, reasonable academic requirement.
- Be aware of any adverse impact their absence(s) will have upon their academic progress and limit other, unnecessary absences so their success in the course(s) are not jeopardized.

\*Students should be able to plan for the semester when they receive the course syllabus at the start of each semester. Academic requirements that arise unexpectedly should be addressed in a timely manner so the accommodation process can be both efficient and fair.

**Students may:**

- Report non-compliance with the law/policy by contacting the Dean of Student & Legal Affairs.

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**Examples:**

- ✚ Student's clinical rotation schedules Sunday hours but student strictly observes the Christian sabbath which forbids work. Possible accommodation: arrange a different schedule with the clinical site.
- ✚ Student asks to be excused from class when an important discussion is scheduled for Yom Kippur. Possible accommodation: written assignment on the topic + cannot lose participation points.
- ✚ Student asks to take an exam after sundown or after the day's fasting ends during Ramadan. Possible accommodations: proctored exam at night, attend an evening class section (if offered), alternate exam after Ramadan, alternate activity that can be completed to demonstrate knowledge of tested material.
- ✚ Student asks for a different day to deliver a presentation because the assigned date is on Diwali. Possible accommodation: assign a different date.