

# Lehigh University

## Religious Accommodation Policy

### Scope

This policy applies to all members of the University community, including faculty, staff, students, contractors, and visitors.

### Purpose

Although Lehigh University is a non-sectarian institution, the University recognizes that members of our community practice a wide variety of religious and spiritual traditions. The University honors and respects each individual's right to the free exercise of religion. The University further acknowledges that one's religious and spiritual obligations may impact their ability to fully engage in various areas of University life. This Religious Accommodation Policy (Policy) is designed to recognize the right of those who live, work, and study at the University to participate in their respective religious observances.

### Summary

In accordance with this Policy, applicable laws, and our ongoing commitment to equity and inclusion, the University pledges to make good faith efforts to assist in the resolution of conflicts between the demands of life at the University and an individual's religious and spiritual commitments. The University seeks to provide reasonable accommodation(s) for the sincerely held religious beliefs and practices of employees and students, unless such accommodation would impose an undue hardship (more than a minimal burden) on the University.

In any circumstance where a religious or spiritual accommodation is sought, it is the responsibility of the impacted individual to submit appropriate notice of their need for an accommodation as soon as possible. The appropriate methods for giving notice are more specifically described in the sections below. Such requests must be made in a timely manner, which reasonably allows for the appropriate review of the request as well as the implementation of the accommodation, if approved.

Where a mutually agreeable accommodation cannot be met following the processes explained below, please contact the University Chaplain to discuss the request. The University Chaplain will make a reasonable effort to facilitate a resolution.

### Academic Accommodations

A basic tenet of the University's Religious Accommodation Policy is to provide support to a member of the Lehigh community where their adherence to a religious obligation presents a conflict with an academic obligation.

To that end, the University strongly encourages faculty to be mindful prior to scheduling major academic events throughout the semester of certain traditions that may require accommodations. For more information, please consult the calendar of religious holidays found [here](#). Faculty should also be mindful that accommodation requests may include time spent traveling for holiday observances. Under the Policy, no holiday is privileged above another holiday.

It is incumbent upon the student to ensure that a request for accommodation is made in writing<sup>1</sup> to the appropriate faculty member (or department chair, as appropriate) within a reasonable amount of time in light of the nature of the request. It is advisable to make any requests at the beginning of a semester, or as soon as a potential conflict is determinable.

A student is not exempt from meeting course requirements or completing assignments, so it is necessary that the student allow ample time to discuss and/or prepare for a mutually agreeable accommodation. In an effort to not penalize students for religious practices, approved absences related to religious obligations are not to be counted against the course grade, even in courses where attendance is factored into the course grading system.

It is the discretion of the faculty member to determine the most appropriate accommodation since the faculty member is best situated to understand the requirements of the particular course. It is expected that the faculty member will engage in dialogue with the student to discuss the request (if not approving the request as presented). However, in situations where a mutually agreeable accommodation cannot be made by working directly with the faculty member, students should then reach out to the department chair for the course to discuss the situation. If a mutually agreeable accommodation cannot be made with the assistance of the department chair, students should then reach out to the University Chaplain. The University Chaplain will discuss the nature of the religious obligation with the faculty member and/or the department chair and make a reasonable effort to reach a resolution through the interactive process, so long as the requested accommodation is not creating an undue hardship or fundamentally altering an essential element of the course.

## **Dining Accommodations**

The University continuously strives to provide for the dietary needs of various religious communities and cultures within our community by offering Halal-certified products, Kosher products, vegan, and vegetarian options. Individuals are encouraged to reach out to Dining Services should they require additional assistance in navigating these options.

To request specific dining accommodations, please complete the [online request form](#).

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<sup>1</sup>Recommended forms to request accommodations directly from supervisors or faculty members are available on both the Chaplain's Office [website](#) and the Equal Opportunity Compliance Coordinator's [website](#).

## **Housing Accommodations**

The University is committed to providing a safe and inclusive residential experience for its students. The University appreciates that the observance of students' religious beliefs and practices may require a reasonable accommodation relating to housing. Requests submitted after housing assignments have been made may not be able to be accommodated.

To request specific housing accommodations, please complete the [online request form](#).

## **Employment Accommodations**

A basic tenet of the University's Religious Accommodation Policy is to provide support to a member of the Lehigh community where their adherence to a religious obligation presents a conflict with an employment obligation.

To that end, the University strongly encourages supervisors to be mindful of certain traditions that may require accommodations. For more information, please consult the calendar of religious holidays found here. Employees should reserve floating holidays for the observance of religious holidays. If an employee uses the total of their floating holidays, an employee should discuss the need for additional time off with their supervisor. Supervisors should also be mindful that accommodation requests may include time spent traveling for holiday observances. Under this Policy, no holiday is privileged above another holiday.

It is incumbent upon the employee to ensure that a request for accommodation is made in writing<sup>2</sup> within a reasonable amount of time in light of the nature of the request. It is advisable to make any requests as soon as a potential conflict is determinable.

An employee is not exempt from meeting employment obligations, so it is necessary that the employee allow ample time to discuss and/or prepare for a mutually agreeable accommodation.

It is the discretion of the supervisor to determine the most appropriate accommodation since the supervisor is best situated to understand the requirements of employment. It is expected that the supervisor will engage in dialogue with the employee to discuss the request (if not approving the request as presented). However, in situations where a mutually agreeable accommodation cannot be made by working directly with the supervisor, employees should reach out to their next-level supervisor to discuss the situation. If a mutually agreeable accommodation cannot be made with the assistance of the next-level supervisor, employees should then reach out to the University Chaplain. The University Chaplain will discuss the nature of the religious obligation with the supervisor and/or next-level supervisor and make a reasonable effort to reach a

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<sup>2</sup>Recommended forms to request accommodations from supervisors or faculty members are available on both the Chaplain's Office [website](#) and the Equal Opportunity Compliance Coordinator's [website](#).

resolution through the interactive process, so long as the requested accommodation is not creating an undue hardship or fundamentally altering the employment arrangement.

## **Prayer and Gathering Accommodations**

The University recognizes the importance of incorporating prayer and gathering among students and employees of similar faiths into the lives of our community. In an effort to welcome and encourage this aspect of our community members' lives, the University provides various prayer spaces for religious observance.

Specifically, the Dialogue Center has a Muslim prayer room and other open spaces that may be utilized for prayer or religious gatherings. More information, including the locations and hours of access, is available [here](#).

Additionally, there are a multitude of meeting spaces around campus that are available for reservation through the Dialogue Center. Interested individuals should contact the University Chaplain directly to request these accommodations.

## **Grievances**

Lehigh University strongly encourages all faculty, staff, and students to continue efforts to engage in the interactive process and to utilize the informal resolution of accommodation-related disputes prior to pursuing a formal appeal regarding limitations or denials relating to religious accommodation requests. It is recommended that individuals address their concerns directly with the faculty member and/or supervisor they are working with, in an effort to resolve the issue without needing to take additional action. However, a formal appeal may be filed at any time.

Individuals interested in filing a formal appeal to the University Chaplain should complete [this form](#).

## **Policy Prohibiting Harassment, Discrimination, and Retaliation**

Per Lehigh University's Policy on Harassment and Non-Discrimination, the University upholds The Principles of Our Equitable Community and is committed to providing an educational, working, co-curricular, social, and living environment for all individuals that is free from harassment and discrimination on the basis of age, color, disability, gender identity or expression, genetic information, marital or familial status, national or ethnic origin, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or veteran status. Such harassment or discrimination is unacceptable behavior and will not be tolerated. The University strongly encourages (and, depending upon the circumstances, may require) any individual who experiences or witnesses harassment or discrimination, or has information about harassment or discrimination in University programs or activities, to immediately report such conduct. This includes harassment or discrimination relative to requests for, and implementation of, religious accommodations.

Additionally, individuals shall not be retaliated against for requesting a religious or spiritual accommodation in good faith. Faculty and/or supervisors shall keep the request for a religious or spiritual accommodation private and monitor any interactions with the requesting individual to ensure that such interactions are not legitimately construed as retaliatory.

If an individual feels there is discrimination, harassment, or retaliation resulting from a request for a religious or spiritual accommodation that is made in good faith, reports should be made utilizing the [online reporting form](#) or by directly contacting the following office:

Office of Equal Opportunity & Title IX Compliance  
Alumni Memorial Building, Room 305B  
(610) 758-3535  
[eocc@lehigh.edu](mailto:eocc@lehigh.edu)

In the event that the conduct involves the Equal Opportunity Compliance Coordinator, reports should be made to:

Associate Vice President, Human Resources  
306 S. New Street, Suite 437  
(610) 758-3900  
[inhro@lehigh.edu](mailto:inhro@lehigh.edu)

Reports of harassment or discrimination can also be made through the following sources:

Lehigh University Police Department  
321 E. Packer Avenue  
610-758-4200

[Discrimination, Harassment, Retaliation or Bias Reporting Form](#)

Before a disclosure is made, an individual who wishes to talk about these issues confidentially and without initiating a report or investigation can contact:

For Students:

Lehigh University Counseling & Psychological Services  
Johnson Hall, 4th Floor  
610-758-3880

Lehigh University Chaplain's Office  
Dialogue Center, 661 Taylor Street  
610-758-3877

[Telus Health Student Support](#)

844-886-8536

<https://www.myssp.app/us/home>

For Employees:

HealthAdvocate

866-799-2728

[answers@healthadvocate.com](mailto:answers@healthadvocate.com)

[healthadvocate.com/members](https://healthadvocate.com/members)

### **Violations of this Policy**

Any individual who violates any provision of this Policy may be subject to disciplinary action.

### **Questions and Contact Information**

For additional information about the accommodation request process and other matters relating to religious accommodations, please contact any of the following offices:

Equal Opportunity Compliance Coordinator

Alumni Memorial Building, Room 305B

(610) 758-3535

[eocc@lehigh.edu](mailto:eocc@lehigh.edu)

University Chaplain

Dialogue Center, 661 Taylor Street

610-758-3877

[incha@lehigh.edu](mailto:incha@lehigh.edu)

### **Resources**

[Chaplain's Office \(Including Interfaith Calendar/Religious Holidays\)](#)

[Religious Accommodation Request Form \(Appeals & Dining/Housing Requests\)](#)

[Discrimination, Harassment, Retaliation, or Bias Incident Reporting Form](#)

[Office of Equal Opportunity & Title IX Compliance](#)

**Effective Date:** August 1, 2024