Religious Accommodation Guidelines

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy Title</th>
<th>UCSF SOD Religious Accommodation Guidelines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applies To</td>
<td>Predoctoral Dental Students and Postgraduate Professional Students and Residents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approved By</td>
<td>SOD Faculty Council</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOD Religious Accommodation Guidelines

Objective

The School of Dentistry community is enriched by individuals of many faiths that have various religious observances, practices and beliefs. Our School is committed to providing an academic and work environment that is respectful of any religious beliefs. As part of this commitment, the School seeks to establish uniform guidelines to promote a work and educational environment that is respectful of people’s religious beliefs and to ensure compliance with policy related to religion and creed. To that end, the School of Dentistry makes good faith efforts to accommodate the religious practice or sincerely held beliefs of learners, faculty, non-faculty academic and staff employees (and/or prospective learner, faculty, non-faculty academic/staff employee) that may conflict with policy, procedure, or other academic or employment requirement, unless such an accommodation would create an undue hardship.

Definitions

For the purposes of these guidelines:

A “religious practice or belief” is a practice or observance that includes moral or ethical beliefs and that is sincerely held with the strength of traditional religious views.

A “reasonable religious accommodation” is any adjustment in the academic or work environment that enables faculty, learners or staff and academic staff and academic employees (or prospective learner, faculty, non-faculty academic/staff employees) to practice or otherwise observe a sincerely held religious practice or belief without undue hardship on the University. A reasonable religious accommodation may include but is not limited to allowing flexible arrival and departure times, optional holidays, flexible work breaks, dress or grooming practices, or considering schedule substitutions with colleagues of substantially similar qualifications which may need to be arranged by or with the assistance of the requesting staff and academic employee.

Upon written request, the School will explore, through an interactive process, any available reasonable alternative means of accommodating the religious belief or observance to eliminate the conflict between the a job duty and/or academic or School activity and the religious conflict, including the possibilities of excusing the person from those duties or academic or School activities that conflict with his or her religious belief or observance or permitting conflicting activities and/or duties to be performed at another time or by another person.

“Undue hardship” occurs when granting a requested accommodation would require significant expense or difficulty for the School. The determination of undue hardship is dependent on the facts of each individual situation.

Undue hardship may refer to financial difficulty in providing an accommodation or accommodations that are unduly expensive, substantial, disruptive, or that would fundamentally alter academic requirements, the nature or operation of the University’s business, or the essential functions of a job. Accommodations which interfere with the safe and efficient operation of the workplace or campus or with a bona fide seniority system may present an undue hardship.

Implementation

Requesting a Religious Accommodation: Faculty and Staff

Learners, faculty, non-faculty academic and staff employees whose religious beliefs or practices conflict with job duties, work schedule, academic or School activity, or with a School of Dentistry policy or practice (e.g., on dress and appearance), or with other aspects of employment or academic or School activities, and who seek a religious accommodation must submit a written request for the accommodation at least three (3) months in advance, or as soon as they become aware, of their need for religious accommodation.

Once a request for religious accommodation is submitted, the recipient of the request form will initiate an interactive process to determine if the request can be accommodated as requested and, if not, what, if any, alternative accommodations can be made. As needed and appropriate, Labor and Employee Relation will be engaged for consultation.

Requesting a Religious Accommodation: Students

Students whose religious beliefs or practices conflict with an academic or School activity, or with a School of Dentistry policy or practice (e.g., on dress and appearance), or with other aspects of academic or School activities, and who seek a religious accommodation must submit a written request for the accommodation at least three (3) months in advance of their need for religious accommodation.

Student requests for a religious accommodation will follow the procedures listed below:

1. The Religious Accommodation Committee reviews and approves all student requests for a religious accommodation. The committee meets the first Wednesday of every month.
2. Students must complete and submit the SOD Religious Accommodation Form (via email) three months in advance of their requested accommodation.

3. All required documents must be received from the student to the Director of Education and Student Affairs at least 1 week prior to the committee meeting for requests three or more months out.

4. The Committee meets to review. In some cases, students may be asked for more information or to present their request to the committee.

5. The Committee communicates outcome of meeting one day after meeting to the Director of Student Affairs who then notifies relevant parties (course & clinic directors, staff, student, etc.).

6. Once approved, student will complete the current quarter’s Absence Tracker to record their time off.

Course/clinic director responsibilities: 1) work with student to create a reasonable make up plan for didactic work and clinic missed time.

Student responsibilities: 1) complete all required paperwork by deadlines; 2) provide reasonable suggestions for making up work and/or missed clinic time and with a reasonable expectation to use breaks to catch up if needed; 3) complete any required clinical or course absence paperwork.

Providing Religious Accommodation

Accommodation requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis taking into account factors including but not limited to, the fundamental requirements of the applicable academic program and/or related technical standards, essential functions of an individual’s job, the duties of others in the department or job group, the requirements of the department or major, any impact of the accommodation, the duration of the accommodation request, and the availability of alternative accommodations.

The School is not required to accept a requested preferred accommodation if there is more than one alternative that eliminates the religious conflict.

The School will endeavor to protect the requesting learners, faculty, non-faculty academic and staff employees’ privacy in evaluating and implementing the accommodation requested to the extent possible. However, following receipt of the request, the supervisor(s) or designee(s) will discuss the accommodation request as necessary with the learner, faculty, non-faculty academic and staff employee, and with select others in order to further evaluate and/or implement the accommodation.

Resolving Disagreement/Filing a Complaint

The School will endeavor to protect the requesting learners, faculty, non-faculty academic and staff employees’ privacy in evaluating and implementing the accommodation requested to the extent possible. However, following receipt of the request, the supervisor(s) or designee(s) will discuss the accommodation request as necessary with the learner, faculty, non-faculty academic and staff employee, and with select others in order to further evaluate and/or implement the accommodation.

If an individual’s request for a religious accommodation is denied, or there is no consensus on a reasonable accommodation, the requesting faculty, learner, or staff and academic employee may appeal the decision in writing as follows:

Learner: Associate Dean for Education and Student Affairs

Faculty and Non-Faculty Academic Employee: Department Chair and Associate Dean for Academic Affairs

Staff Employee: Associate Dean for Administration and Finance

Individuals who believe they have been discriminated against on the basis of religion by the denial of a requested religious accommodation may contact the UCSF Office for Prevention of Harassment and Discrimination to learn about filing a discrimination complaint.

Office for the Prevention of Harassment and Discrimination (OPHD)

3333 California Street Suite S-16
San Francisco, CA 94143-1249
415-502-3400
OPHD@ucsf.edu

Retaliation is Prohibited

The University prohibits retaliation against learners, faculty, non-faculty academic and staff employees requesting a religious accommodation, participating in an approved accommodation or otherwise engaging in protected conduct under this policy. Any person who violates this antiretaliation provision may be subject to disciplinary and/or corrective action.

Links to Related Policies, Procedures or Information

UC Nondiscrimination policy statement
http://policies.ucsf.edu/policy/150-12

UC Policy, Discrimination, Harassment and Affirmative Action in the workplace https://policy.ucop.edu/doc/4000376/DiscHarassAffirmAction

History/Revisions Dates

Approved by: School of Dentistry

Adoption Date: March 1, 2019

Review Date: