

## **Academic Schedule Religious Accommodation Policy: Instructions for Faculty Members**

### Background

Recently, Washington State revised a law so that private colleges in Washington are required to provide academic accommodations to students for religious holidays and related religious activities (previously the law only applied to public colleges in Washington).<sup>1</sup> For example, if a class has an exam scheduled on a student's religious holiday and the student makes a timely request for an alternative test date, SPU faculty members must offer an accommodation to the student (e.g., an alternative test date). Under the Washington law, SPU is required to post a policy addressing this religious accommodation requirement on its website and faculty members are required to either include the policy or a link to the policy in their syllabi. This new law takes effect on July 27, 2019, so language should be included in syllabi for classes starting after that date.

### The New SPU Policy

The new SPU policy is called the "Academic Schedule Religious Accommodation Policy." It is posted online in the undergraduate Student Handbook and the Graduate Student Handbook (see links below). It is intended to satisfy the requirements of the law in a manner that provides faculty members with flexibility to respond to student requests. It is likely that faculty members are already responsive to these types of student requests (to the extent they arise), but the policy provides structure for situations where it is needed. If you have comments or questions about the policy, please consult with your chair or dean (if deans have questions, they can feel free to email Nick Glancy at [naglancy@spu.edu](mailto:naglancy@spu.edu)). As we implement the policy, we may identify ways the policy should be revised.

### Sample Syllabi Language

To satisfy the requirement that each syllabus must include a link to the policy, here is proposed language to be added to all course syllabi:

Students who would like to request an accommodation for a religious holiday (e.g., request that an exam scheduled for a religious holiday be rescheduled) should make a written request within the first two weeks of the course pursuant to SPU's Academic Schedule Religious Accommodation Policy. The policy is posted in the undergraduate Student Handbook at <https://spu.edu/administration/office-of-student-life/handbook/behavioral-community-expectations/university-policies> and on page 16 of the 2019-20 Graduate Student Handbook, which is posted at <https://spu.edu/catalog/graduate/20190/student-life>.

### Questions about Implementation

If questions arise in the course of applying the policy, faculty members should consult with their chairs or deans (and again, deans can feel free to contact Nick Glancy with questions). It is recommended that faculty members consult with their chair or dean before denying any request from a student for an accommodation.

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<sup>1</sup> The law is RCW 28B.10.039. Washington State's [online posting of this law](#) has not yet been updated (as of 7/24/19) to reflect the revisions. The revisions are shown in [Substitute Senate Bill 5166](#).