

UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA
Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action Programs
Religious Accommodation: Guidelines for Departmental Procedures for Requests

The following guidelines may be adapted by campus departments as needed.

(Department) has adopted guidelines for employees requesting accommodation in scheduling for religious observations. (Department) is a (type of operation: round-the clock unit serving the campus seven days a week?). Faculty and staff members normally may be scheduled at any time during the operating period.

Federal and state statutes require that the university provide accommodation in scheduling for religious observance, upon request. Those requests must be considered “reasonable” by the university. Requests will be evaluated on the following factors:

- Does the request represent leave for a bona fide religious observance?
- Was the request complete and made in a timely manner?
 - Deadline period for filing request:
 - Religious holidays: (Department specifies deadlines)
 - Periods of religious observance: (Department specifies deadlines)
 - Information required; method of filing request: (to be prepared by Department)
- Will the request have an adverse impact on university operations to the point where business necessity requires its denial?

Religious observance requiring absence from work obligations is covered by applicable law. (Department) will consider requests for religious accommodation when the proposed activity meets that standard. Employees may request leave for religious observances of less than 24 hours based on times of religious services in which they plan to participate, including appropriate local travel time. The university may explore alternative observances which occur outside scheduled hours.

Religious observances which include out-of-town travel over a period of days normally are considered regular leave requests and normally are excluded from this policy.

Employees may request leave based on 24-hour or longer periods of religious observance in which they plan to participate. Employees will specify the period by date and hour. Employees may also make “recurring requests,” which will be considered in view of the department's programs.

Requests for periods of observance must be renewed every ... [department must specify renewal period]. All periods of leave for religious observance are granted as approved use of annual leave or leave without pay. The university may reconsider any request found to be pretextual. While the university will limit questioning the validity of the expressed faith, it may explore the employee's sincerity.

SAMPLE WORDING for department guidelines
(written for departments with OPS scheduling, 24-hour service:
to be adapted as needed):

- **Deadline periods:**

1. Religious holidays

“(Department) has a business expectation that an employee will follow university procedures. For observances of less than 24 hours, the request must be received five (5) business days in advance of schedule posting for the pay period covering that observance. We post schedules one pay period in advance of the pay period covered by the schedule. Example: Pay period in which leave is requested starts May 21: schedule is posted for everyone on May 7; requests are due April 30.”

(For departments where faculty schedules change each semester, but A&P and USPS are established without changes, wording might be: “For observances of less than 24 hours, the request must be received five (5) business days in advance of the pay period covering that observance.”)

2. Recurring periods of religious observance

“For recurring periods of observance, the request must be made five (5) business days prior to the beginning of the pay period in which the employee wishes to begin regular leaves for religious observance.”

[Note to departments: The university must accommodate for religious observance. This does not include other activities related to practice of religion such as choir practice or committee meetings. Possible requests may include (but are not limited to) Friday sundown to Saturday sundown; all day Saturday; ~30 minutes at dawn, noon, afternoon, evening, and late evening; two hours plus travel time on Sunday. Seasonal requests may include a dinner break immediately after sundown for a one-month period which changes each year, for example.]

- **Information Required:**

“Please inform your supervisor by email of the date(s) and time(s) of your request, and the nature of the religious observance. Further information may be sought by the department, if needed to make the accommodation decision.”

Alternative: “Please complete the departmental leave request, checking ‘religious accommodation’ and specifying the nature of the religious observance.”

[Note to departments: Do not inquire just about the individual's religious affiliation and then attempt to guess what the employee needs in the next pay period. It is job-related and permissible to require him/her to identify specific needs and the reason the request falls under the provisions for religious accommodation.

The method of receiving requests must be specified, such as by email, verbal request, use of departmental leave form, etc. Whatever format used, this request should be identifiable as a request for religious accommodation. If it is denied as religious accommodation, a reason should be recorded in that same format and communicated to the employee, with a record retained. "Business necessity" for denial is a high standard; consultation with UCF EO/AA is recommended.]

UCF EO/AA 6/10, 7/10