



**University Procedure:** Procedure for Employees Requesting Religious Accommodations

**Related Policy Category:** Personnel

**Subject:** Request Religious Accommodations

**Office(s) Responsible for Review of this Procedure:** Human Resources

**Supplemental Documents:** Religious Accommodation Request and Employer Response Form

**Related University Policies:** Discrimination and Non-Title IX Sexual Misconduct Policy and Leave Policies

## I. SCOPE

American University respects the religious beliefs and practices of all employees and will make reasonable workplace accommodations for such observances that do not create an undue hardship on the University's operations or activities. This procedure applies to all faculty and staff of American University.

## II. DEFINITIONS

Religion – Include all aspects of religious observance and practice as well as sincerely held religious belief. Religion includes traditional, organized religions such as Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism, as well as sincerely held religious beliefs that are new, uncommon, not part of a formal church or sect, only subscribed to by a small number of people, or that seem illogical or unreasonable to others.

Religious accommodation – A reasonable adjustment to the work environment that will allow the employee to comply with their sincerely held religious beliefs without causing undue hardship to University operations or activities. This may include, but is not limited to, an employee requesting to take a particular day or time period off for a religious holiday, an employee requesting an exception to a department's uniform requirements to wear certain religious garb, beards or hair styles, an employee requesting time and a place to pray or an atheist asking to be excused from a religious invocation.

Undue hardship – Includes any accommodation that would impose more than a *de minimis* cost or burden on the University's operations or activities.

Department Head – The executive, dean, assistant vice president or equivalent who has oversight for a department or school.

## III. PROCEDURE

An employee whose sincerely held religious beliefs conflict with his or her job duties, work schedule, the University's policy or practice on dress and appearance, or other aspects of their employment, may request a religious accommodation by submitting a request to the Office of Human Resources. Employees must use the Religious Accommodation Request Form ("Form") to request a religious

accommodation, which includes identifying the nature of the conflict as well as the desired accommodation.

The Office of Human Resources will evaluate the request and determine: (a) whether a conflict exists due to a sincerely held religious belief or practice and (b) whether the employee's requested accommodation is reasonable and resolves the conflict without creating an undue hardship. Examples of potential reasonable workplace accommodations include, but are not limited to, use of leave, granting an exception to the dress and appearance policy (provided it does not affect safety or uniform requirements), or changing some other aspect of employment.

Depending on the type of conflict and suggested accommodation, the Office of Human Resources may consult with the employee's Department Head, or their designee. The Office of Human Resources may also consult others (including religious leaders) and/or request the employee provide additional information about their need for a workplace accommodation due a conflict with a sincerely held religious belief.

The University will make determinations regarding the implementation of religious accommodations on a case-by-case basis. The University will consider a number of factors including but not limited to the: nature and extent of the accommodation requested; duration of the accommodation requested; availability of alternative accommodations; the impact on the employee's ability to perform the essential functions of their position; and likelihood of an undue hardship on University operations and activities. The University may also suggest an alternative accommodation it deems reasonable to resolve the conflict.

The Office of Human Resources will engage the Department Head, or their designee, and employee in an interactive discussion regarding the request and will determine what religious accommodation (if any) the University agrees to provide. If the employee accepts the proposed religious accommodation, their supervisor will implement the decision.

Employees may request a review of their accommodation decision directly to the Assistant Vice President of Human Resources. In addition, any employee or applicant who believes that they may have been discriminated against based on their religion should refer to the *Discrimination and Non-Title IX Sexual Misconduct* complaint procedures.

#### **IV. RETALIATION PROHIBITED**

The University prohibits retaliation against employees requesting a religious accommodation, participating in an approved accommodation, or otherwise engaging in protected conduct under this procedure. Retaliation includes, but is not limited to threats, intimidation, and/or adverse actions related to employment. Any person who violates this provision may be subject to disciplinary and/or corrective action.

#### **V. EFFECTIVE DATE(S)**

This Procedure is effective September 1, 2018.

This Procedure was reviewed or revised July 15, 2021.