

**TITLE: ACCOMMODATION OF RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES PROCEDURE (Students)**

**Date of Approval: Nov 1, 2022**  
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**Mandatory Review**  
**Date: Nov 1, 2027**

**Approved By:**  
President and Vice  
Presidents

## 1. Purpose

The purpose of this Procedure is to outline the steps that will be taken to address a request for the accommodation of a student's religious observances in accordance with the *Accommodation of Religious Observances Policy*.

If this document is required in an accessible format or with communication supports please contact [equity@sheridancollege.ca](mailto:equity@sheridancollege.ca)

## 2. Scope

This procedure applies to Sheridan Community Members as defined in the Policy and to situations where a student's religious observances may affect their ability to participate fully in their academic course of program of study, and thus require accommodation.

This procedure is distinct from the *Accommodation of Religious Observances Procedure (Employees)*.

## 3. Definitions

**Accommodation:** Any adjustment or modification to features of the work or learning environment to address the individual needs of community members to allow them to meet the essential requirements of their position or academic course or program of study.

Accommodation based on creed is considered appropriate if it results in equal opportunity to enjoy the same level of benefits and privileges experienced by others, or if it is proposed or adopted to achieve equal opportunity and meets the person's individual creed-related needs.

**Creed:** The *Code* does not explicitly define creed. In the Ontario Human Rights Commission's *Policy on the prevention of discrimination based on creed* (2016) the term creed includes religion in its broadest sense (religious or spiritual beliefs and practices), rather than only identification with a formal set of religious views, and may also include other non-religious belief systems that substantially influence a person's identity, worldview and way of life. Creed includes the spiritual beliefs and practices of Indigenous cultures.

**Discrimination:** Any intentional or unintentional act, conduct, standard or policy which creates a distinction between certain individuals or groups based on one or more of the prohibited grounds as defined in the *Code* and results in negative, adverse or differential treatment, which may include

imposing extra burdens or denying benefits. It may involve direct actions that appear to be discriminatory, or it may involve rules, practices, or procedures that appear neutral, but have the effect of disadvantaging certain groups of people. It may be obvious, or it may occur in subtle ways.

To establish discrimination on the basis of creed, a person must show that they have been adversely affected by a requirement, qualification or factor in a *Code* social area such as employment, services (including education), housing etc. at least in part, because of their sincerely held creed belief.

**Employee:** Includes a person under the employ of Sheridan either: on a full-time, ongoing basis under the terms of the Academic Employees Collective Agreement, the Support Staff Collective Agreement, the Part Time Support Staff Collective Agreement, or the Terms and Conditions for Administrative Employees; on a less than full-time, and/or temporary basis under the terms of an employment agreement; on a cooperative or work-term placement educational training program; and/or on a volunteer basis.

**Religious Observance:** Refers to commitments or obligations based on a person's creed. This can include, but is not limited to: observance of dates of religious significance, specific dress requirements, daily prayers or prayers at particular times throughout the day, fasting or breaking of fast, etc.

**Sheridan Community Members:** include students, course participants, employees, supervisors, student workers, Board of Governors members, members of committees, societies or associations established or recognized by Sheridan, contractors/sub-contractors hired by Sheridan (including Sheridan's Work-Integrated Learning Partners), providers of service or research, volunteers, visitors or guests, applicants for admission or employment, and others who attend on campus, or who are otherwise connected to Sheridan's operations.

**Student:** means any individual who is admitted, enrolled or registered for study at Sheridan. Individuals who are active in a program, but not enrolled in classes for a particular term (e.g., on vacation, or coop term) are considered to have a continuing student relationship and are included in the definition of a student.

**Supervisor:** A person(s) who has charge of a working environment or authority in the case of an employee, or of the learning environment in the case of a student. In certain circumstances the term "Manager" may be used.

**Undue Hardship:** The legal limit of the duty to accommodate. It applies to situations where severe negative effects outweigh the benefits of providing accommodation. The factors determining whether an accommodation creates undue hardship are limited to:

- costs
- outside resources or sources of funding, if any
- health and safety requirements, if any

Undue hardship must be considered individually, and in the full context in which each accommodation request is made by a community member.

**Working or Learning Environment:** Any land, premises, location or thing at, upon, in or near which an individual works or studies, including Sheridan-sanctioned events.

## **4. Procedure**

### **4.1 Request for accommodation to observe a day of religious significance**

A student may request accommodation by following these steps:

#### **Step 1: Student requests accommodation**

A student will complete the **Accommodation of Religious Observances Student Request Form** and submit the form to their faculty member as early as possible, but normally not later than two (2) weeks prior to the date for which accommodation is sought. Note: Providing documentation from faith leaders is not required to support requests for accommodation.

Where the date(s) of religious significance repeat on an annual basis the student will be required to resubmit their request for accommodation.

There may be circumstances where the date(s) is not yet confirmed (lunar calendar) or known significantly in advance (funerary rituals). The student should contact their faculty member as soon as they become aware of the need for accommodation, even if the specific date/time is not yet known.

#### **Step 2: Acknowledgement of request**

The faculty member will acknowledge receipt of the request in a timely manner and, where possible, will consult with the student to discuss the most appropriate accommodation available. Any information pertaining to the student's request for accommodation will be held in strict confidence.

The faculty member and student should strive to come to a mutually agreeable form of accommodation.

Accommodation measures may include, but are not limited to:

- rescheduling an evaluation to an alternative date
- providing an alternative evaluation for satisfying the course requirement (including a common date for the class for all deferred tests / mid-term examinations)
- providing an alternative assignment for satisfying the course requirement
- extending a deadline

#### **Step 3: Faculty member notifies student**

Where an appropriate accommodation has been identified, the faculty member will notify the student in writing of the agreed upon accommodation, by completing the **Accommodation of Religious Observances Student Request Form** normally within five (5) business days.

#### **Step 4: Faculty member and student are unable to reach agreement**

At any point during the process, a student or faculty member may seek informal advice or assistance from the Centre for Equity and Inclusion (CEI). If after discussion, the faculty member and student are unable to agree on the form of accommodation, the request will be referred to the Associate Dean to determine the form of accommodation consistent with the *Accommodation of Religious Observances Policy* and this Procedure.

A student wishing to file a complaint related to a denial of appropriate accommodation of a religious observance may do so with CEI under Sheridan's *Discrimination and Harassment Policy*. The office responsible for administering this policy is CEI. Anyone with questions or concerns regarding discrimination and harassment may contact CEI at [equity@sheridancollege.ca](mailto:equity@sheridancollege.ca) or ext. 2229

#### **4.2 Other religious observances that may require accommodation**

A student may have creed-based commitments or obligations that can include, but are not limited to:

- specific dress code requirements (e.g., head covering, items of ceremonial dress, etc.)
- temporary absence from class for daily prayers, fasting or breaking a fast during class
- dietary restrictions

#### **4.3 Inclusive Design**

"Inclusive design" or "universal design" means proactively creating environments that are welcoming and useful to people who are diverse in many ways including gender, race and ethnicity, age, creed, socio-economic status, disability, etc. Sheridan applies these design principles in environments that are newly constructed or redeveloped, where possible.

Multi-faith prayer rooms are provided at each Sheridan campus where students and employees may go to communally or individually pray, meditate, reflect, or worship. For further information on Sheridan's Multi-faith prayer rooms please contact the Centre for Equity and Inclusion at [equity@sheridancollege.ca](mailto:equity@sheridancollege.ca) or ext. 2229.

### **5. Roles and Responsibilities**

The accommodation process is a shared responsibility that requires various stakeholders to engage in meaningful dialogue towards finding solutions. This section outlines the specific roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders.

## **Sheridan**

- a) Sheridan recognizes its responsibility to accommodate students in accordance with its legislative obligations, and Sheridan's policies
- b) Sheridan is committed to ensuring that each member of the Sheridan community is made aware of the Policy through information dissemination, education and training

## **Office of the Registrar**

- a) Reference the list of **Commonly Observed Dates of Religious Significance** ("the list") in the establishment of the Academic Calendar for the upcoming academic years (typically 2 years in advance)
- b) Upon confirmation of the Academic Calendar, the list will be posted on the Office of the Registrar's site and distributed to each Faculty to assist faculty members in planning their courses for the upcoming academic year
- c) Have regard to the list when planning annual Convocation Ceremonies

## **Centre for Equity and Inclusion**

- a) Interpret and administer this Policy and its Procedures
- b) Support the roll-out of the Policy and its Procedures
- c) Provide advice, guidance and consultation to all participants under this Policy and its Procedures to facilitate the resolution of concerns and complaints

## **Faculty members**

- a) Accept requests for accommodation in good faith
- b) Enable the student to meet the academic requirements of the course, while ensuring academic integrity is maintained
- c) Consult the list of **Commonly Observed Days of Religious Significance** prior to finalizing a course outline (syllabus) to minimize any potential conflict between religious observances and academic obligations (e.g., scheduling of tests and assessments)

## **Students**

- a) Provide notification of the need for creed-based accommodation following the steps outlined in this Procedure
- b) Inform themselves of academic obligations (such as missed course content, obtaining lecture notes etc.,) in situations where they are absent, and meet the essential educational requirements of their course, program, etc.

## **Facilities and Sustainable Infrastructure**

- a) Embed the principles of inclusive (universal) design in the design of physical spaces that are newly constructed or redeveloped, where possible

- b) Respond to space requests to meet individual or communal creed based needs of students, as applicable
- c) Oversee the ongoing maintenance of the Multi-Faith Prayer rooms at each campus location

## **6. Responsible Office and Executive**

6.1 The Responsible Office: The Centre for Equity and Inclusion (CEI). CEI can be reached at [equity@sheridancollege.ca](mailto:equity@sheridancollege.ca) or ext. 2229

6.2 Responsible Executive: Vice-President, Inclusive Communities

## **7. Related Documentation/Links/Forms**

- [Accessibility Policy](#)
- Accommodation of Religious Observances Policy
- [Accommodation of Religious Observances Student Request Form](#)
- [Centre for Equity and Inclusion](#)
- [Discrimination and Harassment Policy and Procedures](#)
- [Indigenous Ceremonial Burning Protocol](#)
- [Office of the Registrar](#)
- [Ontario Human Rights Code](#)
- [Ontario Human Rights Commission - Policy on the prevention of discrimination based on creed](#)
- [Ontario Human Rights Commission - Creed and the duty to accommodate – a checklist for accommodation providers](#)
- [Ontario Human Rights Commission - Creed and Human Rights for Indigenous People](#) •  
[Privacy Policy](#)