

3.55 – RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATIONS

Effective: XXXXXX, 2026

Purpose: The University is committed to providing equal employment opportunities and to complying with all applicable federal and Kansas laws prohibiting discrimination on the basis of religion. This policy establishes a uniform process for requesting, evaluating, and implementing reasonable religious accommodations, including religious leave, for employees, while ensuring the continued effective operation of the University and avoiding undue hardship. This policy is intended to balance the sincerely held religious beliefs of employees with the University's legal obligations, operational needs, and institutional mission.

Scope: This policy applies to all University employees, including faculty, staff, administrators, and temporary or student employees, regardless of appointment type or funding source. This policy does not apply to students acting solely in their capacity as students.

Responsible Office: Human Resources and Office of General Counsel

Policy Statement: The University will provide reasonable accommodations for employees' sincerely held religious beliefs, practices, or observances unless the accommodation would cause undue hardship on University operations.

This policy is adopted pursuant to and in compliance with, including but not limited to:

- Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended
- The First Amendment to the United States Constitution
- Applicable Kansas anti-discrimination statutes and regulations
- Applicable Kansas Board of Regents policies
- Relevant federal and Kansas case law

Nothing in this policy is intended to expand employee rights beyond those required by law.

Employees are expected to cooperate in good faith in the accommodation process, including providing timely notice and participating in an interactive dialogue.

Request for Accommodation

An employee seeking a religious accommodation must submit a written request to Human Resources or the designated University office as soon as the need for accommodation is known. Requests should include:

- The religious belief or practice requiring accommodation
- The specific accommodation requested
- The anticipated duration and frequency of the accommodation

Failure to provide timely notice may limit the University's ability to provide accommodation.

The University may request limited additional information when reasonably necessary to evaluate the request, including information relevant to the nature of the belief or the requested accommodation. The University will not require clergy letters or third-party verification unless legally justified.

Upon receipt of a request, the University will engage in an interactive process with the employee to identify possible reasonable accommodations. The University retains discretion to select among effective accommodations and is not required to provide the employee's preferred accommodation if an alternative reasonable accommodation is available.

Leave of Absence

Employees may use available paid leave, including vacation, personal leave, or compensatory time, for religious observances, subject to normal approval procedures. If paid leave is unavailable or insufficient, the University may approve unpaid leave as a reasonable accommodation unless doing so would create an undue hardship. Where feasible, the University may accommodate religious observances through flexible scheduling, shift swaps, or alternative work arrangements, provided essential job functions can be met.

Limitations and Undue Hardship

The University is not required to grant accommodations that:

- Compromise workplace safety or security
- Violate federal or Kansas law, accreditation standards, or University policy
- Infringe on the legal rights of students or other employees
- Impose significant administrative, operational, or financial burdens
- Require the University to endorse or promote a religious belief

Each request will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

Denial

If a request is denied, the University will provide written notice to the employee explaining the basis for the decision. Denial of a specific accommodation does not preclude consideration of alternative accommodations.

Retaliation

The University prohibits retaliation against any employee for requesting a religious accommodation or participating in the accommodation process. Allegations of retaliation will be addressed under applicable University policies.

Definitions: All words and phrases shall be interpreted utilizing their plain meanings unless otherwise defined in another University or Board of Regents policy or by statute or regulation.

Religion – Includes traditional organized religions as well as sincerely held moral or ethical beliefs that occupy a place in the employee's life similar to that of a traditional religion, as defined by law.

Religious Accommodation – A reasonable adjustment to the work environment or job requirements that allows an employee to observe or practice a sincerely held religious belief, unless doing so would impose an undue hardship on the University.

Sincerely Held Religious Belief - A belief that is genuinely held by the employee. The University does not evaluate the validity, orthodoxy, or popularity of a belief, but may assess sincerity when reasonably necessary.

Undue Hardship – An accommodation that would impose more than a de minimis cost, burden, or risk on the University, including but not limited to operational disruption, safety concerns, infringement on the rights of others, or violation of law or policy.

Procedures: All procedures linked and related to the policies above shall have the full force and effect of policy if said procedures have first been properly approved by the University's administrator in charge of Human Resources.

[Hyperlink to Human Resources Procedures]

Related Policy Information:

History: Adopted: XX/XX/2026 [Approved by President and included in UPM as Policy 3.55]
 Revised: