

Policy on Time Away From Stevens' Responsibilities for Religious Observance

Approval Authority: Administrative Council
Responsible Officer: Vice President for Human Resources; Vice President for Student Affairs; Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost
Responsible Office: Division of Human Resources; Division of Student Affairs; Office of the Provost
Effective Date: February 12, 2025

I. Purpose of this Policy

Stevens Institute of Technology (“Stevens”) is committed to creating an inclusive and diverse community where employees and students of all religious beliefs and practices are respected and welcomed. The Division of Human Resources publishes a yearly [calendar of holidays](#) identifying the dates that university offices are closed and classes are not held. Additionally, the Divisions of Student Affairs and Human Resources circulate an annual notice to provide guidance on scheduling larger institutional events, giving exams, and assigning coursework on days on which certain religious observances occur. This Policy sets forth Stevens’ commitment to providing reasonable accommodations for time away from work, study and athletic responsibilities for religious observances of Stevens’ faculty, staff, and students on those days on which university offices are open and classes are in session.

II. Policy

A. Respect for Religious Practices

Stevens is committed to fostering an environment in which individuals of different religious beliefs and practices are treated with respect, understanding, and inclusivity. This Policy is intended to address the ways in which members of the Stevens community may take time away from their work, studies or athletic responsibilities to observe a religious practice.

B. Requesting an Accommodation

Members of the Stevens community may request an accommodation permitting time away from work, studies or athletic responsibilities for a religious practice by submitting the Religious Accommodation Request Form attached to this Policy as Exhibit A, including the following information:

- A description of the practice that requires an accommodation.
- The manner in which the observance of the practice conflicts with their current work, class or athletic schedule.
- The specific accommodation requested and how assignments and/or responsibilities may be impacted.
- The duration of the accommodation.

One or more accommodations over the course of a semester or academic year may be requested at the same time using one or more forms. Any accommodation approved pursuant to this Policy shall be in effect for one semester with respect to students, and one academic year with respect to employees, except to the extent otherwise specified in the approval. Any semester or academic-year approval remains subject to change in accordance with Section 2(G) below in the event that Stevens’ business or academic needs

change. The Forms contemplated by this Policy are all available electronically as “fillable forms” which should be completed and emailed to the relevant person or office.

i. Employees

Staff and Student Workers

A staff member or student worker seeking an accommodation shall submit the Religious Accommodation Request Form to their direct supervisor and to HR@stevens.edu as soon as possible at the start of each semester and at least 14 days in advance of the desired accommodation whenever possible. The staff member or student worker must include in the request a description of any potential impact on job responsibilities and proposed solutions. To the extent possible, requests for an entire semester should be addressed on one Religious Accommodation Request Form.

Faculty

A faculty member seeking an accommodation shall submit the Religious Accommodation Request Form to their department chair or equivalent (or dean when there is no department chair or equivalent) and to HR@stevens.edu as soon as possible at the start of each semester and at least 14 days in advance of the desired accommodation whenever possible. The faculty member must include in the request a description of any potential impact on job responsibilities and proposed solutions. To the extent possible, requests for an entire academic year should be addressed on one Religious Accommodation Request Form.

ii. Students

A student seeking an accommodation should submit the Religious Accommodation Request Form to the relevant faculty member(s), staff member, or coach as soon as possible at the start of each semester and at least 14 days in advance of the desired accommodation whenever possible. The student should also include in the request any proposed solutions pertaining to potential rescheduling, adjusting assignment deadlines, or providing alternative methods of participation to accommodate their religious practices. A separate Form is required for each impacted class or sport. Any religious accommodation which is approved under this Policy shall be in addition to any absences permitted by a particular faculty member for all students in their course. To the extent possible, requests for an entire semester for each class or sport should be addressed on one Religious Accommodation Request Form.

C. Interactive Process

Employees and Student Workers

Upon receiving a request for an accommodation, the employee’s or student worker’s direct supervisor or department chair or other supervisor, as appropriate, will engage in an interactive process with the employee or student worker to determine whether and how the religious practice may be accommodated given the employee’s or student worker’s job responsibilities, any logistical constraints, and Stevens’ business and operational needs. The relevant supervisor should aim to respond in most cases within five working days.

Students

Upon receiving a request for an accommodation, the faculty member, staff member or coach will engage in an interactive process with the student to determine whether and how the religious practice may be accommodated given Stevens' academic or athletic requirements and any logistical constraints. The relevant faculty or staff member or coach should aim to respond in most cases within five working days.

Guidance for the Interactive Process

Various issues and questions may arise during the interactive process required by this Policy. Any employee who is responsible for engaging in an interactive process for a student or employee under this Policy is encouraged to consult with the Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs or Associate or Assistant Vice President for Human Resources, as applicable, for guidance on administering requests for accommodations.

D. Reasonable Accommodation

Stevens will make reasonable efforts to accommodate the religious practices of employees and students, taking into consideration the requirements of their respective roles within the university, provided that such accommodation does not create an undue burden on Stevens' operations or academic or athletic functions. Accommodations are determined on a case-by-case basis. Reasonable accommodation may include:

- Adjusting an employee's work schedule or hours.
- Rescheduling a student's exam or adjusting an assignment deadline.
- Adjusting an athletic uniform.
- Providing a break time for religious rituals.
- Providing time off for religious observance.
- Considering the effect of fasting on an activity.

E. Notification; Accounting for Time Off

An employee or student who has submitted a request will be notified in a timely manner (in most cases, within five working days), in writing, by their direct supervisor, department chair or other academic supervisor, or faculty member or coach, respectively, of the determination and, if granted, of the type of accommodation approved. Staff members must use vacation or personal time to support any approved accommodation and submit a request for time off in WorkDay following approval of the accommodation.

When an approved faculty absence results in the cancellation of class or another academic commitment, the faculty member is expected to make up the missed class time or academic commitment in coordination with the department chair or equivalent (or dean where there is no department chair or equivalent).

F. Appeal

If either the employee or student disagrees with the determination and/or proposed accommodation, they may initiate an appeal within five calendar days of the determination by submitting a Religious Accommodation Appeal Form attached to this Policy, to the person or office set forth below:

- Employees and student workers - Next level of management within the organizational hierarchy (for staff, an Assistant or Associate Vice President; for faculty, the Dean)
- Undergraduate students - School's Associate Dean for Undergraduate Education
- Graduate student - School's Associate Dean for Graduate Education
- Student-Athletes – Assistant Vice President and Director of Athletics (“Athletics Director”)

The Religious Accommodation Appeal Form must include details about the individual's religious practice, the specific accommodation requested, any prior communications concerning the accommodation request, and any additional supporting information the individual deems relevant to the appeal.

The respective authority at the next level of management referred to above may conduct a meeting or interview with the individual and the supervisor or faculty member to discuss concerns, gather additional information, and explore potential resolutions. They may also consider alternative accommodations that address the religious practice of the individual while aligning with Stevens' operational or academic requirements.

For employees and student workers, the individual at the next level of management will make a recommendation to the Vice President of Human Resources. For undergraduate students, the Associate Dean will make a recommendation to the Vice Provost for Academic Innovation and Faculty Affairs. For graduate students, the Associate Dean will make a recommendation to the Senior Vice Provost for Graduate Education. For student-athletes, the Athletics Director will make a recommendation to the Vice President for Student Affairs. The Vice President of Human Resources, Vice Provost, Senior Vice Provost, or Vice President for Student Affairs, as applicable, will issue a final written determination to the individual, outlining the rationale behind the decision.

G. Undue Burden

An accommodation may be denied, amended or revoked if Stevens determines the accommodation creates an undue burden on the university's operational or academic obligations. Undue burden will be assessed considering all relevant factors of a particular situation, including but not limited to, the specific accommodation at issue and its practical impact on the continuity of academic or athletic programs and business operations, the ability to meet business, educational or athletic objectives and deadlines, and the equitable distribution of resources among students, faculty, and employees. Factors such as the financial burden of the accommodation, its impact on productivity or instructional quality, and the capacity and resources of Stevens will be carefully evaluated when determining undue burden.

III. Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation

Discrimination, harassment, and retaliation against any individual who follows any religious practice, observance or who requests an accommodation is a violation of Stevens policy. Employees or students who believe they have experienced discrimination, harassment, or retaliation for requesting or needing an accommodation should report it to the Division of Human Resources, the Office of the Provost, or the Division of Student Affairs, as applicable.

IV. Other Types of Accommodations; Exceptions to Policy

- (i) A request for a religious accommodation other than time away from work, study or athletic responsibilities may be directed to the Division of Human Resources, the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Education or the Associate Dean for Graduate Education, as appropriate.
- (ii) In rare circumstances, an exception to the terms of this Policy may be requested. Any such request shall be in writing and addressed to the Division of Human Resources, the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Education or the Associate Dean for Graduate Education, as appropriate.

[Religious Accommodation Request Form for Faculty and Staff](#)

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[Religious Accommodation Request Form for Students](#)

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