

Bucknell Religious Observance Policy

The faculty endorse the principle that an institutional climate of respect for cultural and ideological diversity extends to the variety of religious practices in our community. Religious practice is for many individuals an important element of personal identity, intellectual development, and psychological well-being, and is in many cases inseparable from cultural identity. We consider each individual's decision to either engage in or refrain from religious worship to be worthy of respect and consideration. Our efforts to promote inspection and understanding of individual and cultural differences are hindered when reasonable accommodations are not made for such differences. Further, because Bucknell's policy of non-discrimination published in the University Catalog specifically prohibits discrimination based on religion, action that effectively penalizes or denies opportunities to an individual because of their conscientious adherence to religious practice is contrary to our commitment to non-discrimination. For all of these reasons, faculty are expected to be mindful of potential conflicts with religious observances, and it is incumbent upon each individual faculty member to make reasonable accommodations when students' observance of a religious holiday conflicts with an academic obligation. At the end of each academic year (in preparation for the next academic year), the University Chaplain will publicize a list of commonly recognized religious holidays that are most likely to present scheduling conflicts. These dates will also be published in the University calendar. This list is intended for informational purposes (given that there may always be individuals on campus who practice religions not represented on the list) and is not intended to be an exhaustive list of days to which this policy applies. In cases of holidays not listed by the Chaplain's office, the guiding principle is that similar situations should be treated similarly, without regard to the commonness of the religion. Faculty are expected to consider potential conflicts with religious holidays when scheduling exams, project due dates, field trips or other activities, and are asked to avoid scheduling these on religious holidays whenever possible. If it is impractical to avoid scheduling on religious holidays, faculty are expected to allow a reasonable and comparable alternative for students whose religious practice creates a conflict with their academic obligations. For example, the student may be offered an earlier or later exam or due date, or a comparable alternative activity in place of a field trip. Scheduling for other major University events and extracurricular activities should also be done mindfully of religious holidays, and schedule conflicts should be avoided whenever possible so that religiously observant students are able to participate. It is the responsibility of a student to discuss potential time conflicts with their professors in advance. Faculty can facilitate this by describing in their syllabi how such conflicts are typically resolved.