

Rule R6-100B: Accommodations in Courses for Students' Sincerely Held Religious or Conscience Beliefs

Revision 1. Effective date: August 1, 2026

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I. Purpose and Scope

A. Purpose.

The values held most strongly by the University of Utah community are those of academic freedom and integrity as they are expressed collectively by the colleges and departments as well as individually through research and teaching and as they exist within the wider context of advanced study as commonly understood by all universities. The community also respects every member of the community, without which there can be no collegiality among faculty and students. In addition, the university community values individual rights and freedoms, including the right of each community member to adhere to individual systems of Conscience, religion, and ethics. Finally, the university recognizes that with all rights come responsibilities. These rights and responsibilities are described in Policy 6-316: Code of Faculty Rights and Responsibilities for faculty members and Policy 6-400: Student Rights and Responsibilities for students. The university works to uphold its collective values by fostering free speech and academic freedom, broadening fields of inquiry, and encouraging generation of new knowledge that challenges, shapes, and enriches our collective and individual understandings. This rule establishes the university's policy related to accommodations in Courses for a student's sincerely held religious or Conscience belief in accordance with Utah Code Section 53H-7-903 and Utah Board of Higher Education Policy R264.

B. Scope

This rule applies to Content and Schedule Accommodations related to a student's sincerely held religious or Conscience belief specifically in the context of Course instruction. This rule also does not apply to religious or Conscience accommodations for employees, including student employees, in their role as employees, which are administered by the Division of Human Resources.

II. Definitions

The definitions provided in Policy 6-100 apply for this rule. In addition, the terms below apply for the limited purpose of this rule.

- A. “Arbitrary and Capricious” means without a principled basis or in a manner that substantially deviates from applicable policies.
- B. “Conscience” means, as defined in Utah Code Section 67-27-106, a sincerely held belief as to the rightness or wrongness of an action or inaction.
- C. “Content Accommodation” means a modification of otherwise generally applicable reading, writing, viewing, listening, or performing requirements due to a student’s sincerely held religious or Conscience belief.
- D. “Fundamental Alteration” means a change so significant in an examination, assignment, or activity that the change alters the essential nature, objectives, or standards of a class, program, or degree and negatively impacts the student’s ability to master essential learning outcomes of the Course, program, or degree or acquire the knowledge, skills, or competencies necessary to pass the Course, program, or degree.
- E. “Reasonably Accommodate” means taking reasonable steps to modify expectations for a student’s participation in an examination or other academic requirement by excusing participation, offering an alternative deadline or schedule, or offering an alternative examination or assignment.
- F. “Required Course” means a Course that the university mandates for graduation or for an academic major.
- G. “Schedule Accommodation” means a Reasonable Accommodation described in this rule that permits a student to be absent from an examination or other academic requirement.

III. Rule

- A. Student Responsibility for Satisfying Academic Objectives

1. Consistent with principles of academic freedom, the faculty, individually and collectively, has the responsibility for determining the content of the curriculum.
2. Regardless of any accommodation that may be granted, students are responsible for satisfying all academic objectives, requirements, and prerequisites as defined by the Instructor and by the university. Students are responsible for their work in a Course, and while an instructor determines how a student can make up a missed examination or other requirement, the student who requests an accommodation should work with the instructor to determine the specific accommodation.
3. Because the burdens and appropriate criteria are different for Schedule Accommodations than for Content Accommodations, granting of one type of accommodation has no bearing on the granting of the other type. Likewise, requests for accommodations are individually evaluated, and therefore the granting of one request will not guarantee that all requests will be granted. Because the criteria and requirements will apply differently to each Instructor and to each Course, accommodations granted by an Instructor in one Course will not affect decisions by the same Instructor in other Courses or by other Instructors in the same or other Courses.
4. Students are expected to take Courses that will challenge them intellectually and personally. Students must understand and be able to articulate the ideas and theories that are important to the discourse within and among academic disciplines. Personal disagreement with these ideas and theories or their implications is not sufficient grounds for requesting an accommodation described in this rule, and accommodations requested on such grounds will not be granted.
5. The university recognizes that students' sincerely held religious or Conscience beliefs may make it difficult for students to fulfill some requirements of some Courses or majors. The university assumes no obligation to ensure that all students are able to complete any major.

6. Instructors who believe that Course materials may conflict with students' sincerely held religious or Conscience beliefs may include a statement in the syllabus for the Course Section that advises students that some of the writings, lectures, films or presentations, or other requirements in the Course include materials that may present such conflicts. However, this rule recognizes that Instructors will not always be able to predict in advance which, if any, materials may conflict with the sincerely held religious or Conscience beliefs of a given student or group of students.

B. University and Student Responsibilities for Accommodations

1. Schedule Accommodations

- a. An Instructor must Reasonably Accommodate a student's absence from an examination or other academic requirement if the time at which the examination or academic requirement is scheduled to occur conflicts with:
 - i. the student's sincerely held religious or Conscience belief; or
 - ii. the student's participation in an organized activity conducted under the auspices of the student's religious tradition or religious organization.
- b. A Reasonable Accommodation allowing a student to be absent from an examination or other requirement to accommodate the student's sincerely held religious or Conscience belief may not adversely impact a student's academic opportunities within the context of the Course.

2. Content Accommodations

- a. An Instructor must Reasonably Accommodate a student's objection to a required examination or assignment in a Required Course for reasons of the student's sincerely held religious or Conscience belief by offering an alternative examination or assignment unless the requested accommodation creates a Fundamental Alteration.
 - i. An Instructor may, but is not obligated to, grant a Content Accommodation in a Course other than a Required Course as long as

the Course requirement has a reasonable relationship to a legitimate pedagogical goal, if a reasonable alternative means of satisfying the Course requirement is available and is fully appropriate for meeting the academic objectives of the Course after considering the difficulty of administering the Content Accommodation, the burden on the student's sincerely held religious or Conscience belief, and the importance of the particular requirement to the Course. The Instructor must grant a request for Content Accommodations if denying the request would be arbitrary and capricious or illegal.

1. If an Instructor of a Course Section makes a Content Accommodation for a student, the Instructor must similarly consider requests made during the same semester for the same Course for other students' requests for Content Accommodations.
 3. It is the student's obligation to determine, before the Add/Drop deadline, whether the student has an objection to Course content due to the student's sincerely held religious or Conscience beliefs. In this case, the student should consider dropping the Course. If the student finds this solution impracticable, including because the Course is Required Course, the student may request a Content Accommodation from the Instructor.
 4. The university is not required by law or policy to accommodate sincerely held religious or Conscience beliefs when such accommodation would violate other laws or if the accommodation would be a Fundamental Alteration.
- C. Student Requests for Reasonable Content or Schedule Accommodations
1. A student who is enrolled in a Course may request an accommodation for the student's sincerely held religious or Conscience belief by providing written notice to the Instructor of the Course for which the student seeks an accommodation that identifies the requested accommodation. A student should make a request as early possible, and absent good cause, at least 30 days before the accommodation is needed. The university will not grant an

accommodation for a student's sincerely held religious or Conscience belief if the student does not provide a written request in advance.

D. Instructor Response

1. An Instructor must respond to a student's request for an accommodation within a reasonable time but not later than five business days from the date of receiving the written accommodation request.
2. If the request is for a Schedule Accommodation or for a Content Accommodation in a Required Course, the Instructor must determine whether they can implement the requested accommodation without creating a Fundamental Alteration to the Course. The Instructor may explore other possible Reasonable Accommodations to address the student's sincerely held religious or Conscience belief and may select any feasible accommodation provided the accommodation will effectively eliminate the conflict with the student's sincerely held religious or Conscience belief.
 - a. The Instructor and the student should engage in an interactive process to assess whether the requested accommodation is a reasonable accommodation and/or whether it is a Fundamental Alteration.
3. Following evaluation of the accommodation request, the Instructor must take the following steps, which vary based on the accommodation requested and whether the Instructor grants or denies the request:
 - a. An Instructor who grants a Schedule Accommodation request provides the agreed upon accommodation.
 - b. An Instructor who grants a Content Accommodation request must respond to the request in writing within five business days and provide the agreed upon accommodation.
 - c. An Instructor who denies a request for an accommodation must inform the student in writing within five business days of receiving the request.

- i. If the request is for a Schedule Accommodation, the Instructor must include information about how the student may appeal the denial, a link to this rule, and the contact information for the dean of students or designee. The Instructor must also notify the dean of students or designee and provide a written explanation of why the Instructor denied the request.
- ii. If the request is for a Content Accommodation for a required examination or assignment in a Required Course, the Instructor must include information about how the student may appeal the denial, a link to this rule, and the contact information for the dean of the college or designee. The Instructor must also notify the department chair, dean of the college and the cognizant executive vice president or designee and provide a written explanation of why the Instructor denied the request.

E. Appeal of Instructor's Determination

1. Appeal of denial of a request for a Schedule Accommodation

- a. A student may appeal an Instructor's denial of a Schedule Accommodation request to the dean of students, or designee, who is the neutral arbiter. The dean of students or designee must determine whether the requested accommodation is a Fundamental Alteration and issue a decision to the Student and the Instructor within five business days of receiving the appeal. The dean of student's or designee's decision is final.

2. Appeal of denial of a request for a Content Accommodation

- a. A student may appeal an Instructor's denial of a request for a Content Accommodation to the dean of the college or designee who, if the Content Accommodation request relates to a required examination or assignment in a Required Course, is the neutral arbiter. If the dean of the college is the Instructor of the Course, the student may appeal to the cognizant Executive Vice President or designee.

- b. The dean of the college or designee will, in consultation with the Instructor and the department chair or designee, act within five business days. The dean of the college or designee will uphold the denial unless the dean of the college finds that the denial was Arbitrary and Capricious or was in violation of this rule or other university regulation.
 - i. A denial of a request for a Content Accommodation for a required examination or assignment in Required Course is a violation of this rule unless the requested accommodation is a Fundamental Alteration.
 - ii. The dean's or designee's determination shall be final as it pertains to the specific accommodation request.
 - iii. The dean of the college must notify the cognizant executive vice president or designee of any appeals received and the outcomes of those appeals.
- c. If the Instructor disagrees with the dean of the college's decision that the Instructor's denial of the student's request was Arbitrary and Capricious or in violation of this rule or other university regulation, the Instructor may not be compelled against the Instructor's professional judgment to administer the requested Content Accommodation for the student. If the Instructor declines to administer the Content Accommodation, it will be the responsibility of the dean or designee in consultation with the department chair or designee to design and administer the alternative academic requirement for the student in order to satisfy the student's Content Accommodation request. The dean or dean's designee will determine the student's grade on that specific alternative assignment and will report that grade to the Instructor, who will incorporate that grade for the assignment into the total grade for the Course. The final grade in the Course will be determined by the Instructor and will be calculated in the same way as the final grade is determined for all other students in the Course.

F. Withdrawal from Courses

1. If a student determines, after the last day to drop Courses without penalty, that Course requirements may conflict with the student's sincerely held religious or Conscience beliefs, and the Instructor has denied the student's written Content Accommodation request, the student may seek permission in writing from the dean of the college or designee to withdraw and to receive a refund of tuition for that class. In making this request the student must demonstrate the following:
 - a. that the student is in good standing in the Course Section as defined by the department;
 - b. that the student could not have made this determination prior to the last day to drop Courses without penalty; and
 - c. that the student acknowledges that receiving a refund of tuition for that class may cause adjustments to financial aid eligibility or forms of financial aid received.
2. A student may see assistance from the Office of the Dean of Students to withdraw from the course without penalty.

G. Retaliation Prohibited and Grievance Process

1. Retaliation against a student for requesting an accommodation based on the student's sincerely held religious or Conscience belief is prohibited.
2. Decisions on accommodation requests may not be considered adversely to an Instructor, including in the processes described in Policy 6-316, Policy 6-303, Policy 6-310, Policy 6-321 or other proceedings as long as those decisions are made in good faith. The dean or department chair may not take any adverse action against an Instructor based on the Instructor's decision on an accommodation request.
3. A student who believes that they have experienced discrimination, retaliation, or harassment based on the student's sincerely held religious or Conscience

belief may file a complaint with the Office of Equal Opportunity and Title IX as described in Policy 1-012 and related rules.

H. Confidentiality

1. University employees shall keep a student's request for a Schedule or Content Accommodation request and the student's sincerely held religious or Conscience beliefs and practices confidential unless disclosure is permitted by law.

I. Support for Students and Instructors

1. The dean of students or designee is available to support both instructors and students with accommodation requests described in this rule. A student may contact the dean of students or designee before requesting an accommodation for help with approaching the Instructor about the requested accommodation. Likewise, an Instructor who receives an accommodation request may seek help from the dean of students or designee if they are unsure whether to grant the accommodation or what an appropriate accommodation would be. In addition, an Instructor may seek help from their department chair or dean of the college's office.
2. A department or a college may provide additional guidance to Instructors on how to Reasonably Accommodate a student's sincerely held religious or Conscience belief in Courses offered by the department or college.

Sections IV- VII are for user information and are not subject to the approval of the Academic Senate or the Board of Trustees. The Institutional Policy Committee, the Policy Owner, or the Policy Officer may update these sections at any time.

IV. Policies/ Rules, Procedures, Guidelines, Forms, and other Related Resources

A. Policies/ Rules.

1. Policy 6-100: Instruction and Evaluation

B. Procedures, Guidelines, and Forms. [*reserved*]

C. Other Related Resources. [*reserved*]

V. References

A. Policy 1-012: University Non-Discrimination Policy

B. Policy 6-303: Reviews of Tenure-Line Faculty Members (RPT Criteria, Standards, & Procedures)

C. Policy 6-310: Reviews of Career-line, Adjunct, and Visiting Faculty Members, and Other Instructional Personnel (Standards and Procedures)

D. Policy 6-321: Required Reviews for Tenured Faculty

E. Policy 6-316: Code of Faculty Rights and Responsibilities

F. Policy 6-400: Student Rights and Responsibilities

G. Utah Code Section 53H-7-903

H. Utah Code Section 67-27-106

I. Utah Board of Higher Education Policy R264

VI. Contacts

The designated contact officials for this regulation are:

A. Policy Owner(s) (primary contact person for questions and advice): Dean of Students

B. Policy Officer(s): Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and Executive Vice President for Health Sciences

See Rule 1-001 for information about the roles and authority of policy owners and policy officers.

VII. History

Revision History.

A. Current version. Revision 1.

1. Effective Date: August 1, 2026
2. Legislative History
3. Editorial Revisions

B. Previous versions.

1. Revision 0. Effective Date January 6, 2025.

C. Renumbering

1. Provisions related to content accommodations were renumbered from Policy 6-100.