

Senate Council
February 7, 2011

Proposed New Senate Rule Regarding Accommodation of Religious Observances

Background:

In December, in response to a conversation initiated by VP for Institutional Diversity J.J. Jackson, the SC named an ad hoc committee (JJ, Kyle Kirk, and Bob Grossman) to consider whether the University needed a rule regarding accommodations of students' religious observances, and, if so, to propose some language. They have met, have decided that such a rule is warranted, and propose the following rule:

Faculty shall give students the opportunity to make up work (typically, exams or assignments) when students notify them that religious observances prevent the students from doing their work at its scheduled time. Faculty should indicate in their syllabus how much advance notice they require from a student requesting an accommodation. Faculty may use their judgment as to whether the holiday in question is important enough to warrant an accommodation, although the presumption should be in favor of a student's request. The Offices of Institutional Diversity, the Dean of Students, and the Ombud are available for consultation.

The ad hoc group tried to balance two competing imperatives: the need to allow instructors to decline specious requests for accommodations, and the need to protect students who observe unpopular or less widely recognized religions or who are more observant than the average student.

Separate from this proposed rule, VPD Jackson will put on her office's web site some guidance to faculty as to the major holidays of the more widely observed religions, some examples of the kinds of accommodations that students might request, some ways that faculty can show that UK respects religious diversity, and a link to a site that lists all of the holidays of all of the recognized religions (and some that you may not recognize).