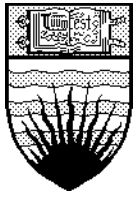


THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



SENATE POLICY:  
J-#136

VANCOUVER & OKANAGAN  
SENATES

c/o Enrolment Services  
2016 - 1874 East Mall  
Vancouver, B.C. Canada V6T 1Z1

**Number & Title**

*J-136: Academic Accommodation for all Students' Religious Observances and for the Cultural Observances of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Students*

**Effective Date:**

September 2020

**Approval Date:**

15 April 2020

**Review Date:**

This policy shall be reviewed five (5) years after approval and thereafter as deemed necessary by the *responsible committee*.

**Responsible Committee:**

Academic Policy Committees of both Senates

**Authority:**

*University Act, S. 37(1)*

*"The academic governance of the university is vested in the senate and it has the following powers:*

*... (f) to consider, approve and recommend to the board the revision of courses of study, instruction and education in all faculties and departments of the university;*

*(g) to provide for courses of study in any place in British Columbia and to encourage and develop extension and correspondence programs;*

*(h) to provide for and to grant degrees, including honorary degrees, diplomas and certificates of proficiency, except in theology; ...*

*(n) to provide for the preparation and publication of a university calendar;*

### **Purpose and Goals:**

The University of British Columbia values respect for the diversity of people within its community and the religious and cultural traditions that guide their individual lives. Moreover, as set out in the Calls to Action resulting from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, we recognize and respect the First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples' right to self-determination in spiritual matters, including the right to practice, develop, and teach their own spiritual and religious traditions, customs, and ceremonies.

In keeping with these principles and values this policy is designed to provide reasonable and appropriate accommodation for students who are absent from classes (including lectures, discussions, tutorials, laboratories, clinical placements, etc.) and scheduled examinations in order to participate in observances of religious significance or observances of cultural importance to *First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students*.

### **Applicability:**

This policy is applicable to all students at all campuses of the University.

### **Exclusions:**

Students in the classifications of Visiting International Research Students and Residents (medical, dental, pharmacy) are not included in this policy. Persons in these categories who seek accommodations should contact their immediate supervisor to make suitable arrangements.

Non-religious cultural observances of those who are not *First Nations, Métis or Inuit students* are not accommodated under this policy. However, students may request academic concessions to participate in such observances if they create a conflicting responsibility with their course work and attendance.

Convocation ceremonies are excluded from this policy.

### **Definitions:**

For the purposes of this policy and in all other policies in which they are not otherwise defined:

- *First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students* are those students who self-identify as such and shall include those students who identify as belonging to groups that are indigenous to territory that crosses over or that is adjacent to the borders of Canada.

**Policy:**

- 1) The University provides reasonable and appropriate accommodation for a student who must be absent from classes (including lectures, discussions, tutorials, laboratories, clinical placements, etc.) and scheduled examinations in order to participate in observances of significance in keeping with the practices of the student's own sincerely-held religious beliefs and/or the cultural traditions of *First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students*;
- 2) The University accepts that sincerely-held beliefs by members of the same group may lead to different observance practices.
- 3) Documentation from faith or community leaders is not required to support requests for accommodation.
- 4) Students should first explore options for fulfilling their religious or cultural obligations that will avoid a conflict with a class or exam. If alternatives are not available, then students should seek accommodation.
- 5) Students are expected to incorporate the deadlines for submission of course work such as essays, reports, and homework/problem sets into their schedules without requesting accommodation.
- 6) Observance may restrict participation in course activities and may require:
  - a) absence from class in which work is produced for a grade;
  - b) absence from scheduled exams;
  - c) absence from a scheduled placement;
  - d) following specific dress codes;
  - e) temporary absence from class for daily prayers, fasting or breaking a fast during class; or,
  - f) missing other required activities identified in the course syllabus.
- 7) Accommodations may include, but are not limited to, the following:
  - a) setting an alternative date for in-term or final examinations or other in-class assessments that are missed;
  - b) providing an alternative assignment for satisfying the course requirement; and,
  - c) re-calculating the evaluation scheme to eliminate the component that has been missed.

- 8) No accommodation will be granted that causes undue hardship, including jeopardizing the academic integrity of the curriculum, the academic standards of courses, or the safety of the student or others.
- 9) Some course activities such as group presentations and laboratories may be impossible to reschedule and so accommodation may require alternative means of demonstrating that the learning outcomes have been achieved.
- 10) It is the responsibility of the student to make the request for accommodation to their course instructor or coordinator, their graduate advisor, or the Dean's Office of their program as appropriate with as much notice as possible (normally 14 days). Reasonable efforts will be made to accommodate such requests. Failure to make a timely request may result in a denial of the request.
- 11) The instructor/coordinator/advisor/Dean's Office will process requests expeditiously to avoid an academic disadvantage to the student.
- 12) If a course instructor and a student are unable to agree on the form of accommodation, the student may refer the request to the academic head of the unit offering the course or program to determine the appropriate form of accommodation.

**Calendar Statement:**

As above.

**Consultations:**

The following groups were consulted during the development of this policy:

Aboriginal Programs and Services, Okanagan Campus; AMS; UBCSUO; Academic Advisors; Centre for Accessibility; Chaplains; CTLT; Deans, Directors and Academic Heads; Disability Resource Centre; Enrolment Services; Equity and Inclusion; First Nations House of Learning; GSS; UBC Community via Senate website and UBC Today newsletter; VP Students' Office and AVP Students' Office; Office of the Ombudsperson; Office of University Counsel; Offices of the Provosts on either campus.

**History:**

This is the first version of this policy. Prior to this policy having been approved, the related provisions in this policy were covered under Board of Governors Policy #65 – Religious Holidays. In a review of the Board policy undertaken in

2018, it was determined that the Senate is the appropriate authority for dealing with academic accommodations for students' religious holidays.

**Related Policies:**

[Joint Board and Senate Policy LR7 - Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities](#)

[Board Policy SC7 – Discrimination](#)

[Senate Policy V-130 - Content and Distribution of Course Syllabi](#)

[Senate Policy V-135 - Academic Concession](#)

[Grading Practices](#)

[Withdrawal](#)

**Appendix:**

There is no appendix to this policy.

**Procedures:**

- 1) Faculties may vary the procedures and practices they implement to facilitate the submission and determination of requests for accommodation under this policy; however, in so doing they will adhere to the principles and provisions of policy J-136.
- 2) In determining the appropriate form of accommodation to be granted, instructors should be aware that the act of writing a test or essay in class or in formal exam conditions is a valuable learning experience and so should ensure that if the missed assessment is not rescheduled, students are able to see the assessment questions and learn from the instructor the kinds of answers that were expected.
- 3) Requests for accommodation must normally be made in person or in writing to the course instructor or, in multi-section courses, to the course coordinator. Students in the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies should direct requests to their graduate advisor or supervisor. Some other faculties and schools require that requests be made to the academic advising office (“Dean’s Office”) of that unit.
- 4) In cases where a satisfactory arrangement between the student and course instructor/coordinator cannot be made, or if the student is uncomfortable approaching the instructor to request accommodation, the student should contact the advising office of their home Faculty or School or the Equity & Inclusion office for assistance in communicating with the course instructor or the academic head of the unit offering the course.
- 5) Requests for accommodation for examinations scheduled in a formal examination period should be made well in advance and normally no

later than 14 days prior to the start of the examination period. Requests for accommodation for examinations and other academic requirements during the term should be made with as much notice as possible. Reasonable efforts will be made to accommodate such requests. If the observance occurs within 14 days of the start of a term, the student shall contact the course instructor/coordinator at the earliest opportunity to request accommodation.

- 6) In some credit courses, such as some practica and field-work courses, there may be steps required for approval and authorities involved in requests for accommodation in addition to those described in this policy.