



Religious Accommodations Policy 2.24 Academic Affairs

Applies to: All Full- and Part-time Faculty, Marketing, and Academic Administrators

POLICY *(required)*

Issued: 07/01/2023 (approvals: Academic Policy Committee, April 28, 2023; Faculty Assembly, May 3, 2023; URG Board, 07/21/2023; RGCC Board, 06/26/2023)
Revised: MM/DD/YYYY
Edited: MM/DD/YYYY
Reviewed: MM/DD/YYYY

Under this policy, students may be absent for up to three (3) days each academic semester for reasons of faith or religious or spiritual beliefs and receive alternative accommodations without academic penalty.

Purpose of the Policy

Since the University of Rio Grande/Rio Grande Community College is committed to providing reasonable accommodations for all enrolled students with sincerely held religious beliefs and practices with regard to all examinations or other academic requirements, and;

Since section 3345.024 of the Revised Code, "The Testing Your Faith Act," requires each state institution of higher education to adopt a policy providing students with religious accommodations (see Appendix A, *Testing Your Faith Act*) and;

Since Rio Grande Community College is a state institution of higher education;

Therefore, the University of Rio Grande/Rio Grande Community College has developed and adopted this Religious Accommodations policy.

PROCEDURE *(required)*

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For Students:

1. The student must meet the following criteria to receive alternative accommodations due to absences incurred under the Religious Accommodation Policy:
 - A. The absence(s) must be due to the student's faith or religious or spiritual belief system so that the student may participate in organized activities conducted under the auspices of a religious denomination, church, or other religious or spiritual organization.
 - B. The student's sincerely held religious belief or practice severely affects the student's ability to take an examination or meet an academic requirement, and
 - C. The student must provide the instructor with written notice of the specific dates for which the student seeks alternative accommodations, no later than fourteen (14) calendar days after the first day of instruction in the course for which alternative accommodations are being sought, using the following **procedure** for notification:
 - 1) The student completes and signs the notification form adopted for use by the institution.

- 2) The student emails the form through campus email to each impacted faculty member within fourteen (14) calendar days after the first class meeting of the course(s) for which the student is seeking alternative accommodation(s)
- 3) The student is informed by email, of the receipt of the notification by the faculty member.
 - If the notification form is determined to be invalid due to being unsigned or incomplete, the student will be notified by the faculty member through campus email. The form may be resubmitted, but resubmissions are still subject to the 14-day requirement.
 - If the notification form is received after the 14th calendar day of the first class meeting, the form will be considered out of compliance with Rio's Religious Accommodation Policy, and alternative accommodation(s) will not be made available. The student will be notified of this by the faculty member through campus email.

For Faculty:

1. Faculty must excuse students without question or penalty and provide alternative accommodations for examinations or other academic requirements missed due to such an absence for students who have satisfactorily notified faculty in accordance with this policy.
2. Faculty must include the following statement in each course syllabus:

Religious Accommodations: Students who wish to seek alternative accommodations for religious absence(s) permitted under Ohio's Testing Your Faith Act must follow the procedure as outlined by Rio's Religious Accommodation Policy. This includes: 1) providing your instructor with written notification using the notification form provided by the institution and 2) sending the completed and signed notification form through campus email to your instructor(s) within the first fourteen (14) calendar days of the first class meeting of the course(s) for which you are seeking alternative accommodations. Those with questions about the Religious Accommodation policy may contact the Director of Academic Support Services and Student Accessibility.

3. Faculty shall accept without question the sincerity of a student's religious or spiritual belief system. An instructor shall keep all requests for alternative accommodations confidential.
4. Within three (3) calendar days, faculty will confirm receipt of the student's notification of religious accommodation through campus email using the form adopted for that use by the institution
5. Faculty will discuss any needed alternative accommodations with students no less than seven (7) days before the anticipated absence that is excused under this policy.
6. When alternative accommodations require rescheduling a test or any other academic requirement, faculty shall schedule the time and date of the alternative examination or academic requirements. This may be before or after the time and date the examination or other academic requirement was originally scheduled but will be done without prejudicial effect.
7. Faculty will provide a list at the end of each term to the Office of Accessibility of all students who exercised the use of this policy and, if used, what alternative accommodations faculty provided. This information will be kept confidential and retained as evidence of compliance.

For the Administration:

1. According to section 3345.024 of the Ohio Revised Code, Rio must post both of the following in a prominent location on its website:
 - a. a copy of the policy, which must contain the contact information of an individual who can provide further information about the policy;

- b. a non-exhaustive list of major religious holidays or festivals for the next two academic years.
2. The chancellor of higher education shall provide each state institution with a non-exhaustive list of major religious holidays or festivals for the next two academic years at the beginning of each academic year. Rio may adopt the chancellor's list in its entirety or choose which holidays to include on its list.
 3. Each time Rio posts, prints, or publishes its policy, it shall include a statement that the list is non-exhaustive and may not be used to deny accommodation to a student for a holiday or festival of the student's faith or religious or spiritual belief system that does not appear on the list.
 4. Nothing in this section, and no inclusion or exclusion of a religious holiday or festival on the list posted by Rio, shall preclude a student from full and reasonable accommodations for any sincerely held religious beliefs and practices with regard to all examinations or other academic requirements and absences for reasons of faith or religious or spiritual belief system.

Responsibilities (*required; number of responsibilities if more than one for any position or office*)

| Position or Office | Responsibilities |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Provost/VPAA | Ensure all faculty are aware of the policy and their expectations and that all syllabi have the approved Religious Accommodations policy language. |
| Faculty | Ensure each of their syllabi includes the approved Religious Accommodations policy language. Accept without question the sincerity of a student's religious or spiritual belief system and keep requests for alternative accommodations confidential. Provide appropriate accommodations for each student as needed. |
| Dir of Marketing (or designee) | Post or update the website with the policy, the non-exhaustive list of holidays, and contact details for the person/office who can provide further information. |
| Director of Academic Support Services & Student Accessibility | Serve as the contact person who can provide further information about the policy. Serve as the contact person when a grievance occurs. |
| Student | Any student taking advantage of this policy must follow the procedure for students as outlined in this policy. |

Questions about the procedure used to secure alternative accommodation(s) under the Religious Accommodation Policy should be directed to the Director of Academic Support Services & Student Accessibility.

Grievances related to the Religious Accommodation Policy are to be reported within three (3) regular academic calendar days to the Director of Academic Support Services and Student Accessibility. Since grievances related to the Religious Accommodation Policy may be either academic or non-academic in nature, the Director of Academic Support Services & Student Accessibility will hold a meeting with the student within five (5) regular academic calendar days to gather information needed to determine the nature of the grievance. The grievance will then be referred to the appropriate dean as follows:

- If the grievance is of a *non-academic* nature, the grievance will be referred to the Dean of Students and handled in accordance with the *Non-Academic* Grievance Policy as stated in the student handbook.
- If the grievance is of an *academic* nature, the grievance will be referred to the appropriate Academic Dean and handled in accordance with the *Academic* Grievance Policy as stated in the student handbook.

History (required)

All changes must be listed chronologically in the format below, including all edits and reviews. Note when the policy name or number changes. Note the Board of Trustees resolution number and date if board action was taken. Note if an edit or revision date is exclusively for the policy section or the procedure section:

Issued: 07/01/2023
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Appendix A
Testing Your Faith Act

(134th General Assembly)
(Amended House Bill Number 353)

AN ACT

To enact section 3345.024 of the Revised Code to enact "The Testing Your Faith Act" to require each state institution of higher education to adopt a policy providing students with religious accommodations.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Ohio:

SECTION 1. That section 3345.024 of the Revised Code be enacted to read as follows:

Sec. 3345.024. Each state institution of higher education, as defined in section 3345.011 of the Revised Code, shall adopt a policy that reasonably accommodates the sincerely held religious beliefs and practices of individual students with regard to all examinations or other academic requirements and absences for reasons of faith or religious or spiritual belief system. The policy shall satisfy all of the following conditions:

(A) The policy shall permit a student to be absent for up to three days each academic semester to take holidays for reasons of faith or religious or spiritual belief system or participate in organized activities conducted under the auspices of a religious denomination, church, or other religious or spiritual organization. The institution shall not impose an academic penalty as a result of a student being absent as permitted in the policy.

(B)(1) The policy shall require that students be provided with alternative accommodations with regard to examinations and other academic requirements missed due to an absence described in division (A) of this section, if both of the following apply:

(a) The student's sincerely held religious belief or practice severely affects the student's ability to take an examination or meet an academic requirement.

(b) Not later than fourteen days after the first day of instruction in a particular course, the student provides the instructor with written notice of the specific dates for which the student requests alternative accommodations.

(2) An instructor shall accept without question the sincerity of a student's religious or spiritual belief system. An instructor shall keep requests for alternative accommodations confidential. An instructor shall schedule a time and date for an alternative examination, which may be before or after the time and date the examination or other academic requirement was originally scheduled, but shall do so without prejudicial effect.

(C) The policy shall require the institution to post both of the following in a prominent location on the institution's web site:

(1) A copy of the policy adopted under this section, which shall include the contact information of an individual who can provide further information about the policy;

(2) A nonexhaustive list of major religious holidays or festivals for the next two academic years



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Am. H. B. No. 353

134th G.A.

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. The chancellor of higher education shall provide each state institution with a nonexhaustive list of major religious holidays or festivals for the next two academic years at the beginning of each academic year. Each state institution may adopt the chancellor's list in its entirety or choose which holidays to include on its list.

Each time a state institution's policy is posted, printed, or published, including as described in divisions (C) and (D) of this section, the state institution shall include a statement that the list is nonexhaustive, and the list may not be used to deny accommodation to a student for a holiday or festival of the student's faith or religious or spiritual belief system that does not appear on the list.

Nothing in this section, and no inclusion or exclusion of a religious holiday or festival on the list posted by a state institution, shall preclude a student from full and reasonable accommodations for any sincerely held religious beliefs and practices with regard to all examinations or other academic requirements and absences for reasons of faith or religious or spiritual belief system provided under this section.

(D) The policy shall require instructors to include in each course syllabus a statement regarding the institutions's policy adopted under this section. The statement shall include both of the following:

(1) A description of the general procedure for requesting accommodations;

(2) Contact information for an individual whom a student may contact for more information about the policy adopted under this section.

(E) The policy shall include a procedure under which a student may notify the institution of any grievance with regard to the implementation of the policy.

SECTION 2. This act shall be known as "The Testing Your Faith Act."