



Human Resources

Religious Accommodation FAQs

What does “religious accommodation” mean?

Religious accommodation is the process in which employees and supervisors make a good faith effort to provide a reasonable accommodation of an individual’s sincerely held religious belief.

Why do we do this?

The university is committed to diversity and nondiscrimination and supports the employment of qualified individuals, regardless of religious affiliation, in accordance with state and federal laws and regulations, including Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission Guidelines on Discrimination Because of Religion, and the New York State Human Rights Law. This process is part of that commitment.

What is the process?

See [University Policy 6.13.8](#). Faculty, staff, and student employees are asked to initiate requests for any desired religious-related workplace accommodation by contacting their supervisor or department chair in a timely manner (at least 30 days in advance of the event, if possible); be willing to make available any documentation related to the tenets of the religious practice or belief that supports the request; complete the [Cornell Request for Religious Accommodation form](#) (pdf) and submit it to their supervisor or department chair; and cooperate with their supervisor's or department chair's good faith efforts to accommodate their practice or belief.

Supervisors and department chairs are asked to discuss the basis of the employee’s request

with the employee, exercise good faith in making decisions regarding requests for religious-related workplace accommodation, and help make an agreed-upon accommodation effective.

Do all requests have to be granted?

The process requires that a good faith effort is made to provide a reasonable accommodation, which may not be “granting the request.” Reasonable accommodations are determined on an individual basis, and may include (but are not limited to) providing an employee leave for religious observances, providing a time and/or place to pray, and/or providing the flexibility to wear religious attire. Other examples of accommodating an employee's religious beliefs include scheduling changes, voluntary substitutions of shifts or hours with a supervisor’s or department chair's approval, job reassignments, and lateral transfers.

Factors that are considered in this determination include the nature of the accommodation requested, the duration of the request, alternative accommodations, the impact on the operation of the department or unit, and the ability of the individual to perform the essential functions of the position if the accommodation is granted. Supervisors and department chairs should consult with the director of Workforce Policy and Labor Relations in the event that a request may be denied. In the event that the faculty or staff member disagrees with the determination and/or proposed accommodation, he or she may contact WPLR or the University Ombudsman for assistance.

Who do I call for guidance?

You may contact your [HR representative](#) for guidance or you may contact the Office of Workforce Policy and Labor Relations at equalopportunity@cornell.edu.
