


MEMORANDUM

TO: Deans, Directors, Department Chairs and University Faculty

FROM: Anne Veeger, Ph.D.
Vice Provost for Academic and Faculty Initiatives 

DATE: August 13, 2021

SUBJECT: University-Sanctioned Events and Religious Holidays

As the new semester approaches, I want to remind faculty of policy regarding students participating in University-sanctioned events and absence due to religious observances.

A complete list of religious holidays can be found at: <http://www.interfaith-calendar.org/>

Please familiarize yourself with the following university policies:

6.20.10 Policy on Religious Observance. *No faculty or staff member, administrator or student shall be discriminated against because of religious beliefs or practices.*

This year Rosh Hashanah begins at sundown on Monday September 6th and ends at sundown on Wednesday September 8th. As a result, both advising day on Sept. 7th, and the first day of classes, on Sept 8th, fall on Rosh Hashanah. It is university policy to excuse, without penalty, absences for religious observance. We ask faculty to be sensitive to requests from students for accommodation on these days and encourage faculty to reach out in advance of the start of classes to acknowledge this calendar conflict, inform students if their class will be canceled and if not, remind students to give advance notice if they will be observing the holiday and absent from class.

Students who do not attend class or lab on the first few days of the fall semester due to their observance of a religious holy day should not be dropped from the roster nor penalized for missing class for this reason. However, students are responsible for informing their professors/instructors in advance that they will be missing class and they are responsible for making up any missed work. Sections 8.51.11 & 8.51.12 of the *University Manual* (<http://web.uri.edu/manual/chapter-8/chapter-8-4/>) provide guidance to faculty in developing appropriate accommodation for religious and other University-sanctioned events:

8.51.11 *Students who plan to be absent from classes or examinations for religious holy days that traditionally preclude secular activity (see 6.20.11 for how such information is made available) shall discuss this with the appropriate instructor(s) in advance of the holy day. The instructor(s) shall then make one of the following options available:*

- a. the same quiz, test, or examination to be administered either before or after the normally scheduled time;*
- b. a comparable alternative quiz, test, or examination to be administered either before or after the scheduled time;*
- c. an alternative weighting of the remaining evaluative components of the course which is mutually acceptable to the student and instructor(s).*

8.51.12 *Students who expect to be absent from classes or examinations for University sanctioned events shall discuss this with the appropriate instructor(s) at least one week in advance of the sanctioned event(s). The instructor(s) concerned shall then offer the student an alternative listed in section 8.51.11. For these purposes, University-sanctioned events shall be those events approved for class excuses by the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, a Vice President, a Dean, or the Director of Intercollegiate Athletics. No event shall be regarded as University sanctioned until the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs has been notified. Disagreements over the validity of an event being categorized as University sanctioned shall be mediated by the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs. If agreement cannot be reached, the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs shall decide the matter and that decision shall be final.*

In addition, when there is leeway in scheduling a program, meeting or other gathering, conflicts with religious observances should be taken into consideration.

If faculty are planning to cancel classes for their own observance of religious holy days, please ensure that your students know in advance that you will not be holding class and further, what alternate arrangements you have made.

Best wishes for an enjoyable and productive semester.

c: Faculty Senate Executive Committee