

Human Resource Services

Procedure #4-143

Effective Date: 05.25.04

ACCOMMODATION OF RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES

PURPOSE: The Accommodation of Religious Observances procedure has been developed to ensure all members of the College Community can observe the special observance days of their religion or creed.

RATIONALE: Georgian College, in agreement with and in support of the Ontario Human Rights Code, is committed to respecting the religious beliefs and practices of all members of the College Community and to making accommodations for observances of special significance to adherents.

SCOPE: The Accommodation of Religious Observances procedure applies to all members of the Georgian College Community. The Georgian College Community includes students, employees, members of the Board of Governors, members of College committees, and groups or associations who have a direct relationship to, or are under the authority of the institution. All individuals responsible for accommodation of religious observance(s) are expected to comply with this procedure, as well as the Ontario Human Rights Code; in particular, the Policy on Creed, Accommodation of Religious Observances, and Protecting Religious Rights.

1. GENERAL PRINCIPLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

1.1 The Ontario Human Rights Code requires that every person should have access to the same opportunities and benefits, and be treated with equal dignity and respect, regardless of his or her religion. Religion includes the practices, beliefs, and observances that are part of a faith or religion. It does not include personal, moral, ethical or political views. Nor does it include religions that promote violence or hate towards others, or that violate criminal law. The Ontario Human Rights Commission has adopted the following definition of creed:

Creed is interpreted to mean "religious creed" or "religion". It is defined as a professed system and confession of faith, including both beliefs and observances or worship. A belief in a God or gods, or a single Supreme Being or deity is not a requisite. Religion is broadly accepted by the Commission to include, for example, non-deistic bodies of faith, such as the spiritual faiths/practices of some aboriginal cultures, as well as **bona fide** newer religions (assessed on a case by case basis). The existence of religious beliefs and practices are both necessary and sufficient to the meaning of creed, if the beliefs and practices are sincerely held and/or observed.

1.2 Georgian is committed to respecting the religious beliefs and practices of all members of its community and recognizes that different forms of accommodation may be needed by students and staff to meet the particular needs of religious observance.

1.3 For students, every effort will be made to avoid scheduling in-class or formal examinations on days of special religious significance throughout the year. The schedule of dates for religious holidays will be compiled annually by the Office of the Registrar, consistent with those in the Ontario Public Service Religious Holiday Policy and is available on the College web site. It is understood that while the Ontario Public Service Religious Holiday list is quite extensive, it may not be inclusive of all religious holiday observances.

1.4 Faculty should inform students of the existence of this policy and the process to request accommodation for Religious Observance. In instances when a timetable or class conflict exists, refer to Section 2 of this document to review the process in place to request accommodation.

1.5 For staff requiring leave for religious observance, where possible the College will endeavor to grant leaves. It is the intention of the College that leave for religious purposes will be paid leave. Refer to Section 2 to review the process in place to request accommodation.

1.6 The person requesting religious accommodation and the College in providing the accommodation have Rights and Responsibilities.

Rights and Responsibilities of the person requesting accommodation:

Take the initiative to request accommodation; Explain why accommodation is needed; Provide notice of request in writing, and allow a reasonable time for reply; Explain what measures of accommodation are required; Deal in good faith.

Rights and Responsibilities of the College (Supervisor for staff, faculty for students) responsible for accommodation:

Respect the dignity of the person seeking accommodation; Assess the need for accommodation based on the needs of the group of which the person is a member; Reply to the request within a reasonable period of time; Grant requests related to the observance of religious practices; Deal in good faith.

2. PROCESS – ACCOMMODATION OF RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES

STUDENTS

2.1 A student requiring accommodation for a religious holiday should notify, in writing, his or her coordinator at least three weeks prior to the required accommodation, including details of name, course(s), professor(s), required accommodation and date(s) of accommodation (e-mail is acceptable).

2.2 The coordinator will respond within a reasonable amount of time in writing to the student detailing how the student's need for accommodation will be met (e-mail is acceptable). The coordinator will forward a copy of his/her response to the appropriate faculty.

2.3 In the case of an external work placement, clinical placement or practicum, it is the responsibility of the student to inform his/her supervisor as soon as possible of the need for accommodation regarding religious observances. As in 2.1 above, three weeks may be a reasonable timeline to speak to the placement employer. If difficulties are encountered about the request, the student should contact his/her co-op officer or coordinator at the College.

2.4 Should uncertainty arise about the request for accommodation or about the approval of accommodation from the coordinator, the Dean or Associate Dean's office should be contacted to discuss the matter.

STAFF

2.5 An employee requiring accommodation for a religious observance should notify his or her immediate supervisor at least three-weeks prior to the required accommodation date including details of name, the required accommodation and date(s) of accommodation (e-mail is acceptable).

2.6 The supervisor will respond within a reasonable amount of time in writing to the employee detailing how the need for accommodation will be met (e-mail is acceptable). A copy shall be sent to Human Resources.

2.7 This religious leave absence shall be identified and reported on the departmental Attendance Report as RL (Religious Leave).

2.8 Should uncertainty arise about the request for accommodation from the employee, or about the approval of accommodation from the supervisor, Human Resources should be contacted to discuss the matter.

GEORGIAN COLLEGE OF APPLIED ARTS AND TECHNOLOGY

OPERATING PRACTICES AND PROCEDURES

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Prepared by: Betty McCoppen

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Approved by: Brian Tamblyn, President