

Accommodation of religious, aboriginal and spiritual observance for learners procedure

Parent policy

Learner Accommodation Policy #500-1-4

Purpose

The purpose of the procedure is to acknowledge the rights of Bow Valley College learners to freedom of conscience and religion; to recognize learners' rights to engage in religious and aboriginal observance of special significance in exercising that freedom; to reasonably accommodate such rights within the confines of the College community; and to inform learners seeking accommodation of the process to be followed in so doing.

Scope

This procedure applies to learners, employees and representatives of the College within all campuses, course/program delivery modalities, activities, services and facilities.

There are a number of areas and activities where the practice of religion and spirituality may result in a request for accommodation. These areas and activities may include but are not limited to the following:

- observation of major religious or spiritual holy days, celebrations or ceremonies
- prayer
- smudging
- dietary requirements
- fasting
- religious attire
- ablution (e.g. washing of hands, face & feet)
- participation in daily activities and curriculum

Compliance

Employees (including contractors) and learners are responsible for knowing, understanding, and complying with this procedure to the extent that it relates to their position, employment, or enrolment at the College.

Procedures

1. It is the responsibility of a learner requesting accommodation for religious observance to do so as soon as possible after being provided with the information necessary to identify a conflict, normally, within two weeks of the conflict and normally within the first two weeks of the term.
 - 1.1. The learner shall make the request to his or her instructor(s) in writing (Attachment "A").
 - 1.2. Any delay in requesting accommodation may affect the College's ability to make any necessary arrangements and may result in denial of the request.
 - 1.3. The learner's request for accommodation shall include their written signature and shall identify the religious or spiritual observance creating the conflict, the need for accommodation and the nature of the accommodation requested (e.g. absence for part or all of a class, rescheduling of an assignment due date, arranging for an alternate date for writing of a scheduled examination).

- 1.4. Submission of a written request, with signature, attests to the fact that the learner is submitting a bona fide claim. A copy of the request should be retained by the learner for a minimum of one term after it is submitted.
- 1.5. Where the instructor and the learner are unable to agree on a reasonable accommodation, the matter will first be referred to the Program Coordinator. The decision of the Coordinator may be reviewed by Academic Dean within 5 days of the decision being provided to the learner.
- 1.6. Requests for accommodations for religious or spiritual observance must be submitted each semester.
2. The College recognizes that normal scheduling of classes, assignments and examinations may unavoidably conflict with religious holidays or activities.
 - 2.1. The College will make reasonable effort to avoid scheduling in-class or formal examinations on days of special religious significance throughout the year through a universal design approach.
 - 2.1.1. A schedule of dates for many of the world's major religions is available at: www.interfaith-calendar.org
 - 2.2. Where universal design principles cannot be followed, it is the responsibility of the learner to request accommodation for religious or spiritual observance.
3. The College is not required to provide a designated area for religious observance on campus, however a Multi-Faith Room is available for learner use on the 2nd floor of South Campus.
 - 3.1. Procedures for Use of the Multi-Faith Space will be made available to learners.
4. The College will accommodate learners' attire that is related to their religious or spiritual practice.
 - 4.1. In programs where uniforms are worn, administrators may ask the learners to wear religious attire in the same colour as the uniforms (e.g. the hijab); however, there may be religious requirements that cannot be modified and may require accommodation.
 - 4.2. Where religious or spiritual attire may pose safety and security concerns in specific circumstances, reasonable and justifiable safety restrictions and limitations may be required.
5. No request for accommodation for religious or spiritual observance will be considered where it is made after a missed examination or assignment in the absence of special circumstances justifying the failure to seek accommodation in advance.

Definitions

Accommodation:

Is the process of making alterations to the delivery of services so that those services become accessible to more people, including persons with disabilities. They can be provided to individuals, groups or provided through universal design practices. Examples of accommodations include but are not restricted to:

- Absence from a class, lab, or other instructional/course activity
- Alternative demonstration of admissions requirement
- Appropriate furniture
- Assistive technology
- Automatic doors

- Braille indicators on doors, elevators, stairwells
- Communication Access Real-Time (CART) or other transcription
- Deaf Interpreters
- Exam accommodations
- Extra time on tests or assignments
- Intervenors
- Modified course load
- Note Takers
- Oral interpreters
- Readers
- Religious clothing/attire/objects
- Scribes
- Service animals
- Sign Language Interpreters
- Universal design/universal learning design
- Use of preferred name

Employee:

A person who is currently employed by the College, hired to perform services.

Learner:

A person who is currently registered as a learner at the College whether or not for credit. For the purposes of this document, “learner” shall be used synonymously for applicants, and learners, unless otherwise noted.

Religion:

The Supreme Court of Canada has defined religion as being “about freely and deeply held personal convictions or beliefs connected to an individual’s spiritual faith and integrally linked to his or her self-definition and spiritual fulfillment, the practices of which allow individuals to foster a connection with the divine or with the subject or object of that spiritual faith”.

Religious belief:

Refers to a system of belief, worship and conduct.

Religious attire:

Is not cultural/traditional/dress; it is attire that is a requirement of religious or ceremonial observation. Religious attire includes but is not limited to:

- hairstyles
- yarmulkes/kippah (skullcaps), turbans, Rastafari headdress
- head covers (e.g. hijab)
- crucifix, Star of David, etc
- kirpan
- items of ceremonial dress
- modesty of attire

Representatives of the College:

Include employees, advisory or other committee members, or members of the Board of Governors.

Data sheet

Responsible officer

Director responsible for Learner Success Services

Relevant dates

Approved	Board of Governors: BOG161127-09
Effective	May 1, 2016
Next review	January 2021
Modification history	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Admin changes – August 2017 • November 2019 – titling changes • Rebranded February 2021
Verified by	Office of the President, March 2022*

Related policy

Learner Accommodation Policy #500-1-4

Associated policies, procedures, and guidelines

Academic Continuance and Graduation Policy #500-1-5

Admissions Policy #500-1-2

Distributed Learning Policy #500-2-7

Grading Policy #500-1-6

Learner Appeals Policy #500-1-12

Learner Code of Conduct Policy #500-1-1

Learner Records & Information - Collection, Access & Waivers #500-1-16

Protected Disclosure Policy #200-1-6

Related legislation

Alberta Human Rights Act

Alberta Freedom of Information and Protection from Privacy Act

Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

**Attachment “A”
Learner request for accommodation of religious,
aboriginal and spiritual observance**

A separate form must be completed for each course/section (print clearly)

Date		ID number	
Last name		First name(s)	
BVC email address			
Program of study			
Course			
Section			
Instructor name			

Accommodation need(s):

(instructor and learner must initial each agreed upon accommodation)

Date of conflict (specific date/dates or recurring)	Observance	Requested accommodation	Agreed upon accommodation
Learner signature			

Internal use only:

Date received	
Instructor signature	

This agreement is valid only for the course indicated above and approved in accordance with the timelines and terms outlined in the Accommodation of Religious, Aboriginal and Spiritual Observance for Learners Procedure.

Once approved, the instructor must provide one copy to the learner, one copy to the Centre/School and one copy to Learner Success Services.