

## AC.3.8.1 Attendance

### Schedule A: Accommodations for Religious Observances

#### Why is SAIT required to accommodate a student's religious observances?

As is the case for all post-secondary institutions in Alberta, SAIT's operations are governed by provincial human rights legislation. This means that students are legally entitled to be free from discrimination on a variety of protected grounds. This also means that SAIT must reasonably accommodate students so that they do not experience discrimination on those protected grounds.

One of these protected grounds is religion. SAIT recognizes that a student may not be able to attend classes because it is a day of religious observance for the student. Likewise, a student may not be able to complete a particular assessment because it requires the student to do something contrary to the student's religious beliefs. SAIT requires its employees and contractors to work collaboratively with the student in reasonably accommodating the student's religious observances.

For resources and further information on religious observances:

- contact the manager of the Interfaith Centre at [student.engagement@sait.ca](mailto:student.engagement@sait.ca).
- go to SAIT's Interfaith webpage at <http://www.sait.ca/interfaith> or at <https://saitnow.ca/departments-and-schools/external-relations/student-services/student-engagement-office/interfaith-centre/>
- refer to the Interfaith Calendar, which can be found at <http://www.sait.ca/interfaith>
- refer to the Alberta Human Rights Commission's bulletins and information sheets:
  - <https://albertahumanrights.ab.ca/media/pgrdfmor/duty-to-accommodate-human-rights-guide.pdf>
  - <https://albertahumanrights.ab.ca/media/nn1ct5xh/religious-beliefs.pdf>

#### What are reasonable and unreasonable accommodations?

Reasonable accommodations might include, but are not limited to:

- changing the date of an exam or in-class assessment for the student requiring the accommodation.
- developing an alternate assessment that lets the student meet the course outcomes that the original assessment supported.
- exploring alternate ways to accommodate a student's religious observances while:
  - maintaining exam integrity
  - ensuring the student meets industry's safety standards for the assessment or activity
- redistributing or reweighting assignments for the student requiring the accommodation, where the course outcomes are covered in other assessments.

Unreasonable accommodations include those that would:

- compromise the outcomes and requirements for entering or completing the program or course.
- contravene legally required occupational health and safety requirements.
- create a significant negative financial impact on SAIT as a whole (but not on the particular program or school: human rights legislation assesses the financial impact in relation to the institution's entire budget).



- significantly interfere with the rights of other individuals.
- lower the academic integrity or standards of the course or program.
- negatively affect health and/or safety for the student or other individuals.

### **What is the process for accommodating a student's religious observances?**

1. A student who requests a religious observance accommodation should be directed to the manager of the Interfaith Centre as the starting point for the discussion.
2. The student will be required to complete and submit the online Religious Accommodations form (available on the Interfaith website under Religious Accommodations at <https://www.sait.ca/interfaith> or at <https://saitnow.ca/departments-and-schools/external-relations/student-services/student-engagement-office/interfaith-centre/> preferably at the start of the semester, or, at a minimum, 10 business days (unless extenuating circumstances justify a shorter time frame) before the absence or the assessment in question. If the student does not meet the deadline and there are no extenuating circumstances, SAIT not required to accommodate the student.
3. The student's request must identify the nature of the religious observance and the suggested accommodation that the student proposes, for SAIT's consideration.
4. The manager of the Interfaith Centre reviews the student's request within three business days and decides whether the student has met the timelines for making the request and if the student's request is based on a religious observance. The manager can ask a student to submit documents or other evidence that corroborate the student's request.
5. If the manager of the Interfaith Centre does not support the student's request, the manager advises the student and the academic chair/coordinator responsible for the course(s) for which the student has requested an accommodation.
6. If the manager of the Interfaith Centre supports the student's request, the manager approves the online Religious Accommodations request form and forwards their decision to the academic chair/coordinator responsible for the course.
7. The academic chair/coordinator, instructor, and student work together to see if there is an effective and reasonable way (or accommodation) that lets the student complete the work or assessment that cannot otherwise be completed due to the religious observance. Accommodations do not have to be perfect, but must be reasonable in light of all the circumstances.
8. In some situations, depending on the particular assessment that has been missed, it may not be possible for a student to complete the assessment in question, and this may affect the student's grade in the course.
9. The academic chair/coordinator documents the decision on the Religious Accommodations form, and submits the completed online form, along with any supporting documentation from meetings with the student, within three business days of reaching a decision.
10. A student who disagrees with the decision of the manager of the Interfaith Centre or of the academic chair/coordinator can appeal the decision to the dean or designate responsible for the course. The dean or designate must consult with the manager of the Interfaith Centre when considering a student's appeal. The



details on the appeal process are set out in [AC.3.8.1 Attendance Requirements](#) procedure and [AC.3.8.2 Attendance Requirements – Apprentices](#) procedure.

11. Employees and contractors who meet with students to discuss religious accommodations must document their discussions and the outcomes of those meetings. This documentation must be included with the Religious Accommodations online form, so that there is a complete file for the student.
12. If a student requires a religious accommodation in relation to a work-integrated learning course or requirement, SAIT will work with the work-integrated learning site to determine if a reasonable accommodation is possible for the student.

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