



**Title:** ABSENCES DUE TO RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES –  
POLICY AND PROCEDURES

**CLASSIFICATION:** HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT  
**FIRST ADOPTED:** June 1995  
**AMENDED:** November 2013

## 1. General

The following statements are extracts from a Supreme Court decision in the case *Central Okanagan School District No. 23 versus Renaud*.

“An employer must take reasonable measures short of undue hardship to accommodate an employee’s religious beliefs and practices.”

“Private arrangements, by contract or collective agreement, must give way to the requirements of the Charter of Human Rights.”

“The search for accommodation is a multi-party inquiry: employer, employee and fellow employees.”

## 2. Reasonable Accommodation

Employees whose religious beliefs require that they be absent during a workday must discuss their anticipated absence with their supervisor. Supervisors who have questions about the “reasonable measures” the College must take to accommodate religious observances must consult with the Coordinator of Human Resources.

## 3. Professionals and Support Staff

Professionals and Support Staff whose religious beliefs require that they be absent on a work day may use their personal days to cover their absence. Vacation days or compensatory time may be substituted for personal days.

## 4. Teachers

4.1. Teachers whose religious beliefs require that they be absent on a day when they are scheduled to teach must:

- a) advise the Department Chair prior to the beginning of the staffing process for the semester of the anticipated date(s) of absence;
- b) consult with the Chair on acceptable alternative arrangements for their classes;
- c) abide by the decision of the Chair on the selection of alternative arrangements;

- d) include in the course outline the approved arrangement(s) as per the College's Institutional Student Evaluation Policy (ISEP).

The absences of teachers who have followed this process are with pay.

- 4.2. Teachers whose religious beliefs require that they be absent during their period of availability but do not interfere with scheduled classes will notify their Department Chair and report their absences to their Sector Dean using the mechanisms provided at the earliest opportunity.
- 4.3. The Department Chair is responsible for taking into consideration the expected absences requested by faculty due to religious observances in developing the department's course assignments. The Chair is also responsible for approving appropriate alternative arrangements for teachers intending to be absent for religious observances. The Chair may consult the department and the Sector Dean.
- 4.4. If necessary, the Chair will invite teachers in the department to exchange assignments in order to accommodate a teacher's religious observances necessitating an absence.
- 4.5. The Chair will render a decision within 15 days of receipt of the request for accommodation and advise the Sector Dean of the decision.
- 4.6. The hiring of substitutes is not normally authorized under this policy with the exception of clinical course components, intensives courses, or courses with laboratory components. The Sector Dean may in other circumstances make exceptions.