



TEMERTY FACULTY OF MEDICINE
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

Religious and Spiritual Observances Accommodations Guidance Document

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On behalf of the PGME Religious and Spiritual Observances Working Group

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Background

- University of Toronto welcomes and includes learners, staff, and faculty from a wide range of communities, traditions, and spiritual beliefs
- The university is committed to arranging reasonable accommodations for residents who observe religious holy days other than those already accommodated by ordinary scheduling and statutory holidays
- Residents and programs have identified a need for guidelines regarding accommodations for religious and spiritual observances, including leave requests
- Other universities have recently developed similar guidelines:
 - University of Ottawa: "Guidance document to support observance of Ramadan"
 - Queen's University: "Statement on Religious Accommodations for Trainees"
- The Office of Learner Affairs (OLA) in partnership with Office of Inclusion & Diversity, spearheaded a Religious and Spiritual Observances Working Group, with support from PGME

Goal

- Goal of the Religious and Spiritual Observances Working Group was to develop a comprehensive guidance document to support programs in planning and supporting residents' religious and spiritual observances.

Purpose

- Provide guidelines for residents and residency programs around religious and spiritual observances, ensuring inclusivity and accommodation, in alignment with existing university policies, as well as the PARO-OTH collective agreement and the Ontario Human Rights Code (OHRC).
- Supports transparency, fairness, and consistency around processes across programs.
- Raise awareness amongst residents and faculty about available accommodations.
- Promote the existing resources, including the University of Toronto [Dates of Recognition, Observance & Celebration](#), a multi-faith calendar, when considering resident religious and spiritual observance requests.
- Promote and foster a culture of inclusivity and learner wellbeing within PGME at the University of Toronto.

Working Group Representation

- Director, Postgraduate Learner Affairs/Wellness (*Co-Chair*)
- Manager, Office of Inclusion & Diversity (*Co-Chair*)
- Three Residency Program Director representatives
- Two Professional Association of Residents of Ontario (PARO) resident representatives
- Two Diversity Advisory Council resident representatives
- One Program Administrators Advisory Committee (PAAC) representative
- PGME Accessibility, Lead Advisor, Office of Learner Affairs
- Project Manager, Business Optimization, PGME
- Accreditation Coordinator, PGME (*Administrative Support*)

Summary of Guidance Document

- Applies to residents enrolled in postgraduate medical education programs at the University of Toronto, with regards to observances including religious holidays, daily/weekly religious or spiritual practices, and occupational health and safety standards, as well as mandatory departmental and postgraduate level educational events.
- Includes guiding documents and resources; principles for religious and spiritual observance accommodations; practical guidelines; definitions and key concepts (Appendix A).
- Developed by the working group and reviewed by the Office of Learner Affairs, Legal counsel, PARO, Office of Indigenous Health, and the Institutional Equity Office.

Principles for Religious and Spiritual Observance Accommodations

- Under the Ontario Human Rights Code, employers and education providers have a duty to provide accommodation for religious leave requests, **up to the point of undue hardship** - which may include such things as patient safety, the hospital's service requirements and the learner's educational or training requirements. The service should make every reasonable effort to not schedule the learner for clinical duties on the religious holiday that they observe and request time off for.
- Other considerations highlighted:
 - How the PARO-OTH Collective Agreement, hospital policies and service requirements intersect
 - Sustainability of patient care
 - Coming to a mutually agreed upon solution on a case-by-case basis
 - Fostering an inclusive environment

Practical Guidelines for Religious and Spiritual Observances Accommodations

- Resident's responsibility for self-identification.
- Programs to provide reliable information at a variety of touchpoints (e.g., resident orientations, academic half-days, program newsletters, etc.) and adopting an open-door approach.
- Programs are encouraged to consider consultation and/or recommend learners to the Office of Learner Affairs for assistance in navigating requests and for support.
- Consulting with the Office of Inclusion and Diversity or the Office of Indigenous Health for general guidance and support.
- Programs encouraged to reference the University of Toronto [Dates of Recognition, Observance & Celebration](#) multi-faith calendar when considering resident requests.

Next Steps

- Development of a practical educational toolkit for Residency Programs, Program Directors/Administrators, and Residents

Questions?



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