

Holidays & Religious Accommodations

Holidays and Leave

EWU Policy 403-01

Authority: EWU Board of Trustees

Effective: December 8, 2023

Proponent: Vice President for People and Culture

Summary: This policy describes the availability of holidays for students and employees. It also describes the procedure for requesting religious accommodations.

History: This policy amends the previous policy dated December 10, 2021. It was approved by the Board of Trustees on December 8, 2023. Housekeeping edits to position titles were made on August 11, 2025.

1. GENERAL

Per RCW 1.16.050 and RCW 28B.137, university employees and students are entitled to unpaid holidays or absences as described in this policy. Additionally, some employees may be entitled to paid state legal holidays if such holidays occur during the term of their employment and the employees are entitled to pay for such days under the terms of the applicable collective bargaining agreements, policies, or contracts.

2. STATE LEGAL HOLIDAYS

Eastern Washington University recognizes the following legal holidays in accordance with RCW 1.16.050:

New Year's Day (January 1st)
Martin Luther King, Jr. Day (third Monday of January)
President's Day (third Monday of February)
Memorial Day (last Monday of May)
Juneteenth (June 19th)
Independence Day (July 4th)
Labor Day (first Monday in September)
Veterans' Day (November 11th)
Thanksgiving Day (fourth Thursday in November)
Native American Heritage Day (Friday immediately following the fourth Thursday in November)
Christmas Day (December 25th)

Whenever a holiday falls on Sunday, the following Monday shall be considered a nonworking or legal holiday. When a holiday falls on Saturday, the preceding Friday shall be considered a nonworking or legal holiday.

In addition to these state legal holidays, employees are also entitled to one paid personal holiday, as provided for in applicable collective bargaining agreements and university policies.

3. EMPLOYEE HOLIDAYS FOR REASONS OF FAITH OR CONSCIENCE

a. Policy

University employees are entitled to two unpaid holidays per calendar year for reasons of faith or conscience or for organized activities conducted under the auspices of a religious denomination, church, or religious organization.

The university must allow an employee to take their unpaid holidays on the specific days desired unless an employee's absence would impose an undue hardship on the university or the employee is necessary to maintain public safety. Undue hardship shall have the meaning established in WAC 82-56-020.

Employee seniority will not be impacted by absences authorized under this policy.

Each holiday taken under this policy must be taken as a whole day, i.e. the day may not be divided into hours and taken piecemeal.

b. Employee Procedures

Employees shall consult with their supervisors at least two-weeks in advance of any desired unpaid holiday unless the purpose of the unpaid holiday was not known until later. Employees shall request unpaid holidays, in writing, using the same procedure as is used for requesting leave without pay.

4. STUDENT HOLIDAYS FOR REASONS OF FAITH OR CONSCIENCE

a. Policy

The University will provide reasonable accommodations to students who, due to the observance of a religious holiday, expect to be absent or endure a significant hardship during certain days of a course or program. Students may be granted an excused absence for reasons of faith or conscience or for organized activities conducted under the auspices of a religious denomination, church, or religious organization.

A faculty member must accommodate a student's request that complies with the following procedures by coordinating with the student to reschedule examinations or other activities necessary for completion of the program. This includes, but is not limited to, rescheduling examinations, activities, or offerings at different times.

If the student's desired absence date is on a day when a test was scheduled or an assignment was due, the instructor may require that the student take the test or submit the assignment before or after the regularly assigned date. Regardless of an instructor's class expectations or grading policies, absences authorized under this policy shall not adversely impact a student's grade.

Additionally, the faculty member should not question the sincerity or validity of a student's religious beliefs.

As required by RCW 28B.137.010, faculty must include either a link to this policy in their syllabi or the text of chapter four of this policy in their syllabi.

b. Student Procedures

(1) Students must submit a written request to Student Accommodations & Support Services (019 Hargreaves Hall; (509) 359-6871; sass@ewu.edu) within the first two weeks of the beginning of the term. Requests are to be submitted online at: <https://inside.ewu.edu/studentaffairs/holidays-and-religious-accommodations/>. The student must include information about the specific dates of absence and the requested accommodations. The student is not required to disclose their religious beliefs.

(2) Student Accommodations & Support Services will review the request and determine whether it meets the requirements of RCW 28B.137.010. If the request does not meet the requirements of the statute, Student Accommodations & Support Services will inform the student via email that the request has not been approved and inform the student of the grievance process. If the request is reasonable, Student Accommodations & Support Services will notify the faculty member and the student that the request has been approved. The student is then responsible for meeting with the faculty member to arrange for the particular accommodations needed. All absences under this policy must be approved in advance of the absence. The university will not authorize an absence for a student after the absence occurs absent compelling circumstances.

(3) If a student believes Student Accommodation and Support Services Office improperly denied a request or the faculty member failed to provide a reasonable religious accommodation, the student may file a

grievance with the Director of Civil Rights Investigations (117 Showalter Hall; eoaa@ewu.edu). The Director of Civil Rights Investigations will review information submitted by the student and then request a response from the faculty member and Student Accommodation & Support Services. The Director will make a determination as to whether or not the student was provided with a reasonable accommodation or whether additional measures must be taken. The Director's decision is final.

(4) It is the student's responsibility to submit a timely request for an accommodation. If a student fails to submit a timely request for an accommodation or identifies incorrect days for the requested absence, the instructor is not obligated to make any accommodations for the student's absence or treat the absence as authorized under this policy or the law.

5. RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATION REQUESTS

For religious accommodation requests that are not covered by chapters 3-4 of this policy, EWU engages in an interactive process with students and employees to determine which religious accommodations can be provided. Employee requests may be denied if they constitute an undue hardship or do not meet the requirements for a religious accommodation consistent with the requirements of federal law. Student requests may be denied if EWU is not required to provide the accommodation under applicable state or federal law.

a. How to Submit a Request

Student Requests: students may request a religious accommodation by submitting an online request at: <https://inside.ewu.edu/studentaffairs/holidays-and-religious-accommodations/>. Student Accommodations & Support Services will review the request and engage in an interactive process with the student to determine which accommodations, if any, the university can provide.

Student Employee Requests: if a student is requesting a religious accommodation relating to their employment at EWU, they must follow the process set forth below for employee requests.

Employee Requests: employees may request a religious accommodation by submitting an online request at <https://inside.ewu.edu/civilrights/> or by contacting the Director of Civil Rights Investigations & Accessibility at 509-359-7496 or eoaa@ewu.edu. The director will review the request and engage in an interactive process to determine which accommodations if any, the university can provide.

b. Appeals

If a request for a religious accommodation is denied by Student Accommodations and Support Services or the Director of Civil Rights Investigations, the person who submitted the religious accommodation request may file a written appeal within 14 days of the director's decision by contacting the Vice President for People and Culture at hr@ewu.edu. The Vice President or designee will coordinate with the appropriate reviewing official. Academic issues will be reviewed by the dean of the applicable academic college. The reviewing official's decision is final and will be communicated to the student or employee in writing within 30 days of receipt of the appeal.