



Frequently Asked Questions:  
**ASSISTING STUDENTS  
WITH RELIGIOUS OR  
SINCERELY HELD BELIEFS**

Title IV of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 famously outlawed segregation in our Nation's schools. Title IV prohibits discrimination in the public school setting, including state colleges and universities based on race, color, national origin, as well as religion. Religious protection extends not only to people who belong to traditional, organized religions, such as Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism, but also to others who have sincerely held religious, ethical or moral beliefs. Moreover, another part of the Civil Rights Act, Title VI prohibits discrimination in federally funded programs and activities based on race, color, and national origin; and when a religion is tied to a shared ancestry, ethnic identity, citizenship, or residency in a country with a dominant religion or distinct religious identity, Title VI may also prohibit religious discrimination.

The Maricopa County Community College District's non-discrimination policy states that "individuals will not be discriminated against on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, citizenship status (including document abuse), age, disability, veteran status or genetic information." At the Maricopa County Community Colleges, we aim to foster an environment of religious inclusion where all students are welcomed and supported.

QUESTION	
DOES THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION'S OFFICE FOR CIVIL RIGHTS INVESTIGATE CLAIMS OF RELIGIOUS DISCRIMINATION AT COLLEGES?	The civil rights laws enforced by the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) protect all students, regardless of religious identity, from discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, and age; but none of the laws that OCR enforces expressly address religious discrimination. Under the U.S. Department of Justice's jurisdiction, Title IV of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination on the basis of religion in public colleges. Religious discrimination can also involve treating someone differently because that person is married to (or associated with) an individual of a particular religion.
WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A RELIGIOUS STUDENT?	The law protects not only people who belong to traditional, organized religions, such as Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism, but also others who have sincerely held religious, ethical or moral beliefs including those who do not subscribe to any religious belief, i.e. atheism.
ACCOMMODATIONS	
WHAT IS A RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATION?	A religious accommodation in the classroom is a change in school schedule or in the way assignments are customarily completed to enable a student to participate in his/her religious practice or belief without causing undue hardship or materially altering the course.  A religious accommodation could also relate to campus policies, procedures or practices pertaining to students, where, because of his/her religious practice or belief, the student was unable to meet a deadline.
WHAT FACTORS ARE CONSIDERED IN DETERMINING RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATIONS?	Reasonable accommodations are determined on an individual basis and depend on the circumstances. The college is not required by law or policy to accommodate religious beliefs when such accommodation would cause undue burden or interfere with the safety and security of the campus.

<p>WHAT ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF CLASSROOM RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATIONS?</p>	<p>Accommodations might include excusing class absences, rescheduling an exam or giving the student a make-up exam, allowing an individual or group presentation to be delivered on a different date, allowing a student attend a different discussion section for the same class that week, adjusting a due date, or assigning the student appropriate make-up work that is intrinsically no more difficult than the original assignment.</p>
<p>HOW WILL I KNOW IF THERE IS A STUDENT WHO NEEDS RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATIONS IN MY CLASSROOM?</p>	<p>A student should make his or her religious accommodation request to the instructor or faculty member in charge of the course. Students are asked to examine the course syllabus for potential conflicts at the start of the semester and promptly notify the instructor of any anticipated accommodation needs, providing as much notice as possible. This allows time to identify solutions or alternative reasonable accommodations. The student should clearly specify the reason for the requested absence or other accommodation and identify that the request is being made pursuant to religious or sincerely held belief. Students are responsible for arranging in advance to make up missed work or material in a timely manner.</p>
<p>WHERE DO I DIRECT STUDENTS WHO REQUEST A PRIVATE AREA FOR PRAYER OR REFLECTION?</p>	<p>The First Amendment protects freedom of religion and the U.S. Supreme Court has ruled in favor of accommodations, such as prayer rooms or quiet rooms for reflection, so long as they do not coerce or disrupt other students. To identify the protected and private space on your campus please refer to your Compliance Office or Office of Student Affairs.</p>
<p><b>HOLIDAYS</b></p>	
<p>WHICH RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS ARE ACCOMMODATED?</p>	<p>Any traditional organized religious holidays (Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism) or sincerely held religious, ethical or moral beliefs on other days of religious observance will be accommodated where reasonable, including holy days.</p> <p>An interfaith calendar of primary sacred times for world religions is available for guidance and planning purposes at <a href="http://www.interfaith-calendar.org">www.interfaith-calendar.org</a>. Faculty members may wish to consult such a calendar in advance for planning coursework, syllabus dates, and deadlines. This calendar may not include all holidays; and it is not intended to exclude any other days or occasions of religious observance.</p>
<p>MCCCD GENERAL REGULATIONS 2.3.2 ATTENDANCE</p>	<p>Religious Holidays: Students shall have the right to observe major religious holidays without penalty or reprisal by any administrator, faculty member or employee of the Maricopa Community Colleges. Absences for such holidays shall not count against the number of absences allowed by an instructor or department. At least one week before the holiday, students shall submit to their instructor(s) a written statement that includes both the date of the holiday, and the reason why class attendance is impossible. Prior arrangements must be made with each instructor for make-up work. If prior arrangements have been made, the student will not be penalized.</p>
<p><b>RESOURCES</b></p>	
	<p>Interfaith Calendar of primary sacred times for world religions: <a href="http://www.interfaith-calendar.org">www.interfaith-calendar.org</a>.</p> <p>MCCCD General Regulations 2.3.2 Attendance: <a href="https://chancellor.maricopa.edu/public-stewardship/governance/administrative-regulations/2-students/2.3-scholastic-standards/2.3.2-attendance">https://chancellor.maricopa.edu/public-stewardship/governance/administrative-regulations/2-students/2.3-scholastic-standards/2.3.2-attendance</a></p> <p>Title IV of the Civil Rights Act of 1964: <a href="https://www.justice.gov/crt/types-educational-opportunities-discrimination">https://www.justice.gov/crt/types-educational-opportunities-discrimination</a></p>