

**To:** Long Island University Deans and Faculty  
**From:** Gale Stevens Haynes, Vice President of Academic Affairs, Chief Operating Officer, and Jeffrey Kane, Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs  
**Date:** November 17, 2016  
**Subject:** Academic Policy on the Observance of Religious Holidays and 2016-2017, 2017-2018, 2018-2019 Calendar of Dates

### **Academic Policy on the Observance of Religious Holidays**

LIU prides itself as being one of the most diverse multicultural private universities in the country. The mission of LIU since 1926 has been to open the doors of the city and the world to men and women of all ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds who wish to achieve the satisfaction of the educated life and to serve the public good. Its mission is to awaken, enlighten and expand the minds of its students.

At LIU, all students find an academic community where cultural, ethnic, religious, racial, sexual, and individual differences are respected and where commonalities are affirmed. This requires the campus to be open and welcoming, even as it maintains respect for intellectual, cultural and academic traditions. LIU recognizes the character of its diverse student body as its greatest strengths and challenges.

Although Long Island University does not as an institution observe religious holidays, the academic calendar is designed to avoid conflicts with observed holidays, such as July 4, Memorial Day, Thanksgiving, New Year's Day, and Christmas. As the diversity of our community has increased, additional religious holidays now affect a significant number of students and faculty. Consistent with our commitment of creating an academic community that is respectful of and welcoming to persons of differing backgrounds, we believe that every reasonable effort should be made to allow members of the university community to observe their religious holidays without jeopardizing the fulfillment of their religious obligations.

### **Section II: Policy Requirements**

In accordance with the commitment stated above and New York State law, see appendix A for full law, students shall not be penalized for their absence due to their observance for recognized religious holidays. LIU recognizes and values the significant role of religion and faith in the lives of students, and will ensure that no members of the university community are compelled to attend classes in a way that impacts their ability to practice their faith.

In accordance with NYS law, it shall be the responsibility of the faculty to make available to each student who is absent from school, because of his or her religious beliefs, an equivalent opportunity to register for classes or make up any examination, study or work requirements which he or she may have missed because of such absence on any particular day or days.

In accordance with NYS law, Students cannot be penalized for class absences because of religious holidays. When possible, students should notify the faculty member of conflicts due to religious holidays in advance of any anticipated absence. If asked, the student should provide accurate information about the obligations entailed in the observance of that particular holiday or a letter from their clergy

In the event, however, that a professor and student cannot reconcile, or a student believes that there has been a violation of the policy, the student should contact the ombudsman office or the office of academic affairs.

It is advisable that faculty provide course syllabi at the beginning of each term that specify dates of exams and due dates of assignments. Every effort should be made to avoid scheduling exams on religious holidays. A two year calendar of religious holidays will be maintained by the office of academic affairs, and emailed, every February and October.

In all cases, when in conflict with a department bylaw, New York Education Law § 224-a, must be followed.

### **Section III: Recognized Holidays**

**Holidays observed by many members of the university community include, but are not limited to: Id al-Fitr, Id al-Adha, Ramadan, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkot, Purim, Passover, Shavuot, Diwali, Ash Wednesday, Easter, Christmas and Good Friday.** Information about these holidays and the dates of their observance is available at the office of academic affairs.

Please note:

- All Islamic holidays begin at sundown on the evening before the given date. Islamic holidays are based on the lunar calendar and may vary by one or two days from what is scheduled based on the sighting of the new moon.
  - Professors should be aware and considerate that during the entire month of Ramadan students are fasting all day.
- Observance of Jewish holidays begins before sundown of the date listed. Due to their preparation and travel restriction, all these polices apply to two and a half hours before sunset for all Jewish holidays as well on every Friday afternoon for the Sabbath.
- Christian Orthodox holidays begin at sundown on the evening preceding the holiday.

LIU is committed to maintaining a learning and working environment that is free of bias, prejudice, discrimination and harassment and an environment that supports, nurtures, and rewards career and educational advancement purely on the basis of ability and performance. Discrimination or harassment based upon race, color, religion, sexual orientation, gender and/or gender identity or expression, marital or parental status, national origin, ethnicity, citizenship status, veteran or military status, age, disability or any other legally protected basis

is prohibited by law and undermines the character and purpose of the University. Such discrimination or harassment is illegal, against University policy, and will not be tolerated.

LIU strives for high standards of courtesy, integrity and discipline, and as we learn more about our community we will update this policy. Any questions regarding this policy please contact the Office of Academic Affairs.

#### **Appendix A: New York Education Law § 224-a**

Students unable because of religious beliefs to register or attend classes on certain days,

1. No person shall be expelled from or be refused admission as a student to an institution of higher education for the reason that he or she is unable, because of his or her religious beliefs, to register or attend classes or to participate in any examination, study or work requirements on a particular day or days.
2. Any student in an institution of higher education who is unable, because of his or her religious beliefs, to attend classes on a particular day or days shall, because of such absence on the particular day or days, be excused from any examination or any study or work requirements.
3. It shall be the responsibility of the faculty and of the administrative officials of each institution of higher education to make available to each student who is absent from school, because of his or her religious beliefs, an equivalent opportunity to register for classes or make up any examination, study or work requirements which he or she may have missed because of such absence on any particular day or days. No fees of any kind shall be charged by the institution for making available to the said student such equivalent opportunity.
4. If registration, classes, examinations, study or work requirements are held on Friday after four o'clock post meridian or on Saturday, similar or makeup classes, examinations, study or work requirements or opportunity to register shall be made available on other days, where it is possible and practicable to do so. No special fees shall be charged to the student for these classes, examinations, study or work requirements or registration held on other days.
5. In effectuating the provisions of this section, it shall be the duty of the faculty and of the administrative officials of each institution of higher education to exercise the fullest measure of good faith. No adverse or prejudicial effects shall result to any student because of his or her availing himself or herself of the provisions of this section.
6. Any student, who is aggrieved by the alleged failure of any faculty or administrative officials to comply in good faith with the provisions of this section, shall be entitled to maintain an action or proceeding in the supreme court of the county in which such institution of higher education is located for the enforcement of his or her rights under this section.

6-a. It shall be the responsibility of the administrative officials of each institution of higher education to give written notice to students of their rights under this section, informing them that each student who is absent from school, because of his or her religious beliefs, must be given an equivalent opportunity to register for classes or make up any examination, study or work requirements which he or she may have missed because of such absence on any particular day or days. No fees of any kind shall be charged by the institution for making available to such student such equivalent opportunity.

7. As used in this section, the term "institution of higher education" shall mean any institution of higher education, recognized and approved by the regents of the University of the State of New York, which provides a course of study leading to the granting of a post-secondary degree or diploma. Such term shall not include any institution which is operated, supervised or controlled by a church or by a religious or denominational organization whose educational programs are principally designed for the purpose of training ministers or other religious functionaries or for the purpose of propagating religious doctrines. As used in this section, the term "religious belief" shall mean beliefs associated with any corporation organized and operated exclusively for religious purposes, which is not disqualified for tax exemption under section 501 of the United States Code.