Academic Accommodations for Religious, Indigenous and Spiritual Observances

New Policy - Effective September, 2021
Land Acknowledgement

St. Lawrence College is situated on the traditional lands of the Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee peoples.

May we always be grateful to live and learn on these lands.

Anishinaabe art by Bruce K. Beardy for Ontario College of Teachers
Policy Need

• As part of the value of **Belonging**, SLC supports an inclusive teaching and learning environment that respects and values the diversity of our students.

• Under the Ontario Human Rights Code (OHRC), every individual has the right to be ‘treated equally based on creed, and to freely hold and practice creed beliefs of one's choosing.’

• Like accommodations under other OHRC grounds, such as disability, we have a duty to accommodate to the point of undue hardship.

• This new Policy provides a clear, consistent structure and practice to support individuals’ rights and delineates institutional obligations relating to faith observances under OHRC.
Key Highlights

• New Policy, AC836, Effective, September, 2021.

• Policy relates to students and academic accommodations.

• The Workplace Observance Accommodations Policy exists for staff members of SLC.

• Policy contains a link to our interfaith calendar, although this resource is not exhaustive of all possible observances: https://www.stlawrencecollege.ca/about/belonging-equity-diversity-and-inclusion-at-slc/upcoming-events-and-calendar

• Preplanning re key dates may be a valuable mitigation strategy e.g., Nov. 4,5 – Diwali / Vikram New Year (Hindu).

• Personal information relating to a student’s creed is confidential and cannot be shared without consent.
• Observance-related academic accommodation requests should be taken ‘in good faith’ as per the Ontario Human Rights Code.

• In exceptional cases, faculty may request substantiating documentation when there are reasonable grounds to believe that the policy is being abused.

• All planning relating to religious, Indigenous or spiritual accommodations occurs between the student and faculty directly.
  o Only accommodations which may pose a health and safety risk require consultation with Student Wellness & Accessibility and approval by Associate Dean and/or Dean. e.g., garment / machinery
Accommodation Process

• Request is submitted by student to faculty through the “Accommodation for Observance Student Request Form”.

• Form can be found at S:\AccommodatingStudents\Observances Form

• One form is required for each course.

• Form should be submitted within first two weeks of semester start, wherever possible.
Accommodation Process (CON’T)

- Page 2 of the Accommodation for Observance Student Request Form contains Student and Faculty Instructions.

- Student and faculty sign, date and each retain a copy of the form.

- Faculty respond to submitted form within two weeks or one week prior to observance date.
Where a mutually agreeable accommodation cannot be reached, students may have faculty decisions reviewed by Associate Dean and/or Dean.

Within five days of faculty feedback, if no resolution can be achieved, students may launch an appeal through the College complaint process.

Faculty objections should be rare, given our duty to accommodate in good faith.
• Recommend that course outlines and learning plans reference this policy and clearly state students’ rights and obligations.

• Students are responsible to obtain any lecture notes or other pertinent information missed in class.

• Students must be given opportunity to make up missed academic work or assessment, in a way that is intrinsically equitable and does not result in an academic disadvantage, as soon as possible before the end of semester.
Examples

- Absence from class or placement
- Deferral of an assessment or assignment
- Absence from scheduled exams with a deferral
- Following a specific dress code
- Temporary absence from class or placement for daily prayers, fasting, breaking a fast or religious observance
- Absence and/or deferral of other required activities as outlined in a course syllabus
Questions