

Attachment 5
Alternative Course Requirements Policy

USU ACADEMIC POLICIES AND PROCEDURES MANUAL

403.4 PROCEDURES FOR ALTERNATIVE COURSE REQUIREMENTS DUE TO CONFLICTS WITH SINCERELY HELD CORE BELIEFS

It is the student's obligation to determine, before the last day to submit a petition for late course drop without penalty, when course requirements conflict with the student's sincerely held core beliefs. ~~and the~~ The class should be dropped if a conflict exists. A student who finds this solution impractical may request **an alternative requirement** from the instructor. Though the University provides, through this policy, a process by which a student may make such a request, the policy does not oblige the instructor to grant the request, except in those cases when a denial would be arbitrary and capricious or illegal. A request for **an alternative requirement** must be made to the instructor in writing, and the student must deliver a copy of the request to the office of the department head. The request must articulate the burden the requirement would place on the student's sincerely held core beliefs.

The instructor must respond to any request for **an alternative requirement** within **two school days** of receiving it. The response must be made in writing and a copy must be delivered to the office of the department head. In the event that the class does not meet on the day by which the instructor must respond, the student must make arrangements to receive the response in a timely manner. *Instructors are not required to provide an alternative requirement, as long as the original course requirement has a reasonable relationship to a legitimate pedagogical goal.* ~~but they~~ They may do so, only if a reasonable alternative means of satisfying the **curricular course** requirement is available and only if that alternative is fully appropriate for meeting the academic objectives of the course, after considering (i) the fundamental importance of the particular requirement to the legitimate pedagogical requirements of the course; (ii) the burden on the student's sincerely held core beliefs; ~~and~~ (iii) the difficulty of administering the alternative requirement.

In considering whether or not to provide an alternative requirement, the instructor may evaluate the sincerity but not the validity of the student's beliefs. If an instructor in a course provides an alternative requirement, the instructor must similarly consider all other requests made during the same semester for the same course for **alternative requirements** to address all students' sincerely held core beliefs. Requests will be individually evaluated in relation to the same considerations; however, the granting of one such request will not guarantee that all requests will be granted. Because the criteria and requirements for granting requests will apply differently to each instructor and to each section of each course, decisions made by an instructor in one course will not affect decisions by the same instructor in other courses or by other instructors in the same or other courses.

If an instructor does not grant a request **for an alternative requirement**, the student may appeal that denial in writing to the dean of the college. If the dean is the instructor of the course, the student may appeal the denial to the office of the provost. The dean (or designee) will, in consultation with the faculty member and the department head (or designee), act within two school days. The dean (or designee) will uphold the denial unless she or he finds that the denial was arbitrary and capricious or illegal. The dean's determination shall be final as it pertains to the

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specific request **for an alternative requirement**. Faculty challenges to the appropriateness of this decision should follow established grievance procedures. The student may but is not required to participate in these further reviews.

If the faculty instructor disagrees with the dean's decision that the instructor's denial of the student's request was arbitrary and capricious or illegal, the faculty instructor may not be compelled against his/her professional judgment to administer the requested **alternative requirement** for the student. If the faculty instructor declines to administer the **alternative requirement**, it will be the responsibility of the dean in consultation with the department **head chair** to design and administer the alternative **academic** requirement for the student in order to satisfy the student's request. The dean (or dean's appropriate designee) will determine the student's grade on that specific alternative **requirement** and will report that grade to the course instructor, who will incorporate that grade for the **requirement** into the total grade for the course. The final grade in the course will be determined by the faculty instructor and will be calculated in the same way as the final grade is determined for all other students in the course.

If a student in good standing determines, after the last day to **submit a petition for late course drop courses** without penalty, that **a course requirements may** conflicts with the student's sincerely held core beliefs, and the instructor has denied the student's written request **for an alternative requirement**, the student may seek permission in writing from the dean to withdraw without receiving a W on his/her transcript and to receive a refund of tuition for that class. It is the student's responsibility to determine any effect withdrawing **from the course** may have on the student's financial aid. In making this request the student must demonstrate that he or she could not have made this determination prior to the last day to drop courses without penalty, or that the request was made prior to the last day to drop a course and a decision was made after the drop date. The dean's determination shall be final.

Decisions on requests for alternative requirements shall not be considered adversely to a faculty member in retention, promotion and tenure, or other proceedings as long as those decisions are made in good faith. Faculty shall not take adverse academic action against students requesting alternative requirements. The dean or department head shall not take any adverse action against an instructor based on his/her decision to provide or not to provide an alternative requirement for a student.