

**University of Toronto Faculty of Medicine**  
**Department of Surgery, Division of General Surgery**

**General Surgery Postgraduate Education Committee**  
**Religious Observances Policy**

1. This policy is based on the University of Toronto's Vice-Provost (Students) statement entitled "Accommodations for Religious Observances" and the Province of Ontario's Human Rights Code.
2. The University of Toronto and the Division of General Surgery welcome and include residents, staff and faculty from a wide range of backgrounds, cultural traditions and spiritual beliefs.
3. It is the policy of the University of Toronto to arrange reasonable accommodation of the needs of residents who observe religious holy days other than those already accommodated by ordinary scheduling and statutory holidays.
4. Residents have a responsibility to alert members of the teaching staff in a timely fashion to upcoming religious observances and anticipated absences.
5. It is most important that no resident be seriously disadvantaged because of his/her religious observances. However, in the scheduling of academic and other activities, it is also important to ensure that the accommodation of one group does not seriously disadvantage other groups within the University community.
6. In accordance with Section 13 of the PAIRO-CAHO Collective Agreement, residents are entitled to 5 days of leave over a 12-day period during the Christmas/New Year's period. If a resident wishes to waive this leave in order to take a 5-day leave at the time of a religious holiday pertinent to his/her faith, this request should be accommodated whenever possible, provided professional and patient responsibilities are met. It is the responsibility of the resident to request in writing to the General Surgery Program Director a leave day(s) for religious holidays as far in advance as possible.
7. Letters or documentation from faith leaders to support requests for accommodation should not be requested. The reasons for not requesting such letters are as follows: The practice of requiring some sort of faith leader substantiation for requests for accommodation implies a potential assessment of the sincerity of the religious practice. Not all faith traditions necessitate involvement in an organized faith community.
8. Where a resident's request for a religious observance leave is deemed to significantly impact the resident's training by the General Surgery Program Director, the General Surgery Program Committee will provide guidance on how best to assist the resident in maintaining satisfactory progress in his/her training.