



Policy Name:	Policy on Meal Plan Exemptions and Dietary Accommodations for Students		
Associated Form(s):	1. Application for Accommodations 2. Medical Form Substantiating Dietary Restriction or Food Allergy	Policy Number :	2023-11
Reviewed:	Non-Academic Policy Committee	Approved:	August 17, 2023
Approval Authority:	President <i>Susan L Parish</i>	Adopted:	
Responsible Executive(s):	Vice President for Student Affairs	Revised:	September 24, 2021, December 23, 2020
Responsible Office(s):	Office of ACCESSibility	Contact(s):	Director, ACCESSibility

I. Introduction

This Policy sets forth Mercy University's ("University") guidelines for residential students seeking accommodations to or exemption from Mercy's required meal plan for residential students. It applies to students identifying as having food allergies as well as to individuals with dietary restrictions related to health or religious observance who may need other accommodations as it relates to food purchased at Mercy's dining services, whether through the University's meal plan or otherwise.

II. Accommodations for Students with Food Allergies and Dietary Restrictions

The University recognizes that certain individuals in our community have (potentially severe) allergies to food or may have other dietary restrictions. If an individual has been diagnosed by a physician with a life-threatening food allergy, this may constitute a disability under the Americans with Disability Act (ADA). Mercy has an obligation under the ADA to make reasonable modifications in policies, practices, and procedures when necessary to accommodate students.

- Students with medical documentation indicating a life-threatening food allergy may apply for an accommodation up to and including an exemption from the University's required meal plan.
- Students with other allergies and/or dietary restrictions may seek other accommodations specific to the meal plan, including but not limited to having options that meet their dietary needs and/or having an individualized meal plan.
- *Only in circumstances where no accommodation can be made under the current meal plan would students be exempt from the University's meal plan.*

III. Procedures for Students Seeking Food Allergy and/or Dietary Accommodations

Dining services at the University's Dobbs Ferry and Manhattan campuses can accommodate individuals with food allergies or special diets. While students can speak directly with dining services about their need, the University encourages students to work with the Office of ACCESSibility to ensure their particular accommodation needs are met. Students are strongly encouraged to make the University aware of any food allergy and/or dietary needs as early as possible. Once a student contacts the Office of ACCESSibility, the following procedures will take place:

- A. The student will begin the accommodation process by completing the required

Application for Accommodations, in which they will provide a statement of their dietary restriction or food allergy.

- B. Students with medically related dietary restrictions shall also submit the Dietary Restriction Form to the Office of ACCESSibility. This form must be completed by their treating health care provider. Students with dietary restrictions related to their religious observations should submit a personal statement explaining their religious practice and related dietary restrictions.
- C. The student must sign the Dietary Restriction Disclosure Form so information related to their food allergies or dietary restrictions can be shared with other necessary University and dining services staff.
- D. Upon receipt of the signed release, the Office of ACCESSibility will schedule a meeting with the relevant dining services nutritionist to develop an appropriate response to dietary requests, in dialogue with the student. Dining services will advise the Office of ACCESSibility about the ability to accommodate the student's dietary needs. If dining services is unable to accommodate the student, the student will be granted an exemption from the required meal plan. If dining services can accommodate the student's dietary needs, a formal, written plan will be put in place.
- E. After the interactive dialogue takes place between the Office of ACCESSibility and the student and the dining service manager determined the ability to accommodate the student, an Acknowledgment and Agreement of Dietary Restrictions ("Agreement") will be created for the student with a food allergy or dietary restriction. This Agreement will outline the University's responsibility and student's responsibility for safely managing food allergies and dietary restrictions while attending classes or functions or residing on campus. The Agreement will be provided to the manager of the relevant dining services. The student under the Agreement must review any changes in their medical condition with the Director of ACCESSibility, who will in turn notify the dining services manager of any necessary modifications to the student's dietary Agreement.

A student may request a meal accommodation at any point during the semester. Accommodations are not retroactive, however, and accommodations are valid from the time of approval and signed Agreement moving forward.

IV. Appeal of Meal Accommodations

If a student is dissatisfied with the meal accommodation they have received under this Policy, they may appeal the matter to the University's Director of Equity Compliance. All appeals and complaints will be acted upon according to the Policy on Equal Opportunity and Non-Discrimination. All complaints will be addressed in a manner that is prompt, impartial, confidential, and free from retaliation. The University will not discriminate or retaliate against any individual because of exercising their right to come forth with a complaint or against individuals who participate in an investigation. After reviewing the matter, the Director of Equity Compliance will make a recommendation to the Vice President for Student Affairs. The Vice President of Student Affairs or their designee will make the final determination of an appeal.