

Portland State University Campus Smudging Procedure for University Housing and Residence Life

I. Procedure Statement

Portland State University (University) is committed to a diverse, inclusive, and respectful campus for all people. Religious and spiritual practices are an important part of life for many people in the University community, and the University accommodates both students and employees who wish to express their faith and/or spirituality.

Many Native Americans participate in smudging as a religious practice. The University recognizes sage, cedar, sweet grass and other herbs and plants as traditional Native American medicines and essential elements of sacred ceremony. The University is committed to providing a pathway for students living on-campus who wish to practice ceremonial smudging.

II. Reason/Purpose for Procedure

The University is located on the ancestral homeland of Native Americans, and the University recognizes the deep connection that many Native people have to the land. The University is committed to supporting Native American students by facilitating the continuation of their religious traditions while they pursue higher education. The University has established the Campus Smudging Procedure (Procedure) in order to provide students with specific protocols to practice ceremonial smudging inside students' University residence.

The University is a [smoke free campus](#), and the [PSU Housing Handbook](#) prohibits students from creating smoke of any kind, by any means inside, in the residence halls. (Housing Handbook 2016-2017, Page 22.) The Smudging Procedure serves as a limited exception to the smoke free campus policy and the Housing Handbook rule against producing smoke in the University residence halls. It is also consistent with University's [Religious Accommodations Policy](#).

III. Applicability

This Procedure applies to students who practice Native American religious traditions. It does not apply to students who practice a non-Native religion/spirituality that involves the burning of herbs or other material.

However, pursuant to the University's [Religious Accommodation Policy](#), students who wish to burn herbs or other material in student housing or students or employees who wish to practice ceremonial smudging at an on-campus workplace/study place may request a religious accommodation by contacting the Dean of Student Life for students or Human Resources for employees to engage in an interactive process.

IV. Definitions

1. **Smudging** is a practice that is common to many Native American religions and spiritual practices. While smudging, a person produces smoke by burning a small amount of sacred herbs. Typically, the smoke lasts only a brief duration of time.
2. **Sacred Herbs** are herbs that are burned during Native American smudging rituals and vary according to tradition. They may include sage, sweet grass, and cedar—as well as other herbs or plants.
3. **Residence Room** is defined to mean the entire area that is located inside a student's assigned living space in any of the residence halls on the University's campus.
4. **Facilitators** are officials who are supervised by the Director of Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) and who have received training to instruct students requesting permission to smudge on-campus on appropriate protocols.

5. **Initial Meeting** occurs when a student meets with a Facilitator. The Initial Meeting will be scheduled to take place within two weeks after the student has submitted a [Ceremonial Use Exemption Form](#) to student housing.

V. Training

The Director of EHS—or an official designee of the Director—will train professional staff members to serve as Facilitators for the purpose of working with students who wish to smudge on-campus. Global Diversity and Inclusion (GDI) will work in conjunction with EHS to ensure cultural responsiveness and to provide an equity perspective on the training of the Facilitators.

VI. Residence Hall Safety Features

A student who lives in a residence hall that has a working fire sprinkler system may request to engage in ceremonial smudging in that student's room by following the steps outlined in this Procedure. However, a student whose room is not equipped with a full, complete coverage, working, fire sprinkler system will need to request a transfer to another room that is equipped with such equipment. University Housing and Residence Life (UHRL) will give special consideration to the transfer request out of deference to the student's intention to observe the religious practice of smudging. However, if the room's cost is higher than the current room, the student will be responsible for the additional cost.

VII. Procedure for Smudging in Student Housing

In accordance with this procedure, the University will accommodate students who live in a University residence hall and who wish to practice ceremonial smudging in their rooms. It is the requesting student's obligation to make the initial request by completing a [Ceremonial Use Exemption Form](#), which will be submitted to UHRL and EHS. If a requesting student has a roommate, UHRL will meet with the requesting student and the roommate to assure the roommate does not have any concerns. If the roommate does have concerns, UHRL will attempt to

find the requesting student an alternative room. However, the requesting student will be required to pay any additional costs of the room.

After the student has submitted a completed Form, EHS will contact the student within two weeks to schedule an Initial Meeting. During the Initial Meeting, the student will meet with a Facilitator. The Facilitator will supply the student with a copy of this Procedure, and the Facilitator will instruct the student on the requirements of this Procedure and the relevant safety concerns. The student will then demonstrate an understanding of the requirements to the Facilitators by conducting the steps of the smudging procedure. The student will then sign a memorandum of understanding outlining the required procedures for ceremonial smudging. This memorandum will signify that the student understands the safety requirements of the Procedure, and that the student may engage in ceremonial smudging inside their room. EHS will keep a copy of the signed memorandum for their own records and will forward a copy of the signed memorandum to the PSU Fire Prevention Manager and a copy to Associate Director of Housing and Residence Life and the resident's Area Coordinator for UHRL. The Area Coordinator will inform the requesting student's Resident Assistant of the approval to engage in ceremonial smudging.

When smudging, students will follow the below procedure. The requirements of this Procedure have been developed in coordination with Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) and with Facilities & Property Management (FPM). The requirements of this Procedure are as follows:

1. The requesting student will complete the [Form](#) prior to meeting with the Facilitator to discuss the procedures.
2. The requesting student's room will be equipped with a full, complete coverage, working, fire sprinkler system.
3. The requesting student's room will have adequate ventilation (for example, windows that open, operable kitchen hoods, or other means of ventilation) to ensure that smoke generated from smudging will not activate the smoke detector/fire alarm.

4. Smoke detectors and fire alarms will never be disabled in order for a student to take part in a ceremonial smudging.
5. Throughout the smudging, the requesting student will place a rolled-up towel or a blanket at the base of the door leading outside of the room in order to minimize the amount of smoke leaving the room.
6. The requesting student will have a dry chemical fire extinguisher (Type ABC) in the room where smudging occurs.
7. The sacred herbs will be placed in a sufficiently large, non-combustible (metal, ceramic or shell) container, and the herbs must stay within or upon that container throughout the smudging ceremony.
8. If the student places the non-combustible container on a surface while the sacred herbs are still burning, the container will be placed on a solid, non-combustible surface (such as metal, ceramic, or shell).
9. The sacred herbs will be ignited with a utility lighter or a similarly approved device, and not matches.
10. After the student has finished smudging, water will be used to completely extinguish the smoldering herbs. Herbs that have not been completely extinguished must never be left in a room without the student being present.

VIII. Failure to Follow Procedure

The Campus Smudging Procedure is intended to accommodate students in University Housing who wish to smudge as a part of their Native American religious practice, and the Procedure is also intended to ensure fire safety compliance. If a student fails to follow this Procedure, that action may result in the suspension or termination of the student's approval to engage in ceremonial smudging in University Housing.

IX. Resolving Disagreements/Filing a Complaint

The University promotes an atmosphere of equity and inclusion. Discrimination on the basis of religious or spiritual beliefs or other protected classes is prohibited by University policy. After a student communicates with EHS or UHRL, and if the student disagrees with decisions regarding their accommodations, the student may contact Global Diversity & Inclusion, Equity and Compliance to file a complaint. Equity and Compliance investigates complaints of prohibited discrimination and harassment based on religion (and other protected classes). [Equity & Compliance](#) can be reached at 503-725-5919:

X. Other On-Campus Resources:

- [Native American Student and Community Center \(NASCC\)](#): The NASCC hosts smudging ceremonies. Please see this website for more information about the NASCC:
 - o Phone: 503-725-9695
- [PSU Housing and Residence Life \(UHRL\)](#):
 - o Phone: 503-725-4375
- [Environmental Health & Safety \(EHS\)](#):
 - o Phone: 503-725-3738
- [Facilities and Property Management \(FPM\)](#):
 - o Phone: 503-725-3738

XI. Links to Related Policies, Procedures or Information:

- [PSU's Religious Accommodation Policy](#)
- [PSU's Prohibited Discrimination and Harassment Policy](#)
- [Smudging Form](#)