

Religion, belief and non-belief policy



Version Control

Approved by:	Executive board
Date Approved:	
Next Review Date:	
Version Number:	01
Applicable Statutory, Legal or National Best Practice Requirements:	<p>Equality Act 2010</p> <p>The Protection from Harassment Act 1997</p> <p>ACAS Managing Bullying and Harassment at Work – A guide for managers and employers</p> <p>ACAS Managing Bullying and Harassment at Work – A guide for employees</p> <p>Public Sector Equality Duty</p> <p>Harassment Act 1997</p> <p>Health and Safety at Work Act 1974</p>
Equality Impact Assessment Completion Date:	September 2018

Contents

Policy

1	Policy Statement	1
2	Definition of a Religion, belief or other belief	2
3	Bullying, Harassment, & Victimisation	2
4	Religious Observance- Temporary adjustments to work and study	3
5	Religious Observance – Time off for Religious Celebrations	4
6	Religious Observance and the Academic Calendar	4
7	Student Placements	5
8	Gender Segregation for Events	5
9	Dress & Clothing	6
10	Food Requirements	6
11	University Chaplaincy and Support	6
12	Implementation and Responsibilities	7
13	Formal Complaint Procedures in relation to this policy	7
14	Monitoring, Evaluation & Review	8

Policy

1. Policy Statement

The University of Bradford is a diverse community of staff and students, many of whom have different religious beliefs and practices. In line with the University's strategic objective on equality and diversity, the University is committed to promoting a culture that encourages and recognises the importance that all employees are treated with dignity and respect, which includes respect for their religion, belief, and non-religious beliefs.

The University demonstrates this commitment by ensuring that it is consistent with its legal equality duty under The Equality Act 2010. These duties include the following:

- Individuals are not discriminated against, or treated less favourably than others because of their (or your own) actual or perceived religion or belief or non-belief (except in the case of a genuine occupational requirement).
- Policies, practices and provisions apply equally to persons of all religious beliefs or non-belief.
- Policies, practices or provisions do not put people of the same religion/belief, or non-belief at a disadvantage when compared to other persons.
- Individuals and groups are treated with dignity and fairness whatever their religious belief/ non-belief may be.
- Where possible, appropriate services are provided to meet the cultural and religious needs of all staff and students. The University provides a diverse environment, to encourage discussion and embrace the critical exploration of questions concerning religion, belief and non-belief.

The University expects individuals and groups on campus to respect the freedom of others to express their convictions, religious beliefs, or non-belief, on their own terms. It is also committed to the principles of academic freedom, free enquiry and free speech within the law. The right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion is absolute, but the right to express beliefs is qualified by the need to respect, protect and recognise the rights and freedoms of others.

People, while giving expression to their belief individually or in association, should be sensitive in seeking to spread their religion, belief, or non-religious belief, and avoid any action which suggests coercion, dishonest, or unworthy persuasion. Acting in this manner must be considered an infringement of the freedom provided, and an infringement of the rights of others. Employees and students should not be using their work or study time to proselytise.

2. Definition of a religious belief or other belief.

In the Equality Act 2010, religion or belief can mean any religion, as long as it has a clear structure and belief system.

The legal protection of religion or belief under the Equality Act 2010 refers to a religion or belief or non-belief. The definition of a 'religion or belief' is not clearly defined in the Act and has developed over time through the courts. Therefore, there are some beliefs that are philosophical in nature and may be protected.

The Equality Act 2010 provides that a belief must be genuinely held and more than an opinion. It must be cogent, serious and apply to an important aspect of human life or behaviour. The Equality Act also says that a belief must be worthy of respect in a democratic society and not affect other people's fundamental rights.

For the purposes of this policy, religion and belief is defined as any religion, religious belief, or belief, which has a clear belief system or profound belief that affects the way of life or view of the world of the believer.

This description is not exhaustive and there will be many religious and other beliefs that will fall within the definition given in this policy.

3. Bullying, harassment, & victimisation

The University of Bradford is committed to providing an environment that is supportive and free of harassment, bullying, and victimisation. Bullying, harassment and victimisation could be deemed unlawful or even criminal offences and are considered unacceptable by the University. Any of these forms of behaviour will not be tolerated and the University will respond promptly and confidentially to formal complaints. Disciplinary action may be taken where appropriate.

Harassment on the grounds of religion, belief or non-belief can occur in a variety of ways, such as:

- Because of a person's belief or non-belief;
- Because of the belief or non-belief of someone with whom they associate;
- Pressure to join or leave a particular faith;

- Pressure to express or not express their faith;
- Because they have changed or renounced their religious/belief allegiance.

For more information you can access the University's Dignity and Respect Policy which can be found [here](#).

4. Religious observance- temporary adjustments to work and study

All staff regardless of religion, belief, or non-belief, are required to work in accordance with their employment contract. Similarly, all students are required to work and study within the guidelines of the UoB Student Contract.

Requests for temporary adjustments to work or study arrangements will be considered by the line manager or Personal Academic Tutor, and are subject to sufficient notice.

Members of the University community may also observe the traditions of their religion or belief and pray at certain times of day. They will be able to do this provided they have made arrangements in advance with their manager or tutor as appropriate.

Students whose prayer time falls within an examination should make arrangements to fulfil their obligations to pray either before or after the examination. A student who leaves the exam room for any reason cannot return to the exam. This is in line with the code of behaviour for all examination candidates.

Examinations, Graduation ceremonies and teaching are not timetabled during Friday prayers (observed in the Islamic Faith). Arrangements that are made to facilitate prayer outside of this time will need to consider the impact that it might have on other colleagues and students, and be sensitive to those.

Individuals considering permanent adjustments to their contract of employment in order to support religious observance may make a request via the Flexible Working Policy which is available on HR ServiceNow.

This is open to all staff that have completed 26 weeks service and is designed to support staff in balancing external commitments with those of work. Managers are encouraged to consider requests sympathetically; however, all applications will be assessed and considered in line with the policy.

Individuals may occasionally be required to work at times outside of their usual working hours. If colleagues have reasons not to work at particular times because of religious observance

requirements, these should be taken into consideration where possible by managers in scheduling work.

5. Religious observance – time off for religious or belief celebrations

Staff members or students in the University community may request to take annual leave from their leave entitlement or other leave to participate in their religious or belief celebrations, festivals or ceremonies. All requests for holiday entitlement to be taken at times of religious or belief significance will be considered, and a decision will be reached based on sympathetic consideration along with being able to meet the needs of the service and other team members' annual leave requests'

It is the responsibility of those members wishing to participate to inform their Line Manager or Personal Academic Tutor in good time to enable arrangements to be made. To assist in planning and maximising the opportunity for time off to be granted, people should, where possible, make leave requests reasonably in advance of requiring such time off. Students that take time off to participate in their religious or belief festivals will be expected to make up any missed learning opportunities. Learning materials are made available on the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) system and students can contact their Personal Tutor if they need any additional support around this.

Any concerns about the provision of time off to participate in religious festivals or to pray should be addressed to Human Resources in the first instance or the Equality and Diversity Team who can offer further advice and support.

6. Religious observance and the academic calendar

The policy will be informed by the implementation of the University's Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy, with its core values of equity of access and learning and working in a diverse society.

The University aims to account for religious and belief observance and accommodates major religious festivals and Friday prayers into the Academic Calendar, this includes scheduling of teaching and assessment. So far as is practicable, due consideration is paid to major religious and belief celebrations, festivals and ceremonies, to avoid any possible detriment to the student experience.

However, the implications of pressure on accommodation and resources associated with examinations means that examination period dates are fixed and publicised in advance and are aligned with other events in the academic calendar. As such, wherever possible, examination dates will be aligned to accommodate the full diversity of religious practices.

The University provides support for students whose religious or belief practices may coincide with the timing of examinations or assessments taken under controlled conditions. The University's Chaplaincy team can advise students on how best to manage their religious or belief commitments during this period. Students can also contact Faith Advisors and Student and Academic Support Advisers for advice on any matter that may affect their studies or assessment.

Deadlines for coursework assessment are given in advance to students. Therefore students who are observing religious or belief festivals around the time of the deadline will need to plan their work so it is completed in good time.

7. Student placements

Students should be treated fairly and consistently, with dignity and respect, wherever they study, or undertake placements as part of their course at the University of Bradford.

The University will take all reasonable steps to ensure that external organisations providing placement opportunities have policies and procedures in place to prevent and deal with issues of discrimination, bullying and harassment. When students are on placement, they are expected to adhere to the policies and practices of their host organisation. The student should research these practices and facilities in advance before agreeing to a work placement programme

8. Gender segregation for events

Many universities understandably seek to facilitate participation in university-based activities by students and staff with diverse religious beliefs, by accommodating their requests where possible.

Gender segregation is only permissible during collective religious worship, and is not permitted in any academic meetings or at events, lectures, or meetings provided for students, or at events attended by members of the public or employees of the university or the students' union.

There are other express exceptions under equality law confined to communal accommodation, toilets and changing facilities, sports and welfare provision together with the potential for positive action measures, but there is no further exception that would permit segregated seating in any other circumstances

9. Dress & clothing

The University does not operate a formal dress code and it is therefore appropriate, and a welcome part of our wish to express cultural diversity on campus, for people to wear religious or belief dress

Where a person is required to wear overalls, protective clothing, or uniforms, these will be adapted wherever possible to enable the person to wear their religious or belief dress without endangering their health and safety or that of others.

For staff or students who will be located for work or study in clinical or laboratory spaces or workshops, particular rules or dress codes may apply and these must be complied with. Health and safety of members of the University community is the priority consideration and exceptionally where the health and safety of the person wearing the dress, is compromised (or that of others). In such cases, it will be necessary for the University to consult with staff/students that may be affected by a restriction, and the Health and Safety Team, to see if an appropriate compromise can be reached.

The wearing of personal protective equipment (lab Coats etc.) is a legislative requirement. It may not always be possible to compromise this and the Health, Safety, and Wellbeing team should be contacted for advice and guidance.

10. Food requirements

The University of Bradford responds positively to requests for food that meets staff and students' dietary requirements (e.g. vegetarian, kosher, halal). Wherever practicable it will provide such food according to requests.

11. University chaplaincy and support

University of Bradford offers opportunities for students and staff to explore and practise faith and spirituality. This includes facilities and information on places for prayer and worship, space for private reflection, opportunities to meet others, and advice on spiritual and ethical concerns.

The University of Bradford's Chaplaincy Team include dedicated Faith Advisors and is based in the multi-faith Space in Chesham Building on City Campus and the University Chaplain offers support to staff and students of all faith and none including:

- Space and time for worship and private reflection within the University
- Confidential personal support to anyone with pastoral or spiritual needs
- Regular events to celebrate particular expressions of Faith and Spirituality
- Advice on spiritual and ethical concerns
- Support for student and staff faith networks and groups
- Information about local faith communities
- Social events and opportunities for people to meet
- Advice and support for the institution on religious, spiritual and ethical matters

For more information about support available, please refer to the [Chaplaincy website](#).

12. Implementation and responsibilities

- The Vice Chancellor has ultimate executive responsibility for the effective development and implementation of this policy.
- The University Secretary has overall delegated responsibility for co-ordinating the day to day operation of the policies and the development, maintenance and monitoring of supporting procedures with the following senior officers having responsibility within their areas of operation.
- The Director of Human Resources has responsibility in relation to staff.
- The DVC [Academic] has responsibility in relation to students on matters concerning programmes of study, and the Academic Registrar in relation to students on all other matters.
- Deans of Faculties / Directors of Professional Services Directorates are responsible for the implementation of the Policy in relation to their operational activities.
- All line managers are responsible for familiarising themselves with this policy, and for following it in matters such as requests for leave.
- All individual students and members of staff are responsible for familiarising themselves with this policy, for informing appropriate colleagues of their particular requirements, and for making up any time lost as a result of cultural/religious observance.

13. Formal complaint procedures in relation to this policy

Formal concerns relating to alleged bullying and harassment by staff against another member of staff will be dealt with according to the University Disciplinary Policy and Procedure;

Formal concerns relating to alleged bullying and harassment by Students against Students will be dealt with through the Student Disciplinary Regulations;

Formal concerns relating to alleged bullying and harassment by Students against staff will be dealt with through the Student Disciplinary Regulations.

If an individual raising a dignity and respect concern is both an employee and a student they should follow the procedure/regulations applicable based on the role they were in i.e. student or employee at the time the behaviour of concern was carried out.

14. Monitoring, evaluation & review

The University's Equality and Diversity Committee will monitor and evaluate this policy.

The University's Policy on Religion, belief, and non-belief will be reviewed not less than every two years by the Equality and Diversity Team.