

Religion and Belief Policy

Version 2.0 – 2022

Contents

1 Purpose	4
2 Scope.....	4
3 Context.....	4
4 Legislative context	4
5 Policy objectives.....	4
6 Discrimination and harassment.....	5
7 Freedom of Speech	5
8 Disclosure and data.....	6
9 Monitoring and Review.....	6
10 Ownership and oversight.....	6
11 Version history	7
Appendices.....	7
Appendix 1: Guidance for all.....	8
Chaplaincy.....	8
Facilities and services.....	8
Faith and Spirituality Group.....	8
Networks and Support	8
Religious Dress	9
Complaints	9
Discrimination and harassment	9
Appendix 5: Glossary of terms and definitions.....	11
Antisemitism	11
Belief	11
Chaplaincy.....	11
Christmas	11
Discrimination	11
Easter	11
Faith	12
Harassment.....	12
Halal	12

Isha prayer	12
Islamophobia.....	12
Proselytism.....	12
Ramadan	12
Religion.....	12
Victimisation	12
Appendix 6: Legislative background	13
Equality Act 2010	13
Human Rights Act 1998.....	13
Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006	13

1 Purpose

1.1 This Policy sets out our commitment to provide inclusive and supportive learning and working environments for all students and staff who observe a religion, belief, or non-belief, where all individuals have the opportunity to fulfil their potential.

2 Scope

2.1 This policy applies to all staff and students at UWE Bristol, in addition to visitors, contractors, and individuals with honorary status.

3 Context

3.1 This policy supports our ambition in the [2030 Strategy](#) to encourage diversity of experience and perspective and create opportunities for all to thrive and flourish.

3.2 Inclusivity is one of our core values, and we recognise the power of a truly diverse university community that observes a wide range of religions and beliefs. We support and celebrate the diversity of staff and students, where they feel empowered, able to be their authentic selves and that they belong.

3.3 The policy also ensures we meet our responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 to ensure that facilities and services do not discriminate against people on the basis of religion or belief, or on the basis of a lack of religion or belief.

4 Legislative context

4.1 The policy follows and reinforces the religious equality provisions in our [EDI Policy](#), [Student Conduct Policy](#), and [Dignity at Work Policy](#).

The policy is set within the following legislations:

- [The Equality Act 2010](#)
- [The Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006](#)
- [The Human Rights Act 1998](#)

5 Policy objectives

5.1 We are committed to creating a community where students and staff of all religions and beliefs (as well as those without beliefs) can thrive. We want to create inclusive learning and working environments that enable people to bring their full selves to work and study and create opportunities for people to learn from each other and celebrate the diversity of faiths, religions, and beliefs at UWE.

5.2 We are committed to ensuring that students and staff are involved in decision making about the provisions we make in relation to religion and belief, including through our seeking and acting on feedback.

5.3 We strive to ensure that:

- a) We are committed to treating all staff and students with dignity and respect and seeks to provide a positive working and learning culture.
- b) Where possible, appropriate services and provisions are provided to meet the cultural and religious needs of all staff and students.
- c) Individuals are not treated less favourably than others owing to their actual or perceived religion, belief, or non-belief.
- d) Policies, practices, and provisions are based on relevant principles, which do not discriminate on grounds of religion, religious belief, or similar philosophical beliefs (except in the case of a genuine occupational requirement).
- e) Policies, practices, and provisions do not put individuals of any specific religion or belief at a disadvantage when compared to other individuals.

6 Discrimination and harassment

6.1 We are committed to providing an environment that is stimulating and supportive and free of discrimination, harassment, bullying and victimisation, by any person whether our employee, student or an external third party. Procedures for dealing with unacceptable behaviour are covered by the University's [Student Conduct Policy](#), [Bullying and harassment of or by students Policy](#), and for staff, the [Dignity at Work Policy](#).

6.2 Discrimination or harassment on the grounds of religion or belief can occur for a variety of reasons, for example:

- On the grounds of a person's belief or non-belief;
- On the grounds of the belief or non-belief of someone with whom they associate;
- On the grounds of someone joining or leaving a particular faith
- On the grounds of someone expressing or not expressing their faith
- On the grounds of someone changing or renouncing their religious/belief allegiance

6.3 Religious-based abuse, discrimination, harassment, victimisation, or bullying (name-calling derogatory jokes (written or spoken) unacceptable or unwanted behaviour, intrusive questions) are serious, and will be dealt with using our policies.

7 Freedom of Speech

7.1 We believe that a culture of free and open discussion is integral to our purpose as an academic institution and this culture is only possible if all concerned behave responsibly. We expect all persons taking part in our activities to be tolerant of the diverse identities of others, in line with the University's core value of inclusivity, being sensitive to the diversity of its community and all sections of that community. While debate and discussion may be robust and challenging, all speakers have a right to be heard when exercising their right to free speech within the law.

7.2 We foster a diverse environment to encourage open discussion, where questions, including those related to religion, belief, and non-belief are critically explored. We expect staff, students, contractors, and visitors to acknowledge the differing opinions of individuals, including those who observe a religion, belief, or non-belief. In instances where beliefs manifest as harassment or create conflict that goes beyond open and amicable debate (see Discrimination and Harassment), we will intervene as our duty to protect students and staff from aggressive, manipulative behaviour, or covert forms of proselytism (attempts to convert someone from one religion or belief to another).

7.3 We regularly welcome visiting speakers from around the world to our campuses who bring great diversity of experience, insight, and opinion. In accordance with the [Freedom of Speech Policy](#), visitors will be notified of any arrangements that may need to be put in place to ensure fair and open debate within the law, to ensure the safety of our students and staff.

8 Disclosure and data

8.1 If a member of staff or student discloses their religion or belief to an individual, it is the responsibility of the staff member or student to treat this information confidentially in accordance with the data protection legislation and Equality Act 2010 obligations. Anonymity guidance can be sought from the [Equality, Diversity, and Inclusivity Team](#). No identifying information should be shared with any person without the individual's explicit consent. However, there may be limited circumstances where the University is unable to obtain consent prior to disclosing this information, such as a disclosure to protect the safety of an individual.

8.2 In line with our responsibility under the Equality Act 2010 and relevant protection legislation, any disclosure made by a student or staff member will be treated with confidentiality.

8.3 UWE Bristol has obligations to monitor staff and student equality data. We are committed to maintaining anonymity in our reporting and will not report on numbers of religious staff or students where there is any risk of identifying individuals. Individuals are given the option not to disclose this information, however confidential disclosure helps us to monitor the impact of policy or practices.

9 Monitoring and Review

9.1 Monitoring of the Religion and Belief Policy will be undertaken by the Wellbeing and EDI Executive Committee through its sub-group, the Faith and Spirituality Group.

10 Ownership and oversight

Document name:	Religion and belief policy
Version number:	V2.0
Equality Analysis:	Completed on June 15 th 2022

Approved by (committee and date):	Comments by: FAB, June 2022 Comments by: LTSEC, June 2022 Approval by: WEDIC October 2022
Effective from:	2022
Next review date:	2025
Senior Policy Owner:	Gerry Rice
Policy Author:	Inclusive Practice Officer
Overseeing committee:	EDI and Wellbeing Board
Compliance measures:	Ongoing engagement with religion and belief communities at the university.
Related policies, procedures, and codes of practice:	EDI Policy
Related legislative and/or regulatory requirements	The Equality Act 2010 The Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006 The Human Rights Act 1998

11 Version history

Issued	2014
Amended	2022
To be reviewed no later than	2025

Version	Date	Details	Who
1.0	2014	Policy created	Ian Yemm, former UWE Bristol Chaplain
2.0	2022	Updated for clarity, accuracy, and improved practice.	Inclusive Practice Officer, EDI Team

Appendices

1. Guidance for all
2. Glossary of terms and definitions
3. Legislative background

Appendix 1: Guidance for all

Chaplaincy

The [Chaplaincy team](#) can provide information and guidance about associated groups and venues for prayer and worship external to the University.

Facilities and services

The University provides safe spaces for prayer and reflection across all campuses and dedicated washing facilities at Frenchay for Muslim students and staff.

For more information on room bookings and the available provisions, please go to our [Faith and Spirituality](#) site.

Faith and Spirituality Group

The Faith and Spirituality Group EDI sub-group has representation from the different communities which UWE's Faith and Spirituality provision seeks to serve. The Group also includes external membership, to provide objectivity and wider perspectives on religious matters. The group advises the University on the direction and management of its services.

The Faith and Spirituality Group aims to:

- Discuss and recommend strategies for UWE's Faith and Spirituality, and multi-faith provision.
- Ensure that UWE's faith and spirituality provision is responsive to the needs of its students and staff.
- Provide appropriate, relevant, and current advice on religious matters, and the needs of different faith communities;
- Develop effective partnerships with local faith communities.
- Promote principles of multi-faith Chaplaincy.

Networks and Support

The University offers opportunities for students and staff to explore and practise religion, belief, and spirituality. This includes facilities and information on places for prayer and worship, space for private reflection and opportunities to meet others.

UWE's Chaplaincy team is based in The Octagon on Frenchay campus. The team provides support for students and staff of all faiths or none, including support for student and staff faith networks and groups, and social events.

Members of the Faith and Spirituality Team, including the University Chaplain, can provide advice to students and staff on issues related to this policy. UWE Students' Union provides support for Student Networks, which bring together students who share similar identities, cultures, and beliefs.

For more information about support for Faith and Spirituality at UWE please see the [Faith and Spirituality](#) pages.

Religious Dress

The University welcomes the diversity of clothing, jewellery worn by staff and students who observe a religion or belief. Students and staff can wear clothing and jewellery to work or study that aligns with their religious observance. For some activities there may be risk control measures in place, that in order to protect the health and safety of the individual, personal protective equipment (PPE) must be worn for example in medical, engineering, or laboratory-based disciplines.

Compliance with the risk control measures to ensure health and safety of staff and students will be given priority over the requirement of religious dress. In these cases the University will ensure explanation of the reason for risk control measures with individuals impacted and consult with them to see if an appropriate compromise can be reached that does not impact their health and safety, or that of others.

In the occasions where students may be requested to remove face coverings to verify their identity (for example security and examination requirements), the University will ensure that it is managed sensitively, and the individual will be taken to an appropriate location by an agreed staff member.

Complaints

10.1 Staff and students who feel that the policy has been discriminatory towards them or that it does not treat them fairly, should follow our [student complaints](#) or [staff grievance](#) procedures.

Discrimination and harassment

Students

For students who would like to report an incident: You should report any form of religious-based abuse using the [Report and Support](#) online reporting website. If you are considering whether to report an incident, or if you would like any advice before reporting, you might also decide to speak to:

- The Student Casework Team at conduct@uwe.ac.uk;
- You can also refer to [Wellbeing support](#).

The SU also have their own [Complaints](#) process if you would prefer to speak with them.

Staff

For staff who would like to report an incident: Please refer to the [Dignity at Work Policy](#) alongside our Freedom of Speech Policy. You can also talk with:

- Your People Manager, or another senior member of the team;

- A [Dignity at Work Advisor](#)
- [Human Resources](#) (HR)
- A [Trade Union representative](#)
- [Employee Assistance Programme](#) (EAP)
- A member of the [Equality, Diversity, and Inclusivity Team](#) (EDI)
- [Staff Networks](#)

Appendix 5: Glossary of terms and definitions

To understand religion and faith issues, it is important to be aware of the variety of terms that may be used socially and legally.

Terminology changes and its use can be highly individualised. It is important to be mindful of trends in language as a students or member of staff may associate with a term perceived by some, even members of the same community, to be inappropriate.

This glossary covers the terms used in this Policy and Guidance and is based on AdvanceHE and Universities UK guidance.

Antisemitism

Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed to Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.

Belief

The language used to mirror the Equality Act 2010 that defines 'belief' as 'any religious or philosophical belief, and a reference to belief includes a reference to a lack of belief'.

Chaplaincy

In higher/further education, this can refer to the role, service, or physical space of a chaplain or religious advisor.

Christmas

The annual Christian festival celebrating Christ's birth, held on December 25 in the Western Church.

Discrimination

The unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people, especially on the grounds of: age, disability, ethnicity, gender reassignment marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

Easter

The oldest festival of the Christian Church, celebrating the resurrection of Christ and held (in the Western Church) between March 21 and April 25, on the first Sunday after the first full moon following spring equinox.

Faith

While this has multiple meanings and interpretations, within the policy, this in reference to religion or being religious.

Harassment

The act of systematic and/or continued unwanted and annoying action of one party or group, including threats and demands.

Halal

Food sourced or prepared in accordance with Islamic law.

Isha prayer

The Isha prayer is the night-time daily prayer recited by practicing Muslim and is fifth of the five daily prayers.

Islamophobia

Islamophobia refers to hostility, mistrust or hatred towards Islam and Muslim people, because of their Muslim identity (or perceived Muslim identity).

Proselytism

To convert or attempt to convert someone from one religion, belief, or opinion to another.

Ramadan

Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar, observed by practicing Muslims as a month of fasting, reflection, and prayer. It commemorates the first revelation of Muhammed and, as such, observance of the month is considered one of the five pillars of Islam. It lasts either 29 or 30 days depending on the year and the holiday of Eid al-Fitr marks the end of Ramadan and the beginning of the next lunar month.

Religion

The policy language is used to mirror the Equality Act 2010 that defines 'religion' as 'any religion and reference to belief includes a reference to a lack of belief'.

Victimisation

Victimisation is when an individual is treated unfairly as they made, supported or someone believes they have reported a case of discrimination.

Appendix 6: Legislative background

Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 defines 'Religion or belief' as one of the nine protected characteristics, and offers protection from discrimination, harassment, and victimisation on the grounds of religion or belief. The Act protects those who:

- are (or are not) of a particular religion
- hold (or do not hold) a particular philosophical belief
- someone thinks you are of a particular religion or hold a particular belief (this is known as discrimination by perception)
- are connected to someone who has religion or belief (this is known as discrimination by association)

The Equality Act 2010 also covers non-belief or lack of religion or belief. For example:

- the Equality Act 2010 protects Christians if they are discriminated against because of their Christian beliefs, it also protects people of other religions and those with no religion if they are discriminated against because of their beliefs.

Human Rights Act 1998

The Human Rights Act 1998 sets out the fundamental rights and freedoms that everyone in the UK is entitled to. Article 9: Freedom of thought, conscience, and religion states:

- everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion; this right includes freedom to change their religion or belief and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest their religion or belief, in worship, teaching practice and observance.
- freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs shall be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of public safety, for the protection of public order, health, or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.

Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006

The Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006 serves to make provision about offences involving stirring up hatred against persons on racial or religious grounds. Under the act, it is an offence to:

- use threatening, abusive, or insulting words or behaviour with intent to stir up racial hatred in the street or public.
- display, publish, or distribute written material that is threatening, abusive or insulting with intent to stir up racial hatred in the street or in public.