

# THE UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER

## Religious Observance - Guidance for staff

If you require this document in an alternative format please contact the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team on 0161 306 5857 or email [equalityanddiversity@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:equalityanddiversity@manchester.ac.uk)

## **Purpose**

This guidance:

1. Sets out the organisational arrangements in place to support the implementation of the University Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy in relation to staff and students fulfilling their cultural or religious beliefs wherever possible.
2. Supports the Equality Act 2010. This legislation prohibits direct and indirect discrimination, victimisation and harassment on the grounds of a person's religion or belief.

## **Overview**

3. The University is a secular institution that has a commitment to diversity. It recognises that it operates in a multi-cultural and religious environment and that it responds to the increasing breadth of awareness needed to ensure that potential discrimination and misunderstanding do not take place.
4. The University community is committed where reasonable and practicable to accommodating religious observance on campus.
5. The University will seek to ensure that all staff and students have equal access to the full range of institutional facilities and will consider adjustments to working and learning practices wherever reasonably possible in order to accommodate a more diverse community.

## **Scope**

6. This guidance is intended to enable staff:
  - to gain a greater understanding of the support they can request from the University in fulfilling their cultural or religious beliefs;
  - to gain a greater understanding of how to support colleagues and students, where applicable and appropriate, in fulfilling their cultural or religious beliefs.

## **Definitions**

7. For the purposes of the legislation and this policy a religion or belief means any religion, religious belief, philosophical belief or absence thereof. However, political beliefs are not included.

## **Dress**

8. The University is supportive of staff or students, who wish to wear religious or cultural dress. For example, a crucifix, a hijab (a Muslim head cover), kippah (a Jewish skullcap) or mangalsutra (a Hindu ornamental gold chain) and welcomes the visible diversity to the campus. There are, however, circumstances where this may not be

possible or appropriate.

For example: Health and safety requirements may mean that for certain tasks specific items of clothing such as overalls, protective clothing etc need to be worn. Some situations may require the temporary removal of particular pieces of religious dress – examples of this may be within certain practical sessions. In some circumstances such as work in laboratories or on student placement visits, it may be necessary to impose particular dress codes e.g. medical students on placements in NHS Trusts. Where this is the case, students should adhere to the local dress code policies by the organisation in which they are working/studying.

9. The university reserves the right to ask an individual to remove a particular piece of religious dress (more specifically face coverings) if they believe the individual will receive a greater learning benefit. This may be requested during group work or in certain interactive sessions. The individual has no obligation to remove said items, but should consider the benefit that may be afforded to them.
10. Where a uniform is required for the job, women should normally have the option of wearing trousers; if the uniform includes headwear then the wearing of religious head dress should not be prohibited unless there is an over-riding safety need. Any adjustments requested by staff as a result of a religious belief should be considered sympathetically.
11. The wearing of slogans and symbols on clothes which may be considered offensive, for example, slogans that are racist, sexist or may amount to harassment on any grounds will be a breach of the Dignity at Work and Study Policy and as such may result in disciplinary action.

### **Campus security**

12. To ensure that the campus remains a safe environment for the University community there may be times when security, or other personnel will need to verify a staff member or student's identity against their staff/student ID card e.g. to gain access to a particular laboratory or the library. In some circumstances staff members or students may be asked to remove headwear which may be obscuring a positive identification. Where a female staff member or student is wearing religious headwear e.g. a niqab (a Muslim veil that covers the face) the positive identification should where possible, be made by a female staff member in a private space.

### **Religious observance**

13. The University provides space/s for prayer and religious observance or quiet contemplation where practical.
14. The University currently has several prayer facilities for different religions and beliefs (including spaces of contemplation for those with no religion or belief) located around campus. These can be viewed on the Sacred Spaces Map:

- <http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=9044>

St. Peter's House is a Christian chaplaincy with a commitment to a multi-faith perspective, and has four full-time chaplains - 2 Anglican, 1 Free Church, 1 Presbyterian

Church of Taiwan. There are also a number of honorary chaplains and Faith Advisers, e.g. Baha'i, Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim and Sikh. St. Peter's House also has a strong relationship with the Roman Catholic and Jewish chaplaincies locally. It is located at building 32 on the campus map.

NOTE: there are currently ablution facilities directly off the Muslim Prayer Room in Sackville Street Building (B.018 & B.019) and in the Prayer Hall South (G.009 & G.011)

### **Work patterns and leave**

All staff members regardless of their religious belief or non-belief are required to work in accordance with their contract. The University is sympathetic towards staff members who request to pray or worship during the working day or who request to alter their working patterns for religious reasons, and will attempt to accommodate such requests although this will not always be possible. When deciding whether or not to accommodate such requests, it will be necessary for managers to consider the business needs of their unit and the need to treat all staff fairly.

15. If appropriate, managers should agree flexible working arrangements with members of staff who wish to pray or worship during the working day or who wish to alter their working pattern for religious reasons (for example accommodating requests from those who require additional time at midday on Friday, or not to work beyond sunset on a Friday or at the weekends) provided that staff make up any time to fulfil their duties and their contracted hours of work. Similar requests from students should also be considered sympathetically.
16. Members of University staff may request to take paid leave from their annual leave entitlement to participate in their religious festivals, celebrations or ceremonies. It is the staff member's responsibility to make leave requests reasonably in advance (**note:** dates can be uncertain in some religions i.e. determined by the lunar calendar) in order to maximise the opportunity for leave to be granted. Line managers should consider all requests in light of operational requirements. Requests should not be refused unreasonably. The number of annual leave days overall will remain as in the contract of employment, for staff of any religious belief or none.
17. If a staff member requests extended leave at a particular time for the purpose of e.g. going on a pilgrimage, the manager should consider the request sympathetically. If any such extended leave exceeding the annual holiday entitlement is granted, the excess days should be taken as unpaid leave.
18. **Note:** Main religious dates for each year are available on the University's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion intranet pages:
  - [www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/services/equality-and-diversity/thediversitycalendar/](http://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/services/equality-and-diversity/thediversitycalendar/)

### **Examinations and assessments**

19. The University's Policy on Religious Observance and Guidance for Students details its

position in relation to timetabling assessment and/or other compulsory activities. This can be found at:

- [www.tlso.manchester.ac.uk/map/teachinglearningassessment/assessment/sectionb-thepracticeofassessment/policyonreligiousobservance/](http://www.tlso.manchester.ac.uk/map/teachinglearningassessment/assessment/sectionb-thepracticeofassessment/policyonreligiousobservance/)

### **Dietary requirements**

20. The University offers a selection of halal (food permissible for Muslims), vegetarian and vegan food available from many of its outlets, kosher (food permissible for Jews) can also be available for events and meetings on request. Further information can be found on the Food on Campus website [www.manchester.ac.uk/foodoncampus](http://www.manchester.ac.uk/foodoncampus).
21. In arranging hospitality for meetings, staff should invite participants to state any particular dietary requirements in advance. Appropriate arrangements should then be made with Food on Campus to aim to meet those requirements where reasonably possible to do so
22. If a member of staff requires his/her food to be stored and or heated separately from other food on religious grounds, they should speak to their line manager in the first instance who will attempt to accommodate such request insofar as it is reasonably practicable

### **Social activities and events**

23. All staff members in their role as a work colleague, tutor or as a manager should ensure that social activities are respectful, inclusive and appropriate. This may include arranging events at times when all staff members would be free to attend or arranging hospitality for meetings.
24. Event organisers can also help by providing an option for alcohol free tables at events.

### **Offensive actions or behaviour**

25. Any behaviour or actions taken in breach of the principles outlined within this guidance or the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy will be treated seriously by the University and may result in disciplinary action. For more information, please refer to the Dignity at Work and Study Policy
26.
  - [www.campus.manchester.ac.uk/equalityanddiversity/dignityatworkstudy/](http://www.campus.manchester.ac.uk/equalityanddiversity/dignityatworkstudy/)

### **Guidance review**

27. The effectiveness of this guidance will be reviewed bi-annually along with the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy. This guidance may be updated from time to time as the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy is amended and/or as changes occur in legislation.

### **Further information**

28. Further information and support is available for staff members from any of the following:
- the appropriate Human Resources Manager for the Directorate/Faculty
  - the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team
  - the Student Support and Services Office
  - St Peter's House Chaplaincy [www.stpeters.org.uk](http://www.stpeters.org.uk)
  - a trade union or student's union representative

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Related information:	
Policy owner:	Director of Human Resources
Lead contact:	Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion