

RELIGION AND BELIEF POLICY AND GUIDANCE

Purpose and Context

To provide a welcoming and inclusive learning, research and work environment where all students and staff feel safe to be themselves and can respectfully explore difference of thought and practice.

To articulate provisions of the University of Huddersfield's Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity Policy with reference to Religion and Belief.

To set out how the University will make reasonable provision for and protect against discrimination on the grounds of religion, belief or non-belief.

Scope

This policy applies to all staff and students at University of Huddersfield.

This policy supports the University ambition in the Strategy 2019-2025 to be inclusive and global in outlook and approach. The policy follows and further articulates the equality diversity and inclusion provisions in the:

- Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity Policy
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity Framework 2020- 2025
- Student Charter
- Community Code of Conduct
- Dignity at Work and Study policies

1 Introduction

The University [Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity Policy](#) details

“We want to make the University one in which people are given the best possible opportunities to make a success of their lives, whatever their background. Everybody has a valuable contribution to make; our challenge is to unlock the talents and potential of all our staff and students. We celebrate diversity and tolerance so that different cultures can thrive, adding to the richness and experience of our community.”

With regard to Religion and Belief this means the University seeks to ensure that:

- Individuals are not treated less favourably than others because of their actual or perceived religion, belief or non-belief.
- Policies, practices and provisions are based on relevant criteria, which do not discriminate on grounds of religion, religious belief or similar philosophical belief (except in the case of a genuine occupational requirement).
- Policies, practices and provisions do not put people of any specific religion or belief at a disadvantage when compared to other persons.

- Individuals and groups are treated with dignity and fairness whatever their religious and/or other beliefs may be.
- Where possible, appropriate services are provided to meet the cultural and religious needs of all staff and students.

The University is a secular organisation committed to the values and principles of equality and diversity; it has a responsibility to ensure freedom of intellectual enquiry and expression.

The University recognises that the spiritual and moral systems that religions and beliefs offer can often be of fundamental importance to the wellbeing of students and staff. Religious rituals, such as dress, diet and prayer, can be an integral part of religious life and identity.

It is important that, where reasonably practicable, the needs of students and staff from all religious backgrounds, and also of those with no religious affiliation, are met. It is also important to be clear when the needs of religious students and staff may impinge upon the needs, rights and freedoms of others, and therefore cannot be accommodated.

The University understands that not all individuals follow their faith in the same way and so making a blanket decision as to what would be suitable for one religious group may not, in practice, be appropriate. This policy aims to provide guidance, and flexibility to respond to individual needs.

2 Legal Context

Key legal instruments that relate to religion, belief and equality are:

- The Equality Act 2010
- The Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006
- The Human Rights Act 1998.

Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 places a general statutory duty on all public authorities when carrying out their functions to have 'due regard' to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- advance equality of opportunity between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not, removing or minimising disadvantage, meeting different needs and encouraging participation;
- foster good relations between different groups.

Additionally, the University has due regard to its legal duties related to Freedom of Speech, lawful segregation, Prevent and, Health and Safety in formulation of this policy and guidance.

3 Inclusive Campus Environment

3.1 Our university community

Our ability to provide a welcoming campus community is grounded in understanding the needs of our community. [Section 8](#) provides a short profile of religious affiliations and current activity. This section will be updated at each triennial policy review. The data will be monitored on an annual basis by the [Religion and Belief Advisory Group](#) to consider any new needs that emerge as our community profile changes.

3.2 Jo Cox - More in Common Centre – Prayer and Community rooms

The More in Common Centre provides facilities for those of all faiths and none. It provides a central facility for inclusion, the practice of faith, spirituality, and a calm space for our University community. Full details of this provision are detailed in [Section 6](#)

3.3 Religious Dress

The University welcomes the diversity of appearance that people from different religious and belief backgrounds can bring.

However, there may be health and safety considerations that would restrict certain modes of dress in particular contexts. In such cases, it will be necessary for the University to consult with staff/students who may be affected by a restriction to see if an appropriate compromise can be reached.

There are some occasions where students may be requested to remove face coverings to verify identity (for example at examinations, and for ID card photos). The University will ensure that such requests are handled sensitively, taking into account students' desire for privacy.

3.4 Food and Drink

The University habitually offers foods suitable for a range of dietary requirements. Every day provision includes:

- Inclusion of vegetarian and vegan options
- Use of Halal meat
- Labelling of items, menus and response to customer queries
- Segregation of food to avoid cross contamination

Additionally we will give due consideration to requests for food that meets particular requirements (e.g. vegetarian, kosher, halal), ensuring it is labelled appropriately.

A range of drink options will be made available at University events, including non-alcoholic choices.

3.5 Networks and Societies

Students' Union governed Student Societies provide a structure for students of faith to organise, meet and build communities. Staff may be invited to practice their faith alongside student groups organising faith activity on campus.

3.6 Freedom of Speech and Freedom from Harassment

The University provides a diverse environment, to encourage discussion and embrace the critical exploration of questions including those concerning religion, belief and non-belief. The University expects staff, students, contractors and visitors to respect the freedom of others to express their convictions, religious beliefs or non-belief in their own terms.

Harassment

The University will intervene, using disciplinary procedures, in instances where manifestations of a belief constitute harassment, discrimination or create conflict that goes beyond open and reasoned debate. For example, religious belief or conviction is not an acceptable reason for discriminating against or harassing others with protected characteristics including sex, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, religion or belief.

Proselytising

The University also has a duty to protect students and staff from aggressive, manipulative or covert forms of proselytising. Consequently, the principle of moral and emotional autonomy of the person shall be adopted in the advertising, invitation and conduct of faith-based events at the University. Information may be freely given about events, but there should be no unreasonable pressure applied to people to attend the event. Acceptance or otherwise of the invitation should be free from judgment. The same principle of autonomy should also apply at the event itself, with no unreasonable pressure being exerted.

External Speakers

Guest speakers can be invited to speak on campus within the framework set out in the University's [Freedom of Speech and External Speakers Policy](#). Any potential speaker should be made aware of the provisions of this policy in advance.

Segregation at events

Segregation of an audience at an event will constitute unlawful discrimination unless it is for a lawful specifically defined purposes which includes Religious worship or religious purposes in order to comply with religious doctrine. Organisers of events where planned or voluntary segregation of the audience or participants is anticipated should comply with the [Freedom of Speech and External Speakers Policy](#) and have due regard to the Equality and Human Rights Commission guidance [Gender segregation at Events and Meetings: guidance for Universities and Students' Unions](#).

3.7 If something goes wrong – feedback, complaints and resolution.

If something has gone wrong the University will wish to hear about that experience, consider it and respond appropriately. Routes to resolution include:

- [Share and Support](#), provides a 24/7 platform to share your experience either anonymously or through seeking support of trained wellbeing advisors (Students and Externals)
- [Student Complaints Process](#), this encourages seeking early resolution with those involved or escalation if appropriate
- Line management and [HR policies](#) which includes Dignity at Work and Grievance procedures (Staff)
- [External Complaints Procedure](#), applicable to individuals who are neither staff or students.

4 Student Religious Observation: academic responsibilities and the academic calendar

4.1 Academic calendar planning

In order that religious observance can, as far as is practicable, be accommodated into the [Academic Calendar](#), including scheduling of teaching and assessment, the university will:

- Review student declarations of religion on an annual basis to identify substantive changes requiring consideration.
- Review religion and belief calendars to mitigate any significant clashes between significant academic activity (e.g. examinations or fieldwork) and important periods of religious observation

- The University will consult with the [Religion and Belief Advisory Group](#) to consider emerging needs.

4.2 Religious Days of Observance (Holy Days)

The established calendar of UK Bank Holidays, the organisation of term times and the normal working week of the University (Monday -Friday) accommodates Christian Holy Days. The above process of academic calendar planning considers the following moveable Religious Days of Observance, which may fall during term time and are recognised as Holy Days.

The two main Muslim Holy days:

- Eid ul-Fitr: feast period just after the month long fast of Ramadan, it is not held on the same date each year. Students will be granted 2 days leave of absence.
- Eid ul-Adha: approximately 70 days after Eid ul-Fitr. This festival also marks the end of the Pilgrimage or Hajj to Mecca. Students will be granted leave of absence for 1 day

On the above established Holy Days the University will not normally schedule examinations and make all reasonable efforts to avoid clashes with graduations.

The University will continue delivery of timetabled learning (lectures, tutorials, seminars, labs etc), and in class tests that include, both formative and summative assessment.

Where Religious Days of Observation clash with teaching or In Class Tests students should use the [Religious Observance Notification Form](#) to request an Authorised Absence. An Authorised Absence means:

- attendance records are not adversely affected.
- the signed and approved notification could be used as supportive evidence for Extenuating Circumstances where an In Class Test is missed.

Students and their tutors should arrange for missed work and learning to be completed in timely fashion.

4.3 Other Special Religious Days

The above Holy Day recognitions allow the University to accommodate larger faith groups. Additionally, students of other faiths may apply for an Authorised Absence where they have a Religious Day of Observance. The Religious Observance Notification Form and academic calendar recognises the following days

- | | | | |
|---------------|--------|-----------------------|-------|
| • Yom Kippur | 1 day | • Diwali | 1 day |
| • Eid Ul-Adha | 1 day | • Vesak | 1 day |
| • Pesach | 2 days | • Holi | 1 day |
| • Vaisakhi | 1 day | • Navaratri | 1 day |
| • Eid Ul-Fitr | 2 days | • Other (please name) | 1 day |

Inclusion in the academic calendar enables the University community to consider and balance the diversity of religious and academic needs. To establish inclusions on the academic calendar the University will consult the [The Inter Faith Network - Religious Festivals Resource](#) to identify those with significant impact for the university community. Ramadan, the period of fasting before Eid ul-Fitr, will be included in addition to those listed above.

4.4 Prayers and scheduled learning activities

Leaving and returning to teaching sessions for religious observance

The University expects those exiting sessions to do so quietly and with minimal of disruption to other students and to return at a suitable break point. For example, if the session is two hours long and a break takes place midway through, to re-join at that point. It may also be possible to join at another time, subject to agreement in advance with the tutor, but again this must be done with minimal disruption to the session and other students' learning experience.

Students who know that they will need to leave an academic session part way through should try where possible to take a seat close to the exit to facilitate a quiet and speedy exit. If a student can return to the session, they should, again take a seat close to the exit and commence studying with as little disruption to others as possible. These are common courtesies which we would expect all students to observe.

Muslim Prayers

Muslims are required to observe prayer times (Salat times); the five daily prayers take place between dawn and dusk. In the winter months when days are shorter it will be more difficult for students to say their prayers. If teaching is scheduled for longer than one and a half hours tutors should ensure that a break of at least fifteen minutes is taken. In the summer months (British Summer Time) students should have no difficulty in meeting their obligations.

Friday prayer (Congregation) is compulsory for Muslim males and therefore Schools should attempt to timetable around the University congregation times. Two and up to three congregations convene in the Jo Cox More in Common Centre between:

- 12.30pm and 1.30pm (November to March)
- 1.30pm and 2.30pm (April and October)

Most timetables should enable students to attend one Friday Congregational prayers, however this may not always be possible and therefore tutors should allow students to absent themselves from classes for a period of 20 minutes to allow them to participate in Friday prayer.

Jewish Sabbath

Allowances should be made for Jewish students wishing to observe the Sabbath from one hour before dusk on Fridays until nightfall on Saturdays, this requires students to refrain from writing, carrying and using equipment on the Sabbath

4.5 Religious Observance and Examinations

Examination period dates are fixed, publicised in advance and are aligned with other events in the academic calendar. Examinations are not scheduled on major Christian (Easter and Christmas) and Muslim holy days (Eid Ul-Fitr and Eid Ul-Adha). However, it is not possible to change examination dates to accommodate the full diversity of religious practices.

Students are not permitted to leave a scheduled assessment activity in order to pray. 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 and is unaccompanied by an invigilator for any reason cannot return to the exam. This is in line with Section 7 of regulations for taught students [Conduct in Assessments](#).

4.6 Coursework assessment (including re-sit coursework)

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

4.7 Religious fasting and observation

The University provides support for students whose religious practices may coincide with the timing of examinations or assessments taken under controlled conditions. [Faith Advisors](#) can advise students on how best to manage their religious commitments during this period. The Association of School and College Leaders provides practical guidance related to [Ramadan: Exams and Tests](#).

Section 8.12 of the [Consideration of Personal Circumstances Procedure](#) considers Periods of Religious Fasting and Religious Observances.

4.8 Pilgrimage

Extended periods of leave for pilgrimage are not permitted during term time. Students should plan such activities outside of term time.

4.9 Responsibilities

Responsibilities of Students

- Students who are absent due to religious observance should ensure that their non-attendance is recorded accurately and promptly on the Attendance Monitoring System and is supported by a completed Religious Observation Notification Form.
- Students should ensure that any assignments handed out or lecture notes are acquired.
- Any assignment due in on these days must be handed in by the deadline date. Students are aware of hand-in dates and must manage their time appropriately. Requests for extenuating circumstances will not be accepted where assignments are handed in late due to religious observation.
- Students wishing to absent themselves should also consider the effects of their absence on their peers and minimise disruption to classes.

School Responsibilities

- Schools, with Registry, may review the distribution of religious affiliations on programmes of study to consider if timetabling/scheduling of sessions to avoid the time of weekly religious observations would benefit students and their learning.
- Module tutors should consider the dates of Holy days and Special Religious Days when setting assignment hand-out and hand-in dates and dates involving in-class tests.
- Module tutors should ensure that any student who is absent due to religious observance is given the same information as those students attending lectures; this may include: copies of lecture notes, assignment tasks, tutorial dates, dates of in-class tests and examinations.
- Module tutors will make allowances for students wishing to observe Friday prayers.
- Module tutors will report to course leaders any students who they believe are abusing the system.

Registry & Student Services

- Holy days and other Special Religious Days identified above will be incorporated into the Academic Administration Timetable.

- The current timetabling of examinations allows for religious observance and Friday prayer. The examinations team will continue to take these into account when scheduling examinations.
- The timetabling of graduation ceremonies will make all reasonable efforts to avoid clashes with Holy Days
- Student Services will work to engage and secure the perspectives Faith groups on campus.

5 Staff Religious Observation

All staff, regardless of religious or similar philosophical belief, are required to work in accordance with their contract. Requests for temporary adjustments to work arrangements will be facilitated as far as is practicable, subject to sufficient notice of religious observance requirements.

Requests for annual leave entitlement to be taken at times of religious significance will be treated sympathetically. For all staff, regardless of religious belief, the number of annual leave days overall will remain as in the contract of employment.

Individuals considering permanent adjustments to their contract of employment in order to support religious observance may make a request via the Flexible Working Policy. This policy is open to all staff who have completed 26 weeks service. The policy 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.

Staff may occasionally be required to work at times outside of their usual working hours. If staff have reasons not to work at particular times because of religious observance requirements, these needs should be taken into account where possible by managers in scheduling work.

6 Facilities for Religion and Belief - The Jo Cox More in Common Centre

6.1 More in Common Centre - Operating Principles

The More in Common Centre offer and service is informed by the University Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity Policy, specifically considering the following elements:

- 1 *The University will seek to create an open, trusting environment, in which there is an absence of prejudice, discrimination and harassment.*
- 2 *The University will promote a positive climate of respect and co-operation, with open and tolerant discussion of important issues, expecting its members to respect one another as fellow human beings and treat one another with dignity; prejudice will be challenged where it becomes apparent.*
- 3 *The University will promote cross-cultural contact between different communities at all levels, foster understanding and respect, and seek to break down barriers.*
- 4 *The University will encourage initiative, creativity and innovation, helping staff and students to be open to new ideas, to learn, to share good practice, and to succeed.*

6.2 Centre Provision

The Centre provides a safe and welcoming environment for university members to practice all faiths and none, undertake reflection, community integration and allied activities. We also provide counselling and student support from the centre. To keep our community safe access is only for current students and staff, which is enabled through swiping university ID cards. Facilities include:

Ground Floor

- A community lounge area providing a social space for meeting friends and colleagues, this includes a kitchenette where you can make hot drink and warm food.
- A large meeting hall that can be used by different faiths and groups and can configure as a room for 200 or two rooms for 100
- A male Muslim prayer room and wudhu facilities
- A chaplains and centre coordinators office.

First Floor

- Prayer and reflections rooms for different faiths, including a Christian prayer room, a multifaith/meeting room, and female Muslim prayer rooms and wudhu facilities.
- A suite of 4 counselling and student support rooms

Opening Times

The centre is normally open from 7am-10pm on weekdays and 8am-9pm at the weekends. The centre will normally be closed during University closure periods, such as UK Bank Holidays and Christmas vacation. During festivals and periods of religious observation we work with faith groups to accommodate needs that may fall outside this time.

Contact, Queries and Bookings

For any queries or booking enquiries contact moreincommon@hud.ac.uk

The facility has been developed with the specific purpose of supporting the integration of our university community and their faith needs, consequently bookings from current staff, student faith groups and for activities that support community integration, spirituality, wellbeing or reflection will normally be approved. Any external or other booking enquiries will be referred to the Director of Student Services who will consider how they align with the centres purpose and University policies for external bookings.

External Conferences and Visitors Access

The University welcomes a wide range of visitors to campus, including school and applicant visits and academic conferences. Members of the University organising events or conferences should contact moreincommon@hud.ac.uk to discuss their guests needs.

6.3 Faith & Prayer on Campus

More in Common Centre

The More in Common Centre is the designated facility on campus to support University members pray, practice their faith and spirituality. It provides a central place on campus to pray and practice faith, accessible by 5 minutes' walk from most campus locations.

Library Provision

The More in Common Centre's hours (7am-10pm on weekdays and 8am-9pm at the weekends) complement normal Library Opening Hours. Additional provisions will normally be made when Library Hours extend to 24/7 and when the Centre is closed during university closures but the Library remains open. During these periods a small room within the library will be designated and signposted as a temporary prayer room.

Salat obligations, particularly during winter months can mean several short prayers take place within a short period. To allow students to quickly complete their prayers and return to study, without packing up belongings, giving a up a study space and disturbing other users they are welcome to pray in any available discreet spaces within the Library which do not disturb other users or pose a health and safety risk (e.g. thoroughfares, book aisles, stairwells). This is for individual prayers only; any group prayers should be completed in the More in Common Centre.

Authorised prayer locations.

The practice of faith and prayer is authorised and encouraged in the More in Common centre and supported in the designated and/or discreet library spaces. Where individuals pray elsewhere on campus, they should be politely asked to use the designated facilities. Praying in space not designated for prayers may present health and safety risks or disturb other users.

Special arrangements and celebrations

Most faith activity will be accommodated within the More in Common Centre. University Faith Groups (Student Societies and University staff members) may access other parts of the Estate and facilities through the established booking and timetabling procedures. The Students' Union supports and governs student societies and is responsible for ensuring compliance with booking policies and procedures.

Arrangements to provide facilities for religious observances or special religious occasions, that access central spaces such as the University Plaza, Student Central and the main foyer areas of campus require at least 14 days' notice providing to the Director of Student Services, who in advance of deciding may consult with members of the Vice Chancellor's Executive Group and other relevant parties. Our commitment to inclusion will normally include supporting the following types of activities:

- Annual Jumma prayers on the University plaza to mark Eid
- Ramadan arrangements to support iftar (breaking of the fast)
- Christmas carol concerts

6.4 Religion and belief advice and support

The University Faith Advisors and Chaplains provide specialist knowledge and advice from a range of religious traditions. The team enable, facilitate and provide:

- Space and time for group worship and private reflection within the University
- Confidential personal support to anyone with pastoral or spiritual needs
- Advice on how to manage their religious observance through teaching, learning and assessment.
- Regular events to celebrate 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
- Opportunities to mark and celebrate religious festivals.

Chaplains and Faith Advisors will work in accordance with university policies including the Religion and Belief Policy and the Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity Policy.

7 Religion and Belief Advisory Group

A Religion and Belief Advisory Group will be established to advise the University Equality Diversity and Inclusion Enhancement Committees on matters of Religion and Belief.

Terms of Reference

- To consider and recommend improvements to the Universities' Religion and Belief policy.
- To annually review the profile of religious declarations and demographics ensuring that religion and belief provision is responsive to the needs of university members.
- To receive an annual summary of the work of the More in Common Centre and Chaplains
- To recommend priorities for University Chaplaincy and the More In Common Centre.
- Through the chaplains provide advice and support for student and staff faith networks.
- Review and recommend to the UEDIEC appropriate, relevant and current advice on religious matters, and the needs of different faith communities.
- Develop effective partnerships with local faith communities, which can help to support University students and staff.
- Promote principles of multi-faith Chaplaincy, including opportunities for dialogue and co-operation between different faiths.

Membership

- Director of Student Services (chair).
- Student Services Business Support Manager (vice chair)
- All Faith Advisors and Chaplains
- A representative from each student faith society
- Representatives from staff faith networks
- A representative of the Human Resource Group Member – nominated by Director of HR
- A representative from Registry - nominated by Director of Registry
- A member of the Students' Union Executive - nominated by the President
- External advisors appointed by the Director of Student Services

Secretariat

- Jo Cox More In Common Centre Coordinator

Meeting Frequency

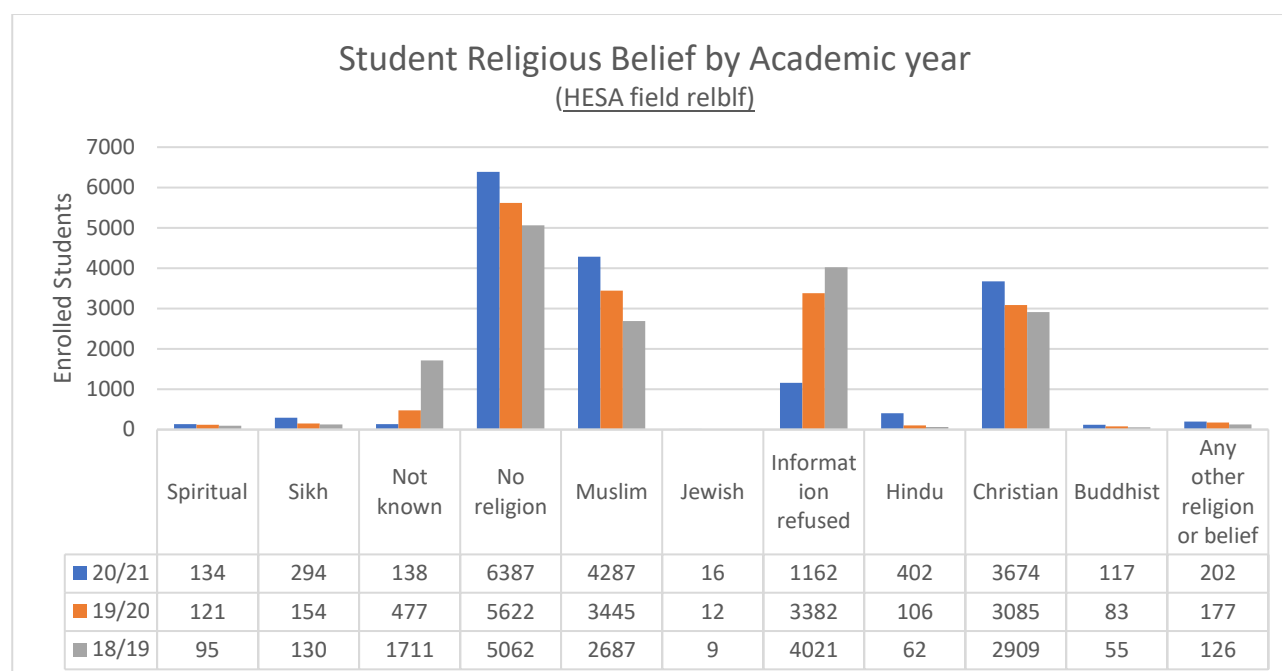
The Advisory Group will meet as required, but at least once per year.

Quoracy

50% of current membership including Chair or Vice Chair

8 Religion and Belief Profile

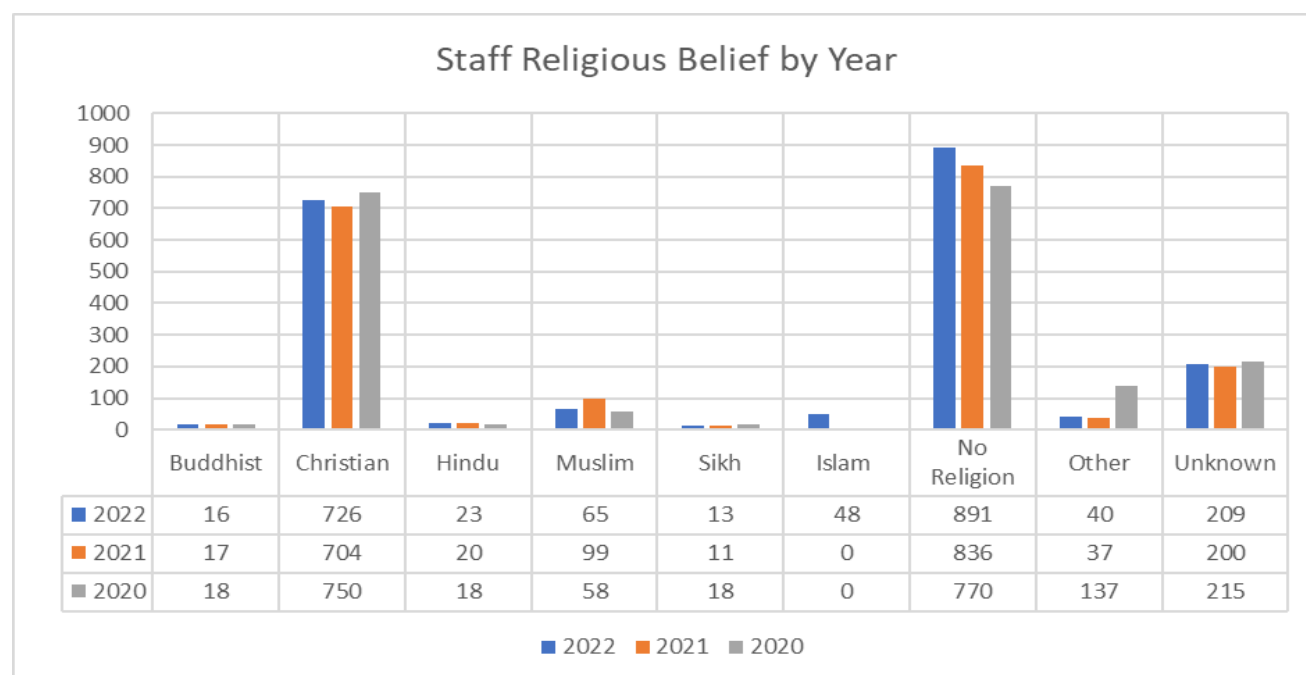
Student Religious Belief Profile: 2023



Notes:

- The decline information refused relates HESA requirements that this is mandatory collection field.
- No religion is consistently the largest declaration 38% in 21/22; 25% of students declare as Muslim; 22% of students declare as Christian.
- The growth in Hindu and Sikh population is likely to reflect international student recruitment.
- Not all students will be actively practicing their faith.

Staff Religious Affiliation



Notes:

- No religion is consistently the largest declaration at 44% in 21/22 increasing from a rate of 38% in 2020, followed by Christian at 36% which has declined slightly from a 38% declaration rate since 2020.
- Over the period shown, there has been a 5% increase in the percentage of staff declaring they have no religion.
- The percentage of non-disclosure has decreased over the period, from 11% in 2019 to 10% in 2022.

Jo Cox More in Common Centre Usage

Entrances Data and usage observations of the JCMIC the centre provide insight into community practice and needs. Key early insight

- An average of 700 daily entrances takes place on weekdays
- Students in Applied Sciences, Computing and Engineering and Business School rank as the highest volume users School Usage
- Daily and weekly (salat and Jummah) Muslim prayers account for significant footfall and use; additionally, a weekly programme of activities by other faith and non-faith groups is establishing in the space and creating a diverse range of inclusive activities

Groups

Established Groups related to religion and belief include:

Student Groups

- Islamic Society
- Ahlulbayt Society
- JSoc (Jewish Society)
- Christian Union
- PENSA - Pentecost Students And Associates UK
- Potters House Christian Society
- Sikh Society
- Winners Chapel Christian Society
- First Love Society

POLICY SIGN-OFF AND OWNERSHIP DETAILS	
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Approved by:	Senior Leadership Team
Effective from:	Start of academic year 2023/24
Date for Review:	June 2026
Author:	Director of Student Services
Owner (if different from above):	Business Support Manager – Student Services
Document Location:	
Compliance Checks:	Annual Review by Religion and Belief Advisory Group
Related Policies/Procedures:	<p>University Community Code of Conduct Regulations for PGR and Taught Students Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity Policy Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity Framework 2020- 2025 Student Charter Dignity at Work Procedure Dignity at Study Procedure Freedom of Speech and External Speakers Policy Safeguarding Policy Health And Safety Policy</p> <p>External Advanced HE,(2018), <i>HE Religion and belief: supporting inclusion of staff and students in higher education and colleges</i> (link)</p>

REVISION HISTORY			
Version	Date	Revision description/Summary of changes	Author
1.0	30 June 2023	New policy	Director of Student Services