



UNIVERSITY OF PLYMOUTH

Religious Diversity Policy (Version 2.0)

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1. Summary and Purpose

The University is committed to preventing discrimination and harassment on the grounds of religion or culture and all individuals and groups within the University have a responsibility to respect people’s freedom to express their convictions and religious beliefs in their own terms, provided this does not impact on the rights and freedoms of others.

2. Definitions

<p>Religion or Belief</p>	<p>The Equality Act 2010 defines religion and belief as “any religious belief, provided the religion has a clear structure or belief system. Denominations or sects within a religion can be considered a protected religion or religious belief; and/ or “a philosophical belief”.</p> <p>It should be noted that a 2009 Employment Appeal Tribunal decision defined the criteria for determining what a philosophical belief is. A philosophical belief must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be genuinely held; • be a belief and not an opinion or viewpoint, based on the present state of information available; • be a belief as to a weighty and substantial aspect of human life and behaviour; • attain a certain level of cogency, seriousness, cohesion and importance; • be worthy of respect in a democratic society, compatible with human dignity and not conflict with the fundamental rights of others. <p>Humanism, pacifism and atheism could be examples of philosophical beliefs. Ethical Veganism is also considered a philosophical belief and is assured protection under the Equality Act (2010).</p>
<p>Safeguarding</p>	<p>The University of Plymouth defines safeguarding as “the act of protecting people’s health, wellbeing and human rights”. We practice safeguarding by supporting people to live free from harm, abuse, neglect and radicalisation.</p>
<p>Prevent</p>	<p>The University recognises ‘Prevent’ as the anti-radicalisation agenda embedded in the Counter Terrorism and Security Bill 2015, and referred to as ‘Prevent’ in this policy. A person may become at risk of exploitation, harm or abuse in relation to violence, incitement to violence, terrorism, incitement to terrorism or other activities that may result in violent behaviour or terrorist activities in the name of an ideology or a set of beliefs.</p>
<p>Additional definitions</p>	<p>The University has a list of adopted definitions used by all services within the University to aid in consistency of approach in tackling abuse, harm or hate. This list includes examples if anti-semitism and islamophobia. The list is available here.</p>



3. Policy

3.1 – General Overview

All members of the University, both staff and students, are responsible for upholding the aims of the Religious Diversity Policy, for fulfilling their part in its implementation and for availing themselves of training and information in this regard.

The Equality Act 2010 protects people from discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief or non-belief. This document sets out the University's policy in this area. Please also refer to the University's [Equality and Diversity Policy](#) and the [Anti-bullying and Anti-harassment Policy and Procedure](#).

The University of Plymouth welcomes religious and cultural diversity in its community, and acknowledges that the right to freedom of belief, conscience and religion is absolute but the right to manifest beliefs must be moderated by the need to protect the rights and freedoms of others.

To this end the University seeks to ensure that:

- Everyone is treated with dignity and respect
- Recruitment, selection and promotion of staff and students are based on criteria, which exclude religious or cultural belief or non-belief
- Where reasonably practicable, appropriate services and facilities are provided to meet the religious and cultural needs of staff and students.

3.2 – Reporting incidents/concerns

Should any member of the University feel that there may be a conflict between university life and their religious or cultural beliefs, they should contact the Equality, Diversity and inclusion department confidentially on equality@plymouth.ac.uk.

If any member of the University community (staff, students, visitors or external contractors) feel they are being treated differently because of their religion/belief or if they have experienced abuse, harm or hate they should follow the University's [anti-bullying and anti-harassment policy and procedure](#) in reporting this.

Staff, students, contractors and visitors can also report incidents online (anonymously, if preferred) vis the University's [Speak Up tool](#).

3.3 - Responsibilities

The Board of Governors, with the assistance of the Vice-Chancellor and other Senior Managers, is ultimately responsible for ensuring that the University meets its commitments under the Religious Diversity Policy and that these are implemented and specifically integrated into policies, procedures, plans, audits and equality analyses covering all aspects of University operations.

All staff with management responsibilities are expected to familiarise themselves with this policy. Individual members of staff are responsible for informing the institution of their particular requirements.

3.4 - Dress Code

The University imposes no dress code on its staff and students, other than where this relates to health and safety or requirements necessary to perform their duties and studies. The wearing of

items arising from particular religious/cultural norms is welcomed. The University's policy for Religious Observance in Teaching Learning and Assessment and its associated guidance provides further practical guidance for students.

Where individuals are representing the University at other locations, we request that they are mindful of the expectations other organisations could reasonably expect in relation to their own dress policy. This, however, should never result in an individual feeling that they cannot wear religious/cultural items of clothing.

3.5 – Religious Holidays and Festivals

The University will make reasonable accommodations for students and staff whose religious holy days coincide with their work and study schedules. Staff and students should inform their line manager or tutor if they have particular requirements and these will be considered.

Information on these days are available on the University's [Diversity and Wellbeing Calendar](#) and associated guidance.

The University of Plymouth does not promote any particular form of religion but recognises that some general holidays are based around the Christian calendar as is common practice in the UK.

3.6 – Prayer Space

The University has multiple multi-faith prayer spaces available for staff and students to use. Some spaces include facilities for hand-washing and Wudu. No spaces on campus should be segregated by faith or gender. For information on locations and availability of prayer spaces, staff and students should refer to the Pastoral and Spiritual Support Pages.

There may be times when prayer spaces are unavailable or it is not reasonable to expect staff or students to travel to a designated prayer space. Line managers, tutors and all members of the University community are expected to respect an individual's right to pray and should provide a quiet, private area for prayer-use if designated prayer spaces are unavailable.

3.7 - Dietary Requirements

Individuals must notify catering services, if possible, as soon as possible if they have dietary requirements/restrictions such as Halal, Kosher or Vegan so arrangements can be made for suitable refreshments. The University will provide such food in its catering outlets according to the demand for it and the practicality of providing it.

3.8 - Offensive Actions or Behaviour

This policy is based on the principle that everyone has a right to their own belief system. However, they have no right to try to persuade others of that belief against their will or inclination. The University also has a duty to protect students and staff from aggressive, manipulative or covert forms of proselytism.

Distribution of unwanted propaganda is not permitted, and making threats or offensive remarks about someone's beliefs will result in disciplinary action as outlined in the [Anti-harassment and anti-bullying policy and procedure](#).

Freedom of speech is fundamental to any University community, and this right is protected in law. However, freedom of speech comes with responsibilities and the University expects all staff,



students and visitors to behave with tolerance and respect and not in a way that needlessly causes alarm or distress. Any behaviours that undermine someone's dignity and respect will be dealt with via the University's [Anti-bullying and anti-harassment policy and procedure, Safeguarding Policy \(including prevent\)](#).

All guest speakers will need to follow the [External Speakers Policy](#).

3.9 - Monitoring

The University will monitor this policy as part of its usual policy review procedure. The religious diversity of both staff and students is monitored annually through the [University's Annual Equality Report](#).

4. Support and Guidance

There are several ways for individuals to get additional support and guidance related to religious diversity at the University of Plymouth.

4.1 - Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

You can contact the EDI department confidentially for advice and support at any time via the following routes:

- Email: equality@plymouth.ac.uk
- Twitter: www.twitter.com/PlymUniEquality
- Facebook: www.facebook.com/PlymUniEquality

You can also access further information on independent support services, policy guidance and terminology used by visiting www.plymouth.ac.uk/equality

4.2 - Dignity and Respect Advisors

The University has a network of trained, confidential dignity and respect advisors who can act as a listening ear and go through your options with you. You can request an advisor confidentially by emailing equality@plymouth.ac.uk

4.3 - Pastoral and Spiritual Support

All staff and students can access the University's Pastoral and Spiritual Support services for support through grief and bereavement; this service is available to everyone whether you think of yourself as spiritual, religious, a person of faith or of no faith at all.

The team is led by the University's pastoral and spiritual support coordinator who is supported by faith advisors from the Jewish, Islamic, Catholic, Hindu, Humanist, Buddhist, Orthodox and Quaker communities.

The service can be contacted by email on spiritualsupport@plymouth.ac.uk

4.4 – Senior HR Partner

Staff can contact the Senior HR Partner for their Faculty/Directorate at any time for support and guidance. The list of Senior HR Partners is available on the [HR SharePoint site](#).

4.5 - Student Services

Students are encouraged to contact Student Services for support and guidance, including accessing wellbeing services. They can be emailed at studentservices@plymouth.ac.uk

Religious Diversity Policy (UOP/HR/P/028 Version 2)

Document owner: Head of Health, Safety, EDI and Training

5. Document Governance

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HR Document Review History

VERSION NO.	DATE OF CHANGE	ORIGINATOR OF CHANGE	DESCRIPTION OF CHANGE
1	2014	Head of Employee Relations	Original document
2	May 2020	EDI Manager	Document updated to include reference to prayer spaces (due to Covid-19 restrictions), reporting incidents and safeguarding.