

Policy on Religion and Belief

Statement of Intent

As part of its overall commitment to equality of opportunity, the University of Chichester ("the University") is fully committed to promoting a good and harmonious working and learning environment where every member of the student and staff community is treated with respect and dignity. The University celebrates and values the diversity brought to its learning and work environment by students and staff and aims to create a context within which the cultural, religious and non-religious beliefs of all are respected.

The right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion is absolute, but the right to manifest beliefs is qualified by the need to protect the rights and freedoms of others. This policy aims to ensure equal treatment for everyone, of any religion or none. It is based on the principle that people have the right to their own belief system; they have, however, no right to force it upon others.

Through the implementation of the relevant policies and procedures the University seeks to ensure that:

- a. recruitment and selection are based on relevant criteria, which do not include religious belief or non-belief (except in the case of a genuine occupational requirement);
- b. members of any religion or none are treated with equal dignity and fairness;
- c. under-represented groups in society are encouraged to apply for jobs; and
- d. where possible, appropriate facilities are provided to meet the cultural and religious needs of all students and staff.

Dress Code

The University does not impose a rigid dress code on its students and staff, and welcomes the variety of appearance brought by individual styles and choices, including the wearing of items arising from particular cultural/religious norms (e.g. sari, turban, hijab, kippah, mangal sutra).

The only limitations to the above are that:

1. Health and safety requirements may mean that for certain tasks specific items of clothing such as overalls, protective clothing etc need to be worn. If such clothing produces a conflict with an individual's religious belief, the issue will be sympathetically considered, with the aim of finding a satisfactory compromise.
2. Dress should conform to the societal "norm" of what constitutes appropriateness and decency.
3. Wearing slogans or symbols which are discriminatory (e.g. racist or sexist) will be considered a disciplinary offence and will be dealt with accordingly.

Religious Observance

The University will make reasonable efforts to provide a suitable space for prayer and ablution where practicable. In some cases individuals' requirements will be met by facilities in the neighbourhood and the University will provide information about these.

University staff, regardless of religious belief or non-belief, are required to work in accordance with their contract of employment. There may be some flexibility over how hours are worked, however; for instance, managers should make every attempt to ensure that those whose religion requires them to pray at certain times during the day are free to do so.

Leave for Religious Festivals

In common with other Higher Education institutions, the University closes around the Christian religious festivals at Christmas and Easter. Those practising other religions, or holding other beliefs, will be able to book three days of their holiday entitlement on the dates of most significance to them. These should be booked at the beginning of the academic year, or when timetables are being drawn up for the forthcoming year, wherever possible; otherwise reasonable notice must be given. Further

requests for holiday entitlement to be taken at times of religious significance will be treated sympathetically.

For staff, the number of annual leave days overall will remain as in the contract of employment.

Extended Leave of Absence

If a student or member of staff requests extended leave of absence from university at a particular time for the purpose of going on pilgrimage, the Head of School or employee's line manager should attempt to accommodate the request if at all possible. (If the extended leave exceeds the employee's annual holiday entitlement, the excess days will be taken as unpaid leave).

Food Requirements

The University undertakes to provide food that meets religious dietary requirements (e.g. vegetarian, kosher, halal). Students and staff should ensure that their requirements are known prior to their commencement at the University, or as soon as possible thereafter.

Offensive Actions or Behaviour

Any attempt at coercing others to comply with a particular belief system (e.g. through the distribution of inappropriate materials, or through threats or offensive remarks) will result in disciplinary action.

The University undertakes to remove any offensive literature or graffiti found on its premises and to take action against those found responsible.

Implementation and Responsibilities

- All managers and academic staff are required to familiarise themselves with this policy, and to follow it in matters such as requests for leave of absence.
- All individual students and staff members are responsible for familiarising themselves with this policy, for informing appropriate staff of their particular requirements, and for making up any time lost as a result of cultural and/or religious observance where necessary.
- Any student or member of staff who feels that they have not been treated fairly in accordance with this policy should refer the matter to:
 - the Pro Vice-Chancellor for students
 - Human Resources for staff
 - Staff also have access to the University's Grievance Procedure.
- All visitors and contractors have a responsibility not to discriminate on the grounds of religion or belief. If a student or member of staff feels that such discrimination is occurring/has occurred, they should report the matter immediately, as outlined above. The person acting on behalf of the University will take appropriate steps to deal with it.

Monitoring of the Policy

Implementation of this policy will be kept under review by the Equal Opportunities Action Group.

Approved by Academic Board: March 2005

Approved by the Board of Governors: April 2005

Updated to reflect changes in institutional and officers' titles.

Issued: 16 February 2006 under authority granted by the Board of Governors on 3 November 2005.

<p style="text-align: center;">We have conducted an impact assessment of this policy and believe it will have a positive effect on race equality</p>
