

# Religion and Belief Policy

## 1 Religion and Belief Statement

- 1.1. Oxford Brookes University celebrates and values the diversity provided by individual members of the University community, and aims to create an environment where the cultural, religious and non-religious beliefs of all are respected.<sup>1</sup>
- 1.2. We expect all members of the University community to respect the beliefs and life choices of other people, even when they are very different from their own.

## 2 Freedom of Speech

- 2.1. Oxford Brookes University is committed to the values of open and respectful debate.
- 2.2. The University expects every member of the University community to observe the requirements of the law on freedom of speech.
- 2.3. The University is committed to protecting and promoting the rights of every member of the University community to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, freedom of expression and freedom of association. This policy embraces the definition of religion as contained in Article Ten 1 of the Equality Act 2010 and United Nations Resolution A/RES/36/55 25 November 1981 declaration on The Elimination of all Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief<sup>2</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> Religion or belief

- (1) Religion means any religion and a reference to religion includes a reference to a lack of religion.
- (2) Belief means any religious or philosophical belief and a reference to belief includes a reference to a lack of belief.
- (3) In relation to the protected characteristic of religion or belief—
  - (a) a reference to a person who has a particular protected characteristic is a reference to a person of a particular religion or belief;
  - (b) a reference to persons who share a protected characteristic is a reference to persons who are of the same religion or belief.

<sup>2</sup> Preamble contains the following

Considering that it is essential to promote understanding, tolerance and respect in matters relating to freedom of religion and belief and to ensure that the use of religion or belief for ends inconsistent with the Charter of the United Nations, other relevant instruments of the United Nations and the purposes and principles of the present Declaration is inadmissible.

Convinced that freedom of religion and belief should also contribute to the attainment of the goals of world peace, social justice and friendship among peoples and to the elimination of ideologies or practices of colonialism and racial discrimination.

UN Resolution 36/55, 25 Nov 1981, Article One further states

1. Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom to have a religion or whatever belief of his choice, and freedom, either individually or in community

- 2.4. These rights apply to people with or without formal religious affiliation, of all faiths and none.
- 2.5. This policy should be read in the context of the University's Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech, including Guidance on Visiting Speakers, which can be found at: [Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech including Guidance on Visiting Speakers](#)

### **3 Legal Obligations on Religion and Belief**

- 3.1. The following legislations set out the legal obligations of the University in regards to people of all faiths and none:
  - The Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006
  - The Equality Act 2010
- 3.2. Under the Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006, it is illegal to incite hatred on religious grounds.
- 3.3. The Employment Equality (Religion and Belief) Regulations 2003 and the Equality Act 2010 make it illegal for the University as an employer and a provider of services to discriminate against someone because of their religion or beliefs.

### **4 Guidelines on Religion and Belief**

- 4.1. This policy should be read in context of the relevant policies and guidelines in place at Oxford Brookes University. The following list is not exhaustive:
  - [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy](#)
  - [Harassment and Bullying Policy and Procedures](#)
  - [Brookes Behaviour Policy](#)
  - [Student Conduct Procedure](#)
  - [Code of Conduct for Staff](#)
  - [Flexible Working Policy](#)
  - [Guides to Support Inclusive Teaching and Learning](#)
  - [Support for Assessment regulations](#)
  - [Prevent Duty](#)
  - [Safeguarding of Children and Adults and Risk](#)

### **5 Accommodating Religious Observance**

- 5.1. The University expects staff and students to make an effort to accommodate their religious observance outside normal working or teaching hours, but recognises that this will not always be possible.
- 5.2. There may be times of the year when people increase their religious observance. The University will try to accommodate this, so far as is possible, in accordance with its rules and regulations, including the Changes to Assessment Arrangements.

---

with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching.

2. No one shall be subject to coercion which would impair his freedom to have a religion or belief of his choice
3. Freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs may be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health or morals or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others.

5.3. The University will:

- Treat all disclosures of religious observance in confidence.
- Ensure that all teaching staff and other staff with management responsibilities are familiar with the terms of this policy.
- Be sensitive to dietary requirements and periods of fasting when arranging events, or providing refreshments.
- Ensure that appropriate space and facilities for complying with religious obligations are available to staff and students on all campuses as far as is reasonable and possible.

5.4. Teaching and research staff will:

- Endeavour to accommodate absence for religious reasons for holy days, feasts or religious festivals, or funerals, including travel abroad, unless there is a legitimate reason for not doing so.

5.5. Line managers will:

- Endeavour to accommodate absence for religious reasons for holy days, feasts or religious festivals, or funerals, including travel abroad, unless there is a legitimate reason for not doing so.
- Endeavour to accommodate flexible working to facilitate worship when appropriate.
- Seek guidance from the People Directorate on making an equitable response to staff requests.

5.6. Students will:

- Disclose where a religious observance will conflict with an assessment date or deadline in accordance with the Changes to Assessment Arrangements Regulations.

5.7. Staff will:

- Act in accordance with the University's leave policies, including Annual leave, Dependent care, Domestic emergency and bereavement leave, and Special leave.

## **6 Governance and Oversight**

6.1. The Multifaith Advisory Board is constituted to be responsible for being alert to and considering issues affecting the faith communities of the University and offering responses. It will:

- Be a forum for religious dialogue and support; in its work and in its discussions it will be respectful and non-proselytising.
- Meet three times a year and report at least annually to the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Group.
- Be available to make recommendations on matters of religion or belief to any group within the University community.

## **7 Chaplains, Faith Community Contacts, and Group Leaders**

- 7.1. Chaplains in the Multifaith Chaplaincy shall be affiliate staff, with the exception of the University Chaplain and Pastoral Care Lead who is a permanent employee of the University.
- 7.2. Chaplains are appointed by arrangement with a sending organisation who manages the Chaplain and serves as a point of contact for the University. They will offer at least three hours per week to the University.
- 7.3. Chaplains are appointed to the Multifaith Chaplaincy Team as 'Affiliate Non Paid Staff' by the University Chaplain and the Head of Mental Health and Wellbeing Support Services or the Chair of the Multifaith Advisory Board.
- 7.4. Where a new sending organisation offers a Chaplain, the Multifaith Advisory Board will be consulted during the application process to ensure that the proposed role is congruent with the needs of the University community
- 7.5. Where a sending organisation wishes to formally engage with the Multifaith Chaplaincy but cannot offer a Chaplain, the University Chaplain may appoint a Faith Community Contact to be a named contact for staff and students. They will not be affiliate staff of the University, and their work will not include pastoral care. Students on placement will have the same status as a Faith Community Contact.
- 7.6. A Group Leader is an individual who works with the University Chaplain to offer specific services to the University through the Multifaith Chaplaincy. They do not need to be offered by a sending organisation, and will be supported by a Chaplain in their work. They will not be affiliate staff of the University, and their work will not include pastoral care.
- 7.7. To avoid conflicts of interest, University staff and current students may not serve as Chaplains but may serve as Faith Community Contacts or Group Leaders.
- 7.8. The relationship between the University and an organisation offering a Chaplain or Faith Community Contact shall be formed through a Ministry and Partnership Agreement, and regularly reviewed.

## **8 Review and Update Arrangements**

- 8.1. This policy will be reviewed regularly by the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Group and may also be amended from time to time to reflect and take account of changes in legislation and best practice.
- 8.2. Any feedback or concerns about the policy and its implementation should be passed to [chaplaincy@brookes.ac.uk](mailto:chaplaincy@brookes.ac.uk).
- 8.3. This policy is available in alternative formats on request.

## **9 Further information**

- 9.1. Oxford Brookes University is not responsible for the content of external websites.
- 9.2. [Guidance on the Equality Act \(2010\)](#)
- 9.3. [EHRC Guidance for employers on religion or belief and the law](#)
- 9.4. [Managing the Interface: Sexual Orientation and Faith](#)

**Approved by:** Academic Board, July 2022