

# Religion and Belief Equality Policy

1.0 – May 2022

## Contents

1	Scope .....	2
2	Definitions.....	2
3	Policy overview.....	2
4	Reporting incidents/Concerns .....	2
5	Religious dress.....	3
6	Religious holidays and festivals .....	3
7	Prayer space .....	3
8	Offensive actions or behaviour.....	3
9	Student Support.....	4

### Creation and Revision History

To be reviewed annually by Head of Student Services. Next review due May 2023.

Version	Owner	Purpose/Change	Date
1.0	Simon Duckworth, Head of Student Services	Created	May 2022

# 1 Scope

This policy applies to all students studying at INTO University of East Anglia (the "Centre"). The Centre is committed to preventing discrimination and harassment on the grounds of religion or culture, and all individuals within the Centre 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

### 2.1 Religion or belief

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". Humanism, pacifism and atheism could be examples of philosophical beliefs.

### 2.2 Safeguarding

The Centre defines safeguarding as the act of protecting people's health, wellbeing and human rights. We practice safeguarding by supporting our students to live free from harm, abuse, neglect and radicalisation.

## 3 Policy overview

All members of the Centre, both staff and students, are responsible for upholding the aims of the Religion and Belief Equality Policy.

The Equality Act 2010 protects people from discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief or non-belief. This document sets out the Centre's policy in this area.

The Centre 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 Centre seems to ensure that:

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

## 4 Reporting incidents/Concerns

If any member of the Centre community feel they are being treated differently because of their religion/belief or if they have experienced, or feel they have experienced, abuse, harm or hate, they should follow the Centre's anti-bullying and anti-harassment policy and procedure in reporting this.

## 5 Religious dress

The need to comply with health and safety regulations will be given priority over the need for religious expression. Every reasonable effort will be made to reach a mutually acceptable solution for all parties.

Student ID cards must include photographs of the individual which are compliant with the UK passport standards. Security and examination requirements mean that a student's identity may have to be verified using their ID card. If headwear (for example) obstructs the face, the temporary removal of such items may be necessary. This will be done in an appropriate location by a member of Centre staff of the same sex.

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

## 6 Religious holidays and festivals

The Centre will endeavour to make reasonable adjustments for students whose religious holy days coincide with their study schedules. Students should inform the welfare team if they have particular requirements, and these will be considered.

Study timetables have been designed to ensure that teaching and learning requirements are delivered efficiently and effectively within the available time and space. For these reasons, the timetable cannot always accommodate all the diversity of religious observance requirements on campus.

As far as is reasonably practicable, examinations will be scheduled to avoid religious festivals where work is prohibited. Examination dates will be given in advance. If an examination clashes with a religious festival that a student observes, and which may prevent their full participation, every reasonable effort will be made to find alternative arrangements. It is the student's responsibility to speak with their personal or programme tutor about this issue at the earliest opportunity.

## 7 Prayer space

The Centre has multi-faith prayer spaces available for students to use. No spaces on campus should be segregated by faith or gender. For information on locations and availability of prayer spaces, students should refer to the Head of Student Services.

There may be times when prayer spaces are unavailable, or it is not possible for students to travel to a designated prayer space. Tutors and all members of the Centre community are expected to respect an individual's right to pray, and shall do their best to provide a quiet, private area for this, if designated prayer spaces are unavailable.

## 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 Centre also has a duty to protect students from radicalisation.

Distribution of unwanted propaganda is strictly prohibited and making threats or offensive remarks about someone's beliefs may result in disciplinary action as outlined in the relevant Centre procedures and policies.

Freedom of speech is a fundamental part of any higher education community within the UK, and this right is protected by law.

However, freedom of speech comes with responsibilities and the Centre expects all students and staff to behave with tolerance and respect, and not in any way that causes alarm and distress to others. Any behaviours that undermine someone's dignity and respect will be dealt with as per the Centre's Safeguarding Policy.

INTO UEA adheres to the UEA Freedom of Speech Policy which contains further information on Freedom of Speech on campus and policy around external speakers.

## **9 Student Support**

Students are encouraged to contact Student Services for support and guidance, including accessing wellbeing services.

Any complaints of discrimination, based on the provisions outlined in this policy, should be made in the first instance to the Head of Student Services.