

# Religion and Belief Policy

Policy Category:	Governance
Subject:	Religion and Belief
Approving Authority:	University Executive
Responsible Officer:	Director of Equality Diversity & Inclusion and the Dean
Responsible Office:	Equality Diversity & Inclusion and the Dean's Office & Chaplaincy
Related Procedures:	<a href="#">Religion and Belief Guidance</a> <a href="#">Statement on Freedom of Expression</a> <a href="#">Academic Quality and Regulations</a> <a href="#">G27 Misconduct Regulation</a> <a href="#">Capability Procedures: Research, Teaching-only and Professional Services Staff</a> <a href="#">Disciplinary Procedure: Research, Teaching-only and Professional Services Staff</a> <a href="#">Academic Staff Disciplinary Regulation</a> <a href="#">Academic Staff Grievance Regulation</a> <a href="#">Terms and conditions of employment (harmonised) for Academic Staff</a> <a href="#">Terms and conditions of employment (harmonised) for Research, Teaching-only and Professional Services Staff</a>
Related College Policies:	<a href="#">Equality, Diversity &amp; Inclusion Policy</a> <a href="#">Dignity at King's – Bullying and Harassment Policy</a> <a href="#">Timetabling Policy</a> <a href="#">King's College London Ordinances</a> <a href="#">College Charter</a>
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## 1. Purpose and Scope

- 1.1. King's College London is committed to creating an inclusive environment that promotes equality of opportunity for everyone in its community. King's values the diversity of its staff and student body and recognises that this is both a strength and a defining feature of King's as a London University in a global context.
- 1.2. Equality, diversity and inclusion are cornerstones of [King's Strategic Vision 2029](#). A key guiding principle of this vision is to create an inclusive environment where all individuals are valued and able to succeed. King's does not tolerate discrimination, victimisation or harassment based on a person's religion or belief, or non-belief, and aims to provide an inclusive environment where everyone in the King's community can thrive.
- 1.3. The purpose of this policy is to outline the expected behaviours of all members of the King's community in relation to religion and belief. This policy sets out the context of the legal framework within which King's operates and the religious foundation of the University.
- 1.4. This policy applies to all of the King's community (staff, students and visitors, both on our campuses and online). 'Staff' includes academic (including research and teaching) and professional services staff. 'Students' includes undergraduate and postgraduate (taught and research) students.

## Legal Framework

- 1.5. As a Higher Education institution, there are several legal frameworks that must be adhered to in relation to religion and belief:
  - Equality Act 2010, including the Public Sector Equality Duty.

- Human Rights Act 1998, notably Article 10: Freedom of Expression.
- Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006.
- Education Act 1986, notably Section 43 (2): Freedom of Speech in Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges.
- The Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023 which will amend the Higher Education and Research Act 2017 and introduce new obligations on King's in relation to freedom of speech and academic freedom, replacing those applicable under the Education (No.2) Act 1986

- 1.6. In particular, the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty place a responsibility on the University to:
  - Ensure facilities and services do not discriminate (whether that is direct, indirect or by association/perception) against people on the basis of religion, belief or non-belief.
  - Have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other unlawful conduct under the Act; advance equality of opportunity between those who share certain protected characteristics (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation) and those who do not; and foster good relations between those who share protected characteristics and those who do not.
- 1.7. In line with this, King's aims to provide an inclusive environment where all individuals are valued and able to succeed and that is free from discrimination, bullying, harassment and hate crime in all its forms, while also being able to exercise their freedom of speech within the law and (for academic staff) their academic freedom within the law.
- 1.8. Further information on how the University and members of the King's community meet these responsibilities in practice can be found in the [Religion and Belief Guidance](#).

### **Monitoring and Data**

- 1.9. Equal opportunity data captures data on protected characteristics listed in the Equality Act 2010, including religion and belief. The University collects equality data, including religion and belief, through HR digital services. This data is an important enabler in monitoring the diversity of King's staff and ensuring processes and systems are promoting equity of opportunity.
- 1.10. Staff are encouraged to input their equality data by logging in to [HR digital services](#). All data is collected in line with the [Human Resources Privacy Notice](#). Further information on the importance of such data and how to update your equality information, including data on religion and belief, is available on the [Equal Opportunity Data webpages](#).

## **2. Definitions**

- 2.1. *Religion and Belief* – [Section 10 of the Equality Act 2010](#) outlines that religion or belief means any religion, religious belief or philosophical belief, as well as a lack of religion or belief. As explained in the [EHRC Religion or belief: a guide to the law](#), the courts have interpreted religion to mean any religion of sufficient seriousness which has a clear structure and belief system and a lack of religion

means people without a religion, such as atheists, humanists and secularists. The Act states that belief means any religious or philosophical belief and includes a lack of a particular belief. The courts have developed a definition of belief which understands that a belief need not include faith or worship of a god or gods, but it must affect how a person lives their life or perceives the world. For a philosophical belief to be protected under the Act (a “protected belief”) it must:

- Be genuinely held.
- Not just be an opinion or viewpoint based on the present state of information available.
- Be about a weighty and substantial aspect of human life and behaviour.
- Attain a certain level of cogency, seriousness, cohesion and importance.
- Must be worthy of respect in a democratic society, not incompatible with human dignity and not in conflict with the fundamental rights of others.

- 2.2 *Discrimination (Direct)* – where, because of their religion or protected belief, someone is treated less favourably than others in the same circumstances are, or would be, treated.
- 2.3 *Discrimination (Indirect)* – instances where discrimination occurs when an approach, practice, policy or system does not discriminate on the face of it (it seems to be a ‘neutral rule’ applied to everyone) but has the effect of causing a particular disadvantage to one group or individual more than others due to their religion or belief and where that practice, policy or system cannot be shown to be a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.
- 2.4 *Discrimination (by perception or association)* – discrimination that occurs because an individual is perceived as belonging to a religion or having a protected belief or is discriminated against because of their association with another person’s religion or belief (for example, a spouse, parent, co-worker).
- 2.5 *Bullying* – offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour involving the misuse of power that can make a person feel vulnerable, upset, humiliated, undermined or threatened. Power does not always mean being in a position of authority. It can include both personal strength and the power to coerce through fear or intimidation. (For more information on bullying related to religion and belief see 3.27 through 3.29.)
- 2.6 *Harassment* – any unwanted physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct that:

- has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them.
- Has the effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them. Decisions about whether the unwanted conduct has had this effect will be made by taking into account the perception of the complainant and all the other circumstances of the case, and considering whether it is objectively reasonable for the conduct to have that effect.

A single incident can amount to harassment. A person may be harassed even if they were not the intended "target" of the harassing behaviour. Harassment is unlawful under the Equality Act 2010 if it relates to age, disability, gender reassignment, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation, or if it is conduct of a sexual nature (sexual harassment).

The University considers all harassment to be unacceptable, whether or not it relates to a relevant protected characteristic. (For more information on harassment related to religion and belief see 3.27 through 3.29.)

- 2.7 *Hate Crime* – any criminal offence which is perceived by the victim or any other person, to be motivated by hostility or prejudice based on a person's race or perceived race; religion or perceived religion; sexual orientation or perceived sexual orientation; disability or perceived disability and any crime motivated by hostility or prejudice against a person who is transgender or perceived to be transgender. (For more information on hate crime see 3.27 through 3.29.)
- 2.8 *Antisemitism* – a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.
- 2.9 *Islamophobia* – a certain perception of Muslims, which may be expressed as hatred toward Muslims. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of Islamophobia are directed toward Muslim or non-Muslim individual and/or their property, toward Muslim community institutions and religious facilities. It should be noted that Islamophobia can be experienced by those who are racialised as Muslim despite not being of the faith.
- 2.10 *Ordained* – an ordained person is someone who has been authorised as a religious leader to perform religious rites and ceremonies.
- 2.11 *Anglican* – belonging or relating to the Church of England or other Churches that are in communion with the Church of England.

### **3. Policy**

#### **King's History and Ethos**

- 3.1 Religion and belief have played a historical role in the foundation of King's. When founded in 1829, there was an express purpose to ensure students received an education that included a religious dimension. The University's motto '*sancte et sapienter*' (with holiness and in wisdom) reflects its Anglican foundation and its continuing commitment to religious life and theological education.
- 3.2 Under paragraph 3(1) of the [College Charter](#), the University is charged to 'regard both to its Anglican tradition and the diverse beliefs and backgrounds of its members'. The University therefore aims to strike a balance between recognising its Anglican foundations and ensuring that our community's plurality of religious belief, philosophical belief and lack of belief is respected and welcomed.

#### **Dean and Chaplaincy**

- 3.3 In line with this heritage, the Dean of King's College London is an ordained minister of the Church of England. The [Ordinances of King's College London](#) state that the Dean is responsible for 'ensuring that the College builds upon the Anglican tradition associated with its foundation' and also for encouraging and supporting all members of the King's community of all beliefs and backgrounds. This requires that the Dean is responsible for overseeing the spiritual development and pastoral

welfare of all students and staff, regardless of religion, belief or non-belief.

- 3.4 As outlined in E.3 of the [Ordinances](#), the Dean is responsible for:
- The College Chaplaincy team and for the religious and spiritual life of the College.
  - The academic directorship of the [Associateship of King's College London](#) (AKC), the original award of the University and a continuing programme open to all King's students, staff and alumni.
  - The promotion of harmony amongst the student and staff bodies of all beliefs and faiths.
  - Liaising with external religious and faith organisations and groups.
- 3.5 The Chaplaincy is a resource for all members of the King's community whether they are from a particular religion, belief or none. The Chaplaincy team is made up of individuals from a range of religious backgrounds. Information about the team and their work can be found on the [Chaplaincy webpages](#).

### **Prayer, Worship and Religious Observance**

- 3.6 In line with the ethos and heritage of King's, the University encourages and supports members of the King's community of all religions and beliefs in observing their religious practice, especially those which are considered obligatory.
- 3.7 A range of spaces for private reflection and prayer are provided by the University and its associated NHS Hospital Trusts. These spaces are available to all members of the King's Community. These spaces include various chapels and rooms for prayer and reflection as well as a number of dedicated Muslim prayer and ablution facilities and a Dharmic Prayer Room for Hindu, Jain, Sikh and Buddhist members of the King's community. More information about the prayer and reflection spaces can be found in the [Religion and Belief Guidance Document](#) and the on the [Chaplaincy webpages](#).
- 3.8 The [Terms and Conditions of Employment](#) for both academic and non-academic staff state that all employees who require time off for religious or cultural observance will be entitled to request flexibility in the arrangement of shifts, rotas and working hours. Managers or Heads of Department/Division should consider requests on these grounds and try to accommodate them wherever it is reasonably practicable to do so, subject to the needs of the service. Managers have a responsibility to positively engage with, acknowledge and enable participation in religious convictions, beliefs or practices where it is important to individuals. More information on flexible working can be found on the [Flexible Working at King's intranet pages](#).
- 3.9 The University closes for the Christian religious festivals of Christmas and Easter. The [Terms and Conditions of Employment](#) outline that staff are entitled to request annual leave or unpaid leave if they require time off for religious or cultural observance. Staff practicing other religions, or holding other beliefs, may therefore request to take their holiday entitlement on the dates of most significance to them. Wherever possible, these requests should be granted.
- 3.10 All members of the King's community should avoid organising important meetings, events or routine meetings on Fridays to allow flexibility for Jews observing Shabbat (flexibility may be needed on Friday afternoons, particularly in autumn and winter, to travel home by sunset) or Muslims wishing

to take extended lunch breaks to attend the Jummah Friday prayers (13:00-14:00). In accordance with the [Timetabling Policy](#) efforts should also be made to avoid scheduling teaching at these times as well as at the times of the College Eucharist and Roman Catholic Mass (Wednesdays and Thursdays 13:00-14:00).

- 3.11 The University understands that the dates of the Islamic holy month of Ramadan are expected to overlap with the University's exam period until at least 2023. For some students Ramadan will also coincide with their clinical placements. Staff should consider how they can support students during this period to enable them to meet their learning and assessment requirements while maintaining their religious observance. More information can be found on the [Religious Observance webpage](#) which is annually updated by the Dean and Chaplaincy.
- 3.12 The [College Regulations](#) apply equally to all students regardless of religion or belief. Students wishing to observe religious holidays that do not coincide with university holidays should make a formal request to their department for leave of absence within a reasonable timeframe, ideally at the beginning of the academic year. These requests should be negotiated where practicable with appropriate arrangements put in place to manage the absence. Where these are unable to be negotiated, students may need to formally interrupt their studies if they wish to continue with the leave of absence. More information on the process for interrupting studies and who to talk to for advice can be found on the [Taking a Break webpage](#).
- 3.13 It is important to note that the rules and customs of religious observance vary greatly between and within religious groups and therefore the types of requests may vary. If staff need advice when supporting and accommodating requests from staff or students, they should contact the [Dean's office](#).
- 3.14 For more information on prayer, worship and religious observance see the [Religion and Belief Guidance Document](#).

### Dietary Requirements

- 3.15 Dietary requirements should be considered for any events or meetings with catering. King's Food ensure vegetarian and vegan food is widely available and gluten free, halal, kosher and other dietary requirements are accommodated wherever possible. See the [King's Food webpages](#) for further information.
- 3.16 Event organisers should also ensure non-alcoholic drinks are available and they should also consider the types of events being held to ensure a reasonable mix of functions with and without alcohol as some members of the King's community may not be able to attend events or venues where alcohol is served.
- 3.17 Members of the King's community should also be aware that some staff and students may require separate utensils or separate places to store and heat their food. All members of the King's community should be respectful of this and help provide mutually acceptable solutions where this is required.

### Religious Dress and Symbols

- 3.18 Some religions require particular dress and as far as possible members of the King's community should be able to dress according to their faith and belief. There may be some circumstances in which this is limited, for example due to health and safety requirements. If dress regulations or guidelines present a conflict with an individual's religious belief, the manager or the student's supervisor should consider

the issue sensitively and try to find a mutually satisfactory arrangement. If advice is required staff or students should contact the [Dean's Office](#) or [Chaplaincy team](#).

- 3.19 Where a uniform is required for the job, they should include the option of wearing trousers and if a uniform includes headwear, then the wearing of religious head coverings should not be prohibited unless there is an over-riding health and safety requirement.
- 3.20 Members of the King's community may be asked to remove religious wear to verify their identity for security reasons. If a photo identification card cannot establish an individual's identity, they may be asked to remove their religious wear privately and with the appropriate staff of the same gender. For examination checks, the University [Academic Regulations](#) state that students wearing religious headwear may be required to prove their identity, by removing their headwear to reveal their head and face to an invigilator of the same gender, in private if necessary.
- 3.21 King's aims to create an environment of respect and members of the King's community should avoid wearing clothing that contains slogans, writing, symbols or images that may reasonably be considered to be offensive to those with a religion or belief. If an individual wears an offensive or inflammatory garment they should be informed that it goes against the University's policy on creating an environment of respect and asked not to wear the item on campus. If an individual persists in wearing offensive or inflammatory garments, then this may be treated as a disciplinary offence under the relevant student and staff regulations. These are the [G27 Misconduct Regulation](#) (for students), [Capability Procedures: Research, Teaching-only and Professional Services Staff](#), [Disciplinary Procedures: Research, Teaching-only and Professional Services Staff](#), [Academic Staff Disciplinary Regulation](#) and [Academic Staff Grievance Regulation](#) and in line with the [Dignity at King's – Bullying and Harassment Policy](#).

## Staff Recruitment

- 3.22 King's is committed to ensuring our recruitment practices are inclusive and provide equality of opportunity for all applicants, including those with a religion or belief, in line with our duties under the Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty.
- 3.23 Staff carrying out recruitment should consider how they can make job adverts and recruitment information inclusive of a range of religions and beliefs, for example by linking to relevant policies and facilities. They should also consider the religious needs of any interviewees when on site, for example, the location and availability of prayer spaces, places of worship and catering requirements. The timings of interviews should also be considered and wherever possible key religious dates and days of rest for different religions should be avoided.
- 3.24 All staff involved in interviewing candidates should complete the Diversity Matters training for managers (see below) and recruitment panels should reflect the diversity of the University with every attempt made to ensure panels are balanced and representative. If this is not possible, other colleagues from similar areas should be asked to contribute. More information on recruitment can be found on the [HR recruitment webpages](#).

## Student Accommodation

- 3.25 Students that require single gender accommodation for religious reasons are asked to indicate this in their application, as per the [King's Residences Accommodation Policy](#). Further information is available on the [King's Accommodation webpages](#).

## **Student Loans**

- 3.26 King's acknowledges that some students may not be able to take on a student loan for religious reasons. There is a [policy statement](#) on this situation which provides further information. In such cases, students (both undergraduate and postgraduate) should submit the declaration form which can be found under the policy statement. Further support and advice can also be found on the same page.

## **Bullying, Harassment and Hate Crime**

- 3.27 King's is committed to providing and promoting a positive environment for all members of the King's community, which is free from all forms of bullying, harassment, victimisation and hate crime – including those motivated by hostility or prejudice based on a person's religion or belief, or a perceived religion or belief.
- 3.28 If a hate crime based on, or perceived to be based on, someone's religion or belief is experienced or witnessed, [emergency help](#) should be sought.
- 3.29 The [Dignity at King's - Bullying and Harassment Policy](#) outlines that harassment related to the protected characteristics, which include religion and belief, is unlawful. The policy outlines that harassment on the grounds of religion or belief may include (without limitation):
- Jokes about a particular religious group.
  - Behaviour which fails to tolerate, acknowledge or allow participation in religious convictions, beliefs or practices.
  - Intrusive questions about a person's religion or beliefs.
- 3.30 Further information on what constitutes bullying and harassment, unacceptable behaviours, what to do if you experience or witness bullying and harassment and where to go for support can all be found in the [Dignity at King's - Bullying and Harassment Policy](#) which applies to all of the King's Community.
- 3.31 Staff members may receive disclosures from students regarding bullying, harassment, victimisation or hate crime based on, or perceived to be based on religion or belief. For advice on how to handle disclosures confidently and effectively staff should access the [Handling Student Disclosures guidance](#).

## **Freedom of Expression, Academic Freedom and the Sharing of Religion and Belief**

- 3.32 In line with Article 10 of the Human Rights Act and applicable legislation on freedom of speech and academic freedom in higher education, the University and King's College London Students' Union (KCLSU) are committed to the values of freedom of expression, freedom of thought, academic freedom, freedom of conscience and religion and freedom of assembly.
- 3.33 This is demonstrated in the [King's Strategic Vision 2029](#) where one of the eight guiding principles is to 'demonstrate open-mindedness and tolerance and expect to challenge and be challenged in protecting the freedom of expression'. As outlined in the [King's and KCLSU Joint Statement on Freedom of Expression](#), academic and professional services staff, students and visitors are expected to respect and promote this guiding principle.
- 3.34 Whilst the University recognises the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, and the fundamental importance within a higher education environment of the right to freedom of speech within the law and (for academic staff) the right to academic freedom within the law. The ability, within the law, to express beliefs, opinions and views and the ability of others, within the law, to challenge and question them in an environment of academic debate and exchange must be a core feature of our community.
- 3.35 The University recognises that the promotion and sharing of a religious belief may be important for some groups and that such activities are generally permitted within laws on freedom of speech. This can, however, be unwelcome to individuals of other religions or beliefs, or those of no belief. Members of the King's community should not apply any unreasonable pressure and respect when the sharing of belief or faith is unwanted. Unwanted behaviour, such as persistent proselytising, may constitute bullying or harassment. Religious belief, or no belief, cannot justify discriminatory behaviour and instances of such behaviour will be dealt with under the [G27 Misconduct Regulation](#) (for students), [Capability Procedures: Research, Teaching-only and Professional Services Staff](#), [Disciplinary Procedures: Research, Teaching-only and Professional Services Staff](#), [Academic Staff Disciplinary Regulation](#) and [Academic Staff Grievance Regulation](#) and in line with the [Dignity at King's – Bullying and Harassment Policy](#).