

Faith and Belief (Religious Life and Belief on Campus)	
Enabling Policy Statement; Executive Owner; Approval Route:	Our Colleagues – Chief Operating Officer – Operations Committee
Is the Procedure for internal use only (Non- disclosable) ?	Disclosable
Associated Policy Statements:	Our Students - Chief Student Officer
Authorised Owner:	Religious Life and Belief Lead
Authorised Co-ordinator:	Associate Director (People Services)
Effective date:	July 2025
Due date for full review:	July 2028
Sub documentation:	N/A

Approval History

Version	Reason for review	Approval Route	Date
1.0	This procedure replaces existing policy on Religion, Belief, Values and Practices to bring up to date and ensure migration to POPP template	Operations Committee	23 July 2025

1. Purpose

This Faith and Belief Procedure exists to support the diverse religious and belief needs of students, staff and visitors at the University of Surrey and the subsidiaries of the University. It aligns with the University's commitment to inclusivity, respect, and equality as outlined in our overarching Equality and Diversity Policy Statement. In line with our University values, the Procedure aims to create an environment where individuals feel welcome, valued and respected regardless of their faith or belief system. It also seeks to ensure compliance with relevant legislation, such as the Equality Act 2010, and to promote best practices within the higher education sector. Its key aims are:

- To foster a welcoming and inclusive environment for individuals of all faiths and beliefs (or none).
- To provide clear guidelines and support mechanisms for the expression of faith and beliefs (or none) within the University community.

2. Scope and Exceptions to the Procedure

This Procedure applies to all University of Surrey students, staff, and visitors, covering various situations where faith and belief expressions are relevant, such as but not limited to in campus facilities, academic settings, and University events. It is inclusive of all students, staff, and visitors, ensuring their right to express their faith and beliefs while on campus or engaging in University activities. Staff in this procedure refers to all contracted, appointed under the University of Surrey either directly or indirectly, providing goods and services to the University of Surrey, its subsidiaries and contractors.

Exceptions include:

- Activities not conducted under the auspices of the University or its subsidiaries.
- Personal belief practices that do not intersect with University-provided facilities or activities that are legally permissible under the framework of UK legislation.
- The University of Surrey may apply a Genuine Occupational Requirement to certain posts within the University. In determining whether a Genuine Occupational Requirement applies to a particular post, the University will assess whether being an adherent of a particular religion or other belief is a genuine and determining occupational requirement and it is proportionate to apply that requirement in a particular case having regard to the nature of the employment or the context in which it is carried out. Any such requirement and the reason for it will be clearly stipulated in associated recruitment advertising and related literature. Further advice on this can be obtained from the [Human Resources](#) department.

3. Definitions and Terminology

Faith and Belief

These terms encompass a wide range of religious beliefs, spiritual practices, and philosophical convictions held by individuals. The University uses these terms interchangeably with "Religious Life and Belief." Our Religious Life and Belief Centre is at the core of the University's strategy to foster a sense of community for staff, students, and visitors, enhancing the student experience, welfare of all those at the university and creating a genuine sense of community.

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Equality Act 2010

UK legislation that protects individuals from discrimination on the grounds of various protected characteristics, including religion or belief.

Genuine Occupational Requirement (GOR)

A provision under the Equality Act 2010 that allows an employer, in exceptional circumstances, to require that a particular post be filled by someone of a specific religion or belief (or none), where it is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim. The University will clearly state any such requirement in recruitment advertising and associated literature.

Additional Key Definitions

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. The University has adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism.

Associate Chaplain / Trainee Chaplain

A person who works alongside or under the supervision of the Chaplain in providing spiritual support, pastoral care, and faith-related guidance to the University community. These individuals may represent a specific faith tradition or belief system and work collaboratively within the Religious Life and Belief Centre (RLBC).

Bullying

Bullying is offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, often 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. Bullying can be related to or motivated by any protected characteristic (including religion or belief), but it can also occur independently of these. This should be cross-referenced with [our bullying and harassment procedure](#) and with our Code of Practice on Academic Freedom and Freedom of Speech.

Chaplaincy / Religious Life and Belief Centre (RLBC)

The dedicated University facility and team providing pastoral care, spiritual guidance, and community-building opportunities to staff, students, and visitors of all faiths and beliefs (including those who do not identify with any religious tradition or belief). The RLBC also liaises with external faith communities and may host chaplains or advisors from multiple faith traditions.

College of Chaplains

A **college** is a dictionary term that refers to the collective body of chaplains and advisors drawn from various faiths, beliefs, and traditions or a single faith community e.g. College of Cardinals, College of Canons etc. They serve a defined community by offering spiritual and pastoral care, facilitating interfaith and intercultural dialogue, and promoting an inclusive environment for all staff, students, and visitors.

Discrimination

Treating a person or group unfairly or less favorably than another person or group because of a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010 (e.g., religion or belief, race, sexual orientation, disability). Discrimination can be direct, indirect, associative, or by perception.

Extremism

Vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. Extremism can also refer to calls for the death of members of the armed forces or any form of terrorism.

Freedom of Speech

The University is committed to protecting and promoting the principle of freedom of speech within the law for all members of our community equally, recognising that freedom of speech within the law may include ideas that are controversial or unpopular and that could cause offence.

Academic Freedom

The intellectual independence of academic staff to question and test received views and wisdom, and to put forward new ideas and potentially controversial or unpopular opinions, without placing themselves in danger of losing their job, status or reducing the likelihood of them securing promotion or different roles at the University. The University of Surrey has embedded this principal into its ordinances.

Harassment

Harassment is 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. A single incident can amount to harassment.

Hate Crime/Hate Incident

'Hate incidents' and 'hate crimes' are terms used to describe acts of violence or hostility directed at people because of who they are or who someone thinks they are. They are motivated by hostility or prejudice based on disability, race, religion, transgender identity, or sexual orientation. This can be an incident against a person or against property and includes materials posted online.

Islamophobia

A form of prejudice that includes fear, hostility, or hatred directed toward Islam and Muslims (or those perceived to be Muslim). It can manifest through stereotypes, discrimination, harassment, or violence against individuals, communities, and property.

Prevent Duty

A legal duty arising from the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 requiring certain bodies, including universities, to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism or extremism. The University addresses Prevent requirements within its relevant [policy frameworks](#)

Protected Characteristics

Characteristics protected under the Equality Act 2010, which include: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief (including lack of belief), sex, and sexual orientation.

Reasonable Adjustments

Modifications or accommodations made to allow an individual (e.g., a staff member, student, or visitor) to overcome disadvantages resulting from a disability or from religious or belief-related requirements. In the context of religion and belief, this can include adjusting timetables, providing prayer spaces, or offering specific dietary options.

Sending Institutions

External religious or secular organisations that sponsor, support, or endorse chaplains and advisors assigned to serve within the University. These institutions (e.g., a Church of England or Roman Catholic

diocese, a Methodist Circuit or denominational Churches, local Muslim Association / Mosque, Humanist Chaplaincy provider, a local Sikh Gurdwara, or Jewish community) who contribute resources and form part of the governance structure of the Religious Life and Belief Centre. They may also collaborate with the University in matters of pastoral care and community engagement. There are often Memorandum of Understandings (MOUs) between the University and these institutions, and they form a key part in the governance of the RLBC at our University in partnership with the Executive Board of the University of Surrey.

Values

The core principles or standards of behavior that guide individuals or communities. In the context of this Procedure, values refer to the moral and ethical beliefs, whether religious or secular, that shape how members of the University community and visitors conduct themselves.

Visitor

Any person who is not a current employee of the University or its subsidiaries or an enrolled student of the University but is present on University premises or participating in University activities (e.g., contractors, volunteers, external speakers, alumni, guests of staff or students).

Zero Tolerance

A policy stance whereby the University commits to respond appropriately when there are incidents that violate this Faith and Belief Procedural Procedure, including harassment, intimidation, discrimination, and incitement to hatred. Violations may lead to disciplinary action or referral to external authorities where appropriate.

4. Procedural Principles

4.1. Roles and Responsibilities

- **Religious Life and Belief Lead:** Oversees the implementation of this Procedure and acts as a point of contact for faith-related matters.
- **Professional Services Group:** Ensure that their areas comply with this Procedure.
- **Faculty Deans, Directors, Heads of Departments:** Ensure their areas comply with this Procedure and support staff and students in its application. Faculty EDI Committees (FEDICs) should ensure that faith and belief compliance with this Procedure is monitored and checked.
- **College¹ of Chaplains and Advisors / Religious Life and Belief Centre:** Provides spiritual support and guidance and facilitates interfaith dialogue and activities.

4.2. Procedure Details

4.2.1 Expression of Freedom

The expression of freedom of thought, conscience, or religion, belief, values, and practice is not an absolute right, and intervention may be justified where this is considered necessary to protect the rights of others. This procedure must not be interpreted by any group or individual as sanctioning a right to engage in activities or acts that negatively impact the rights of others.

4.2.2 Discriminatory Behaviour

¹ The College of Chaplains at a HEFE institution is the collective noun for Chaplains and Clergy. Source:OED.

Religious or philosophical belief cannot be used to justify discriminatory behaviour against others, for example:

- Refusal to provide services to individuals or groups of people with protected characteristics.
- Making derogatory or discriminatory comments about individuals or groups of people.
- Refusing to meet with or work with staff, students, or visitors because they have a protected characteristic.
- Attempting to coerce or threaten others into compliance with a particular set of religious or other beliefs, values, or practices, such as spreading or inciting others to spread extremist views/ideology (including violent extremism), extremist propaganda or materials, and/or forcing these views/opinions on others through unauthorised distribution of propaganda or through threats or offensive remarks.

The University of Surrey does not tolerate instances of this nature, and those responsible may be liable to disciplinary action under the relevant disciplinary procedure and regulations for staff and students respectively (See Harassment and Bullying Procedure, [Freedom of Speech Policy](#) Prevent Policy,).

Where such instances relate to visitors to the University, action taken may include intervention by the Police, removal of the perpetrator from the University premises, and a ban from returning to the University. If the perpetrators are from another institution, that institution may be informed of the issues.

4.2.3. Dress Code

The University of Surrey imposes no dress code (apart from where a uniform is required) on its employees or students, and in this regard welcomes the rich diversity in ethnic, cultural, and religious dress exhibited on campus (e.g. hijab, kippah, niqab, mangalsutra, and clerical collar). There is still an expectation to dress in a way that is considered appropriate for the setting. The Religious Life and Belief team are here to assist colleagues who need assistance in developing reasonable adjustments where required.

Limitations to the above:

- a) **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 religion or belief, values, and practices, the issue will be sympathetically considered by the line manager or academic supervisor, with the aim of finding a satisfactory resolution that does not compromise the health and safety of any University staff, students or visitors.
- b) **Examination or registration requirements** may mean that on occasion the temporary removal of veils and clothing that cover the head and face is necessary to authenticate identity. Arrangements will be made in these cases for authentication procedures to be conducted in accordance with any beliefs and values associated with the wearing of particular clothing (e.g., by staff of the same sex as the individual concerned).
- c) **Wearing slogans or symbols which are discriminatory** (e.g., racist, homophobic, or sexist) is a disciplinary offence and will be dealt with accordingly.

4.2.4. Observance of Religion and Belief

For many religious people, the daily practice of corporate, personal, or private prayer is a primary responsibility. Adherents of a religion should advise their Head of Department, personal tutor, or line manager if they have any special requirements in this regard. Executive Deans, Heads of Schools and Departments, and line managers are responsible for ensuring that if other staff or students or visitors are affected by an individual's needs (arising from their particular religious beliefs, values, and practices), a reasonable degree of respect and understanding is exercised between them. It is the responsibility of the Heads of Services and Facilities and the Executive Deans of Faculties to ensure that no member of staff, student, or visitor is unfairly disadvantaged as a result of accommodations made to other staff, students, or visitors in this respect.

Where specific requirements are sought by staff or students in accordance with their religion and belief, values, and practices, the University will make a reasonable effort to provide such requirements, where appropriate. The advice of the University's College of Chaplains / Religious Life and Belief team should be sought by the relevant Executive Dean or line manager in such cases. It will be the responsibility of the University to ensure that the requirements requested meet Health and Safety standards where applicable.

All staff, without distinction, are required to work in accordance with their contract of employment, although there is sometimes flexibility over how the hours are worked (see Flexible Working Procedure). Those having responsibility for scheduling programmes, teaching hours, examinations, and assessments will ensure that where possible reasonable adjustments are made to alleviate potential conflicts for staff between the proper conduct of their contractual duties and those pertaining to their religion and belief.

Some religious practices (mainly those pertaining to the Jewish and Sikh communities) are also protected under both race and ethnicity **and** religion and belief characteristics under the Equality Act. Human Resources should be able to assist in this area. All Human Resources staff are expected to have completed training on religious life and belief including elements pertaining to current legislation. This should be mandatory for HR staff by 2028. All University staff should make themselves aware of relevant provisions of the Equality Act for both faith and belief **and** race and ethnicity and how they interact under English Law.

Observance of religion and belief will be considered where appropriate in planning, infrastructure, and timetabling. Information on religious festivals and other practices is available from the Equality and Diversity website. This procedure will be published on the University Policies website and, for students, will be published on SurreyLearn.

4.2.5. Dietary Requirements

The University will assess the demand for food that meets dietary requirements arising from religion, belief, values, and practices (e.g., vegetarian, vegan, kosher, and halal) in consultation with the relevant groups and the Religious Life and Belief team.

It will make efforts where possible to provide such food in university catering outlets according to the demand for it. The University will aim to ensure that students, staff and visitors can find a suitable midday meal on campus during the working week when the University is open.

4.2.6. The University Chaplaincy (Religious Life and Belief Centre/ RLBC)

Recognising the dignity of every human being, Chaplaincy staff offer confidential, non-judgmental pastoral care and support to all staff, students, and visitors irrespective of religion or belief. Chaplains are representative practitioners who, true to their own faith or belief, engage openly and honestly with those of all faiths and none. Our faith and belief communities include the following (not mutually exclusive): Buddhist, Christian (Anglican, Pentecostal, Greek Orthodox, Methodist,

Friends International and Roman Catholic), Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, Humanist and Sikh. The inclusion of other communities is at the sole recommendation of the Principal Chaplains in consultation with a relevant member of either the CSO Board or Executive Board. The RLBC aims to have both male and female Chaplains, Associate Chaplains or Trainee Chaplains with each of the eight communities.

The RLBC is part of the University of Surrey and receives support from sending institutions (e.g. Church of England, Surrey Muslim Association, Humanists UK, Guildford Jewish Community, Diocese of Brighton and Arundel, Wey Valley Methodist Circuit, Winners' Place Church, Camberley Sikh Gurdwara, Bahai Community of Guildford etc). These bodies give generously to the University and are a formal part of the governance structure of the RLBC.

4.2.7. Religion and Belief Societies

Those societies working within the procedure and guidelines of the University and affiliated to the Students' Union or to the University of Surrey are free to invite guest speakers from their relevant communities outside the University within the framework set out in the Freedom of Speech Policy and the Prevent Policy. Those societies outside of the Students' Union can invite guest speakers through the Chaplaincy or a main Chaplain.

4.2.8. Prayer Facilities

Prayer facilities are provided on both Stag Hill and Manor Park campuses.

4.2.9. Harassment

The University has an anti-harassment and bullying procedure that encompasses tackling harassment, intimidation, discrimination, and bullying. This includes antisemitism (as defined by IHRA and adopted by the University), Islamophobia, and other forms of hatred and discrimination of any of the characteristics covered by the Equality Act 2010.

5. Governance Requirements

5.1. Implementation: Communication Plan

Information about the Procedure will be posted on SurreyNet and included in Leader's Alerts to ensure widespread awareness. The Procedure will be highlighted during new staff inductions and referenced in the Staff Handbook.

5.2. Implementation: Training Plan

Training sessions will be provided for all staff on cultural competency and awareness of religious diversity, including specific modules on combating antisemitism and Islamophobia.

Specialized training will be provided for staff involved in student support services to handle faith-related queries and accommodation requests effectively.

5.3. Review

The Procedure will be reviewed every three years to ensure it remains current and effective, with adjustments made as necessary based on feedback and legislative changes.

5.4. Legislative Context and Higher Education Sector Guidance or Requirements

- Compliance with the Equality Act 2010 and guidance from the Office for Students (OfS).
- [Equality Act 2010](#)

- [Public Sector Equality Duty](#)
- [Religion and Belief in higher education: the experiences of staff and students](#)
- Internal guidance and support [Faith Communities](#)
- Incorporation of best practices from sector-specific guidelines provided by organisations such as Universities UK (UUK) and the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA).
- Advance HE Guidance: [Religion and Belief in higher education: the experiences of staff and students](#)
- University Sites: [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: Religious Life and Belief Equality; Religious Life and Belief Centre Info, Guidance and Policies](#)
- [Protection from Harassment Act 1997](#)
- [OFS Conditions of Registration, including E6.](#)
- [Higher Education \(Freedom of Speech\) Act 2023](#)

5.5. Sustainability

- Consideration of environmental impacts, including the use of sustainable materials for religious observance items.
- Promotion of energy-efficient practices in prayer spaces and other facilities used for faith-related activities.
- Specialized accommodation requests effectively.

6. Stakeholder Engagement and Equality Impact Assessment

The procedure has been through widespread consultation with 30 stakeholders and their associates across the university. This has included EDI, all relevant CSO Departments including Student Experience and Centre for Wellbeing, Heads of Sustainability, Academic Policy, People Services, Student Success, Policy and Governance, Governance and Risk, Campus Safety, Estates, Health and Safety, OSCAR, all relevant Chaplains from 8 faiths and beliefs, Head of all staff identity networks on campus, Director of HR, Student Union Sabbaticals and relevant student faith communities.

6.1. An Equality Impact Assessment was completed in June 2025 and is held by the Authorised Co-ordinator.

6.2. Stakeholder Consultation was completed, as follows:

Stakeholder	Nature of Engagement	Request EB Approval (Y/N)	Date	Name of Contact
Governance		N	24/03/2025	Kelley Padley, Governance Officer
H&S	Review of Version 1.0	N	27/02/2025	Matt Purcell, Director of Health and Safety
Sustainability				
HR (Our Colleagues, enabling Policy	Review of Version 1.0	N	11/03/25	Katy Huetson (Associate Director,

Statement)				People Services), delegated authority from COO under Our Colleagues
Academic Freedom/Freedom of Speech	Review of Version 1.0	N	13 June 2025	Abigail Bradbeer
Our Students (associated Policy Statement)				Laura Smythson, Acting Director of Student Life, delegated authority from CSO under Our Students