

University of London

Religious Observance policy for employees

1. Introduction

University of London recognises the important part that faith and religious observance play in the lives of many of our staff. The right to religious observance is enshrined in law and has the support of the University.

2. Staff profile information

University staff are asked to specify religion or belief in their staff profile information [on MyView]. This information is requested to allow the University to ensure it is not inadvertently disadvantaging members of any recognised faith. The collected data helps the University to assess the impact of its practices at an institutional level.

A 'prefer not to say' option is provided for those staff who do not wish to answer this question.

3. Dress code

The central University of London does not have a dress code for staff beyond an expectation to dress appropriately for the nature of the individual's work. However, health and safety requirements may mean that for certain activities specific items such as protective clothing need to be worn. If such clothing produces a conflict with an individual's religious beliefs, the issue will be considered sympathetically by the line manager with the assistance of the University Health and Safety advisor with the aim of finding an appropriate solution.

4. Absence due to religious holidays

All staff, regardless of religious belief or non-belief, are required to work in accordance with their contract of employment. However, there will be reasonable flexibility over how the hours are worked. Line managers should take into account the needs of those whose religion requires them to pray at certain times of the day. For example, some staff may request an extra hour at midday on Friday, or not to work beyond sunset on Friday or not work on Saturday, or on Sunday. This should be accommodated if practicable.

In common with other UK HEIs, the University closes for the Christian religious festivals of Christmas and Easter. The University understands, however, that staff may also wish to be absent from work in order to attend other faith events and supports requests to take annual leave during religious festivals. In order to help manage the operational requirements of the University, employees are advised to submit an annual leave request as soon as they know the date of the religious event.

The University will treat all applications for leave for religious purposes with respect, as with requests for other purposes.

5. Discrimination, harassment and victimisation

All employees have the right to be treated with dignity and respect in the workplace and not to be discriminated against or harassed because of: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation.

No staff member should face discrimination, harassment or victimisation because they adhere to a particular religion or belief. Equally, employees should not manifest their religion or belief in a way that breaches our Diversity and Inclusion Strategy or other workplace policies. Staff must not discriminate against or harass colleagues or students on the basis of their faith or other protected characteristic (e.g. sex, sexual orientation).

Any member of University staff can raise an issue informally in accordance with the Dignity at Work Policy, or formally with reference to the established Grievance or Disciplinary Procedures.

6. Fasting

Some faiths require adherents to abstain from food and drink for certain periods during the hours of day-light. During these periods, employees should be sensitive to the impact on their colleagues and should consider whether it is appropriate to arrange working lunches or other events involving food and drink.

7. The Chaplaincy

The Chaplaincy seeks to serve the students and staff of the University and to support them in the practice of their faith. The Chaplaincy offers confidential individual pastoral care and encourages good relations between people of different faiths. The Chaplains will also help reflection on issues of significance relating to study, work and research.

Chaplaincy is available to those with religious or philosophical world views.

Chaplains are available in the constituent colleges of the University and they can be contacted directly.

Students and staff in the Central University can find details for the Muslim and Jewish Chaplains, as well as the lead chaplains for the Christian denominations at [Chaplaincy](#).

For other inquiries, advice about places of worship, and links to other faith support networks please contact chaplaincy@london.ac.uk.

8. Quiet room and prayer facilities

There is a quiet room – not to be used for meetings or private study - on the 2nd floor of Senate House, Room 264A which is located on Staircase 4. The room can also be reached via Staircase 1 and is sign-posted, however if you have limited mobility and/or limited motor/manual dexterity Staircase 4 is a better option due to the proximity of the lift.

Alternatively, staff are entitled to use the men's and women's prayer rooms in the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), Thornhaugh Street, WC1H 0XG (cut through from the Russell Square car park). Please ensure you have your staff ID card with you.

There is also a Prayer Room within an open accessible area located in the Student's Union of the Institute of Education, Bedford Way on level 2. It is available for use by all staff and students who may like to use the room for their own private prayer. The room must not be used for meetings or private study.

This room is open from 08:00 to 22:30 Monday to Thursday and 08:00 to 20:30 on Friday.

9. Diversity & Inclusion

This policy/statement is in accordance with the provisions of The Equality Act (2010) and the University's Diversity and Inclusion Strategy (2016-2020).

An Equality Impact Assessment was completed on 29/06/2016 to ensure that any inadvertent barriers were identified and addressed.

Policy Owner: Deputy Director of HR Services (Corporate Services)

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