



Graduate School of the Environment Religious Observance Policy

1. Introduction and Scope

- 1.1. LJMU is a secular organisation but we recognise that for many students, their religious faith or belief makes an immensely important contribution to their spiritual health, mental wellbeing, sense of belonging, self-confidence, and their ability to flourish during their time at CAT. Furthermore, CAT recognises that religious identity is a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010.
- 1.2. CAT takes a Zero Tolerance approach to discrimination of any kind, including religious discrimination.
- 1.3. The Policy contributes to creating an inclusive culture which cherishes diversity and in which the practice of religious faith is not only tolerated but celebrated. CAT strives to be a compassionate university marked by an empathetic approach to the religious and belief needs and commitments of all its students.
- 1.4. CAT wishes be able to respond positively to students' religious observance obligations. Planning the schedule of examinations and assessments will seek to be sensitive to the most significant festivals of the major faiths represented in the student community.
- 1.5. **Key to enabling a positive response is for students to give as much notice as possible about when their course requirements will conflict with their pattern of obligatory religious observance.**
- 1.6. The Policy sets out clearly the expectations that students and the CAT may have of one another and provides guidance as to how reasonable adjustments can be considered.
- 1.7. The Policy applies to obligatory religious observance over a restricted period of no more than 3 days. It does not apply to religious observance over an extended period e.g. Ramadan, nor does it apply to pilgrimages.
- 1.8. The Graduate School's chaplain is Dr Emily Westwell

2. General Principles

- 2.1. CAT is an inclusive institution and recognises the important role that religious faith and belief plays in the lives and wellbeing of many of its students.
- 2.2. Wherever possible, CAT will make reasonable adjustments to support students to fulfil their religious obligations.

- 2.3. Where possible a dedicated space for individual prayer, reflection, and contemplation will be provided.
- 2.4. CAT operates a vegetarian café but if you have additional specific food requirements, discuss these with the catering team at CAT. Contact Student Support at the time of either booking accommodation or making a module booking.
- 2.5. As a diverse community, CAT recognises that it may not always be possible to support the religious obligations of each individual student.
- 2.6. The Policy notes the reasonable adjustments that the Graduate School may make to support the observance of religious and belief commitments among students studying at CAT. However, students should, wherever possible, fulfil their obligations in relation to their religious observance either before or after lectures/classes.
- 2.7. The focus of the current policy is restricted to timetabling, teaching, and assessments. It is recognised that the influence of religious faith or belief on student learning and experience is much broader.
- 2.8. It is the student's responsibility to confirm they can meet the requirements of their course alongside practicing their religious faith.

3. Procedure

3.1. Timetabling

- 3.1.1. The Chaplain will produce and publish a list of religious festivals that is separate to the academic calendar but will support it.
- 3.1.2. The Academic Calendar is typically confirmed 3 years in advance. The timetable for the forthcoming year is published in early January and is made available to applicants and students .
- 3.1.3. The Graduate School follows a block teaching approach, where teaching is typically delivered via an intensive one week onsite or distance learning activity followed by a period of time for support by distance learning, and completion of assessments.
 - Masters modules follow a standard practice of an 8 week module, with assessment being due at the end of the 8 week period.
 - The standard teaching day is from 09:00 to 17:00, Monday to Friday. Teaching may be scheduled outside these hours and/or at weekends to increase accessibility for those who work, and/or support travelling to CAT .
 - Additional activities such as plenary lectures by guest speakers or displaying films to support a module is normally scheduled in an evening until 21:00.

- 3.1.4. Students have a responsibility to check their module timetable as soon as it becomes available and to note whether assessment or teaching is likely to conflict with their religious observance.
- 3.1.5. If any potential conflicts are identified, students should discuss them with their module leader as soon as possible.
- 3.1.6. Advice can be sought from Student Support or a Programme Leader

3.2. Teaching:

- 3.2.1. It is the student's responsibility to look at the timetable in advance and to alert the relevant Module Leader as soon as possible to any potential conflict between their religious observance and their attendance at taught sessions. However, as CAT provides its teaching in a flexible format suited to distance learning and at a pace dictated by the student, this should not normally be a problem.
- 3.2.2. As a minimum courtesy, a student who wishes leave part of a teaching session for religious reasons should request this at the beginning of the session (and preferably in advance). The student should take care when leaving to cause as little disruption as possible to fellow students and should return to class after the period of religious observance.
 - 3.2.2.1. If possible, time for religious observance may be accommodated within a more general break for all students. CAT will attempt to avoid setting in-class assessments or presentations on Friday afternoons, mindful of the religious observance needs of some students.
- 3.2.3. Some contexts e.g. field trips or practical activities may make it difficult or impossible for students to leave for any reason.
- 3.2.4. It is important to note that a lecturer cannot simply excuse a student from attending taught sessions and that the learning outcomes from the module must still be fulfilled. Students must still complete all summative and formative assessments associated with a module.
- 3.2.5. Lecturers will always respond sympathetically to requests for reasonable adjustments for religious observance when agreed in good time.
- 3.2.6. It is the student's responsibility to address how they are to make up any teaching time that they have missed. This will include using the resources on MS Teams, such as listening to recordings of lectures, use of handouts, resources, structured/annotated reading etc.

3.3. Work based study

3.3.1. Students may have a work-based project or placement as part of their course of study. This may be in a business or industry, such as an architectural practice, or land-based organisation. The Programme's Placement Officer or appropriate member of the Course Team may then alert a placement to the student's religious needs.

3.3.2. Some workplaces have well-developed policies and facilities to facilitate religious observance. In these circumstances follow the policy and practices of the placement organisation.

3.3.3. Other contexts may have less well-developed policies, or indeed no policy, as regards religious observance. In such contexts, the policy and expectations which govern staff working at the institution will also apply to students whilst engaged with the organisation.

3.4. The pattern of work at some placements (e.g. an architectural practice) may well be different from studying at CAT and have different demands. It is not reasonable to expect that work environments will always be able to make the same adjustments as the University. The work-based practice may also need to fulfil the requirements of an Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies professional accrediting body (e.g. Architects Registration Board).

4. Amendments and review of policy and process

4.1. CAT reserves the right to amend and review the Religious Observance Policy in the light of operating experience and/or prevailing circumstances.

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