



Religious Observance Policy

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1. Introduction and Scope of Policy

The purpose of this Policy is to provide university staff and students with information in relation to students who find it difficult or challenging to fulfil their educational requirements or take part in our social provision due to their faith.

Glasgow Caledonian University is enhanced by embracing a diverse population of students of different faiths and of no faith. It acknowledges the wish and right of students to observe their own religion. It aims to facilitate this, while remaining true to its secular origins. The university is also committed to making effective use of its resources in its commitment to the delivery of high-quality research, learning and teaching as befits the university of international standing that welcomes students from diverse cultures and nationalities.

Glasgow Caledonian University makes every effort to ensure, through the prospectus and admissions procedure, that applicants and students are aware of its policies and their obligations.

This statement is part of the university's commitment to ensure that;

- Students are treated equitably, regardless of their religion or belief
- It is able to cater for a diverse population of students
- Students are aware of and able to comply with their duties as learners

2. Equality and Diversity Statement

The University's Equality Outcomes Framework and [Dignity at Work and Study Policy](#) commitment reflect the following:

No discrimination on the grounds of political opinion, age, colour, disability, ethnic or national origin, gender, marital status, race, religion, sexual orientation shall be exercised by the University in the admission of students, or the appointment or promotion of staff or the awarding of any Degree, Diploma or Certificate or generally, in the execution of any of its objectives as laid out in the Equality Outcomes Framework and the University's commitment to Dignity at Work and Study.

3. Accommodating the Religious Calendars

In common with other UK institutions, the University calendar is structured around the Christian calendar with breaks over Christmas and Easter. Religious calendars are taken into consideration when timetables are agreed; however, it is not always possible to accommodate all religious events.

4. Exams and Religious Observance

Students should inform the University as soon as possible if there are examination dates which could affect their ability to observe an event or festival or other important calendar date associated with their religion, culture or belief. For formal examinations student should contact Registry: exams@gcu.ac.uk and for class tests and examinations they should contact their Programme Leader. While the University will try to assist, rearranging examination dates, particularly for the formal examination diets, is not usually possible due to the tight constraints surrounding examination scheduling. The dates of formal examination diets are published a year in advance, and the detailed timetable is published in the middle of the trimester in which the examination diet falls. Students are advised to check dates as soon as they are published, and also to check class examination dates which are published in module handbooks.

5. Coursework and Religious Observance

Schools and Departments must ensure that they publicise coursework deadlines etc. well in advance. If the deadline falls on an important religious day, the student should have been prepared to submit it in advance. Students should therefore ensure that they plan their work in advance so deadlines can be met. The University's policy covers only aspects of religious observance that occur at times known in advance. Other aspects that are unforeseeable or unpreventable (such as the death of a close relative when specified forms of mourning are required) should be handled under the arrangements for considering whether a student is fit to sit an assessment. Further information on the University's Fit to Sit process can be found on the [Fit to Sit](#) webpage.

6. Attendance at Teaching and Learning Activities

If religious observance affects a student's attendance at normal teaching and learning activities in ways that will cause problems, they should discuss the issue with their School by

contacting their Programme Leader. The School will offer sympathetic consideration to the student's problems and will try to make reasonable adjustments. However, adjustments can only be made provided they maintain the standard of the student's degree (e.g. they will not simply be excused from parts of the programme affected by their religious observance or from satisfying overall attendance requirements). Students should also understand that adjustments may not always be possible (e.g. a programme that runs at weekends specifically for part-time students who work on weekdays cannot be changed to accommodate the needs of students committed to religious observance at weekends or the needs of students who work at weekends).

7. Physically Accommodating Prayer and Contemplation

The campus in Glasgow accommodates its various faith communities in the Faith and Belief Centre, William Harley Building. The purpose of the Faith and Belief Centre is to support the spiritual wellbeing of students, staff and University users. The Faith and Belief Centre is a shared use facility, intended for the use of students and staff. The rooms may be booked for an activity which respects and is compatible with the space's primary purpose. For more information on the centre, chaplaincy team, and external places of worship, please see the [GCU Faith web page](#).

Students in the London Campus are advised to speak to the Student Office staff should they require space for prayer or quiet contemplation. External places of worship near the campus can be found [here](#)

8. Placement Arrangements

Students on placement should follow the rules, regulations and dress codes of their employer and placement provider. For example, students placed within the NHS should be treated in the same way as an NHS employee and should liaise with their placement provider regarding any religious observances and dress codes.

9. Religious Dress

The wearing of religious and cultural dress, including clerical collars, headscarves, turbans and kipa (skull cap) is welcomed. The exception to this is where the health, safety and welfare of the person is compromised by the wearing of such dress, or whether this is likely

to increase the risk to other persons, or where effective communication is prevented. The University will consider requests to accommodate religious dress carefully and sympathetically, and be reasonable and flexible where possible. However, there is no automatic right for requests to be granted.

Students wearing face-coverings (e.g. niqab or burqa) may be required to remove these for the purposes of identification prior to the start of an examination. The University will ensure that such requests are made sensitively and that provision is made for the face-covering to be removed in private, in the presence of a female member of staff only.

10. GCU Chaplains

The University has a number of chaplains who cover a variety of different religions and beliefs. They are here to support spiritual wellbeing and provide pastoral guidance. You can find our chaplains' contact details here: [GCU Chaplaincy](#).

11. Complaints

Where a student is dissatisfied with the arrangements offered in line with their religious observance, they can access information regarding the [Complaints Handling Procedure](#).

GCU EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT FORM

1. DESCRIBE
1.1. Name of policy/strategy/decision
Religious Observance Policy
1.2. Owner
Student Wellbeing
1.3. Date
02/12/16
1.4. Aims of policy/strategy/decision
The purpose of this policy is to outline GCU's commitment to equality and diversity and to outline the responsibility of students and staff in regards to religious observance. GCU will treat everyone equally, regardless of religion or belief.
1.5. Who does the policy/strategy/decision affect?
Students, staff, applicants, visitors
1.6. Could there be any potential implications for equality, or people with protected characteristics?

This policy aims to support the principles of equality and diversity to ensure that students are not discriminated against. This policy applies to all students, regardless of their personal characteristics or circumstances.

2. ASSESS

What are the implications, positive or negative (and evidence for this) of the policy/strategy/decision in relation to GCU's duty to have due regard to the need to:

2.1. Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation?

There is likely to be a positive impact on this duty as it will allow for each religion to be treated equally, and in turn, each student.

2.2. Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it?

There is likely to be a positive impact on this duty as the policy is designed to ensure that each student, regardless of their religion, can access support and understand university protocol in regards to religious observance.

2.3. Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not share it?

There is likely to be a positive impact on this duty as the policy has been written to include all students and will lead to staff engaging more with the topic in order to aid tackling prejudice.

3. ACTION

3.1. If a negative impact has been identified, how will this be addressed?

Until the Policy and guidance are implemented, it is not possible to gauge any negative impact. However, the implementation process will be monitored and data will be gathered in relation to the relevant protected characteristics that may be affected; any negative impact will inform the future review process of the Policy and guidance. Overall, there is no direct negative impact on the protected characteristics, as this applies to all students and the principles of the policy are to support all students. Although the policy itself is free from discrimination overall, ultimately it is the application and implementation of the policy that provides the scope for discrimination e.g. prejudices or attitudes of staff supporting their students. Therefore, there is potentially a development need for those involved in implementing the policy, and appropriate information will be provided to staff.

3.2. If changes have been made to the policy/strategy/decision as a result of this assessment, outline the changes

N/A

4. MONITOR AND REVIEW

4.1. How will the implementation of the policy/strategy/decision and its impact on equality be monitored and reviewed?

The policy will be reviewed annually alongside all wellbeing policies.

5. PUBLISH

Please email this completed form, along with the policy/strategy and any other relevant information¹ to equality@gcu.ac.uk for publishing on the Equality and Diversity website and annual reporting in line with Equality Act 2010 requirements.

6. SIGN OFF		
6.1. EIA Owner	Signature	Date
6.2. Equality and Diversity Advisor	Signature	Date
	Adrian Lui	02/12/2016

¹ Information or evidence may be removed if it is commercially sensitive or personal information