

## **F. STATEMENT ON RELIGION & BELIEF**

### **1. Current Legal Position**

People are protected against discrimination on grounds of religion or belief under the Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003. The Regulations cover both employment and study at the College.

It is not necessary for the religion or belief to be a well-known major world religion. The Regulations outlaw discrimination on grounds of “any religion, religious belief or similar philosophical belief” that is held by the complainant. Political beliefs are excluded, although the dividing line may be blurred in some cases. The scope of the Regulations in relation to those who do not hold any religious beliefs is also unclear. The [Explanatory Notes to the Regulations](#) suggest that factors to be considered in terms of deciding whether there is a religion or belief may include whether there is collective worship, a clear belief system or a profound belief affecting way of life or view of the world.

Direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, harassment and victimisation are all covered.

People are protected from discrimination on the grounds of their perceived religion or belief as well as their actual religion or belief: if a person is discriminated against because he is believed to be Muslim, but is in fact Christian, he is still protected under the law.

It is possible to justify indirect discrimination on grounds of religion or belief where it is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

**Positive action** – The College may take positive action in respect of access to facilities and training for specific groups who are under-represented. It would be reasonable to take action to increase applications for posts or study from a particular group of people, or provide work experience, outreach days or training programmes only for those people. These actions increase the numbers of eligible people by developing relevant skills and increasing applications from under-represented groups. The selection for admission to study and appointment to posts must however be made only on the basis of merit.

**Genuine Occupational Requirements** – an employer may also justify discrimination because a post has a genuine requirement for a worker of a given faith to carry out the duties of the post. This can be shown in two types of situation.

- where having a particular religion or belief is a genuine and determinative occupational requirement which it is proportionate to apply. For instance it is reasonable to require an applicant for a post as College Chaplain to follow the Christian faith.
- where the employer has an ethos or belief and being of a particular religion or belief is a genuine and proportionate requirement. For instance it might be reasonable to require someone working closely with students in a theology

college to have sympathy with the Christian faith, but it would not be reasonable to require staff in the kitchens to do so.

**Vocational training** - Higher Education Institutions may require a prospective student to profess a particular faith as a condition of access to a course of study, but they can only do so where the course of study is a vocational course, and the profession of that faith will be a necessary condition of later employment in the job for which the student is training.

## 2. College Response

The College's policies and practices which are relevant are as follows:

	<b>Staff</b>	<b>Students</b>
<b>Recruitment and selection</b>	Standard policies re-staff recruitment &c	Standard policies re-student admissions
<b>Training and development</b>  <b>or</b>  <b>Teaching, learning and research</b>		Arrangements for timing and location of exams, tutorials, etc
<b>Conditions of service</b>  <b>or</b>  <b>Student Support</b>	Arrangements for religious observance  Dietary arrangements  Discipline and grievance procedures  Harassment	See list of places of worship, etc, below  Dietary arrangements  Discipline and grievance procedures  Harassment  Pastoral support for students
<b>Monitoring</b>	Staff starter forms, as amended	No monitoring at present
<b>Publishing</b>	No publication at present	No publication at present

## 3. Support and Advice

The College is able to provide some mechanisms for support and advice. Other vehicles are available via the central University. The College is not liable for the accuracy or appropriateness of advice given by a University body, but believes that the resources provided by the University may be useful to College members.

The Bursar is able to provide initial guidance and advice. He/she takes advice from an external human resources consultant where appropriate.

Student representatives are able to provide guidance and advice. The JCR and MCR Presidents and Welfare Officers should be consulted in the first instance.

For staff the UNISON representative is able to provide advice.

The University's [Diversity & Equal Opportunities Unit](#) is able to offer guidance and advice to departments on University policies.

Investigations into claims of harassment are carried out as per the College's Policy on Harassment

The University offers [training](#) in best practice for those involved in the admissions process, recruitment and selection, management and teaching.

Advice on childcare is available from the University's [Childcare Officer](#) or on the [Childcare website](#) where full details of University nursery and childminding provision, advice on staff and student funding, and application forms are available.

#### **4. Services & Information**

##### **Students and Staff**

Students and members of staff at Oxford will find that there is a wide variety of places of worship in and around the City centre. Most [Colleges](#) have chapels in which [Anglican](#) services are held regularly. In addition, you will find places of worship for: [Buddhists](#), [Ecumenical](#), [Jews](#), [Hindus](#), [Methodists](#), [Muslims](#), [Quakers](#), [Roman Catholics](#) and [Sikhs](#).

The above links are not an exhaustive list of places of worship in Oxford but are the most centrally located. [Student societies](#) also maintain close links with relevant places of worship and are excellent sources of information.

##### **Links to Legislation and external bodies**

- [Employment Equality \(Religion or belief\) Regulations 2003](#)
- Advice on faith issued by the [Equality Challenge Unit \(ECU\)](#)
- Advice on faith issued by the [Advisory Conciliation and Arbitration Service \(ACAS\)](#)
- Guidance on many world faiths, and recent news and debate on a range of issues is available from the [BBC Religion and Ethics website](#).
- Download a calendar of religious festivals [here](#).