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DRAFT Religion and Belief Policy Statement and Information for Staff and Students

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1. Policy Statements

- 1.1 This policy aims to ensure that all staff, students and visitors, irrespective of their personal religious or belief system (or none) are treated with dignity, respect and fairness. The policy is based on the principle that people have the right to practise their own religious or belief system but not to engage in actions that serve to challenge or infringe the freedom and rights of others.
- 1.2 The policy also aims to ensure that all staff, students and students have equality of opportunity at the university irrespective of their religion or belief (or none).
- 1.3 The right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion and philosophical belief is absolute, but the right to manifest beliefs is qualified by the need to protect the rights and freedom of others. The university will uphold the rights to both freedom of speech and academic freedom within the law.
- 1.4 De Montfort University values and celebrates the diversity of its staff, students, (visitors, contractors) and local communities. The university's stated mission is:

'We are a university of quality and distinctiveness, distinguished by our life-changing research, dynamic international partnerships, vibrant links with business and our commitment to excellence in learning, teaching and the student experience. We celebrate the rich cultural diversity of our staff, students and all our partnerships'.

Through this policy the university will take steps to ensure that it develops and promotes a positive culture of understanding and acceptance of the different manifestations of religion, faith and belief, and none within society.

- 1.5 De Montfort University is a secular institution, and therefore does not take or promote a particular religious stance or approach. It must, however, comply with the requirements of the Equality legislation, including that which relates to religion or belief.

2. Policy Context

- 2.1 The Equality Act 2010 makes it unlawful to discriminate against individuals because of their religion, religious belief or similar philosophical belief.
- 2.2 The university wants to ensure that all of its staff, students and visitors:
- are protected from discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act.
 - are offered equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

- experience good relations between people who share relevant protected characteristics and those who do not share them.

2.3 This policy forms part of the university's Equality and Diversity Strategy; reflects the university's Mission and Vision Statements and complements DMU's Equality policies, Staff and Student Policies and Statements.

3. Definition of Religion or Belief

3.1 The Equality Act defines the protected characteristic of religion or belief as pertaining to any religion or lack of religion and any philosophical belief or lack of belief.

3.2 The legislation seeks to protect individuals and groups who have a religion or belief or none from unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation - more details can be found on www.dlz.dmu.ac.uk, (staff and students only).

3.3 This policy must not be interpreted by any group or individual as sanctioning a right to engage in activities or acts that have a negative impact on the rights of others.

3.4 Religious or philosophical belief cannot be used to justify discriminatory behaviour against other individuals or groups of staff or students, for example:

- Refusal to provide services to individuals or groups of people with protected characteristics.
- Making denigrating or discriminatory comments about individuals or groups of people.
- Showing reluctance or refusing to meet with or work with staff, students, contractors or visitors to the university because they have a protected characteristic such as sex, sexual orientation, or different religion, belief or none.

3.5 Instances of this nature may result in disciplinary action under the respective disciplinary codes for students or for staff.

4. Data Collection and Monitoring

4.1 In order for the university to better understand the profile of its staff and students, it will collect data on declared religious beliefs. This will be a voluntary activity and there will be an option to 'prefer not to say'.

4.2 The university started collecting this data on both new and existing staff in 2011. It is proposed that data collection will be extended to students by September 2012.

4.3 The data will be used for statistical and planning purposes only.

- 4.4 Faculties and Departments are expected to keep a record of issues which arise relating to this policy. The university Equality & Diversity Committee will request reports on the effectiveness of this policy and consider whether further monitoring on the grounds of religion or belief is required.

5. Recruitment and Selection of our Staff, Students and Contractors

- 5.1 The selection of staff and students must be based on merit, ability and potential. (Further information on the recruitment of staff at DMU can be found in the Recruitment and Selection Policy.)
- 5.2 The selection of businesses and individuals to contract with the university must follow proper university procurement procedures.
- 5.3 The fact or assumption that a person holds, or does not hold a particular religion or belief, or is associated with a another person or group who hold or do not hold a religion or belief must not impact positively or negatively on the decision to select an individual as a student, employee or contractor to the university. (The exceptions to this would be for cases of documented 'Genuine Occupational Requirement', or when positive action has been agreed at a strategic level).

6. Dress Code

- 6.1 De Montfort University imposes no specific dress code on its employees or students (except where a job or placement requires a uniform or protective clothing to be worn). The wearing of items arising from cultural/religious norms (including, for example, sari, turbans, hats, skullcaps, hijab, kippah, mangal sutra and clerical collars) whilst on campus is seen as part of this welcome diversity.
- 6.2 The only limitations to the above are that:
- Security or examination 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 by staff of the same sex as the individual concerned.
 - Health and safety requirements may mean that for certain tasks specific items of clothing such as overalls, protective clothing, uniforms, and so on need to be worn. In such circumstances these may be adapted wherever possible to enable the person to wear their religious dress so long as they do not endanger their own health and safety or that of others.
 - Students on placement in NHS Trusts. The University expects students to follow the agreed guidelines on uniforms set by the NHS which seek to take account of requirements to dress modestly on the one hand while safeguarding health and

safety, patient safety, public interaction and identity authentication on the other. In such instances or in similar ones – e.g. when staff or students are located for work or study in laboratory spaces or workshops – these particular guidelines or dress codes (and those imposed by external placement agencies) will apply and must be complied with.

- Where a uniform is required to undertake specific tasks, women should be provided with the option of wearing trousers. Similarly, if a uniform does not preclude wearing headwear, then the wearing of turbans or headscarves should not be prohibited unless there is an overriding health and safety need.

7. The University Chaplains

- 7.1 Staff offer confidential, non judgmental pastoral care and support to all staff and students irrespective of belief. The university has a Muslim prayer room and Muslim Chaplaincy, and a Christian Chaplaincy team lead by a co-ordinating Anglican Chaplain, with Roman Catholic, Methodist and Pentecostal Chaplains.
- 7.2 Times of prayers, services and other events can be found on the web pages or by contacting the relevant chaplain.
- 7.3 Chaplains offer confidential, one-to-one discussion at mutually agreed times and regular prayers and services.

8. Religious Societies

- 8.1 Those Societies working within the policy and guidelines of the university and affiliated to the Students' Union (DSU) are free to invite guest speakers from religious communities outside the university within the framework set out in the university's Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech. (<http://www.dmu.ac.uk/aboutdmu/policy/index.jsp>).
- 8.2 Student initiatives with regard to faith and spirituality, other than by invitation through Student Union Societies, are the responsibility of the Chaplaincy team and Prayer Room Committee.
- 8.3 The university reserves the right to cancel any event that is considered to breach its Equality Policies, Freedom of Speech or Security Policies.

9. Staff Religious observance leave (as detailed in the Special Leave Policy 2011)

- 9.1 De Montfort University is supportive of employees who wish to take time off work for the purpose of religious observance. Full details can be found in the Special Leave Policy 2011.

10. Curriculum, Teaching & Learning

10.1 Through the active processes of equality checklists and equality impact assessment at validation, revalidation and periodic review, the university expects staff responsible for all aspects of the curriculum to identify and manage any adverse or positive impacts that the curriculum and its content and/or manner of delivery or assessment, may have on individuals or groups with protected characteristics.

10.2 Staff, students and visitors should be made aware of the right to freedom of speech as enshrined in the university's policy that:

'Expression of opinions which are annoying, offensive, in bad taste, or ill-mannered is not *per se* unlawful unless they amount to incitement to violence or incitement to racial or religious hatred or they would otherwise constitute unlawful discrimination (or harassment)' (*Freedom of Speech within De Montfort University - Code of Practice (2009)*).

10.3 Staff and students should expect to be treated with dignity and respect regardless of their religion or belief or lack of religious or philosophical belief.

11. Timetabling

11.1 Religious holy days are based on different calendars, including the lunar calendar, which is determined by phases of the moon. They can fall within a range of days, the exact date not being determined until very close to the time. Where these dates fall within term times, there may be a conflict between observing the holy day and meeting academic requirements.

11.2 DMU will seek to anticipate the different holy days when devising their timetabling, in order to avoid conflict. The university has a link to the BBC multi-faith calendar on the Equality website (<http://www.dmu.ac.uk/about-dmu/professional-services/equality-and-diversity/information,-events-and-calendars.aspx>).

11.3 Students are encouraged to discuss timetable conflicts with the Head of their Programme of Studies, and to seek guidance from the University Chaplains.

12. Examinations and Assessments

12.1 Staff responsible for setting coursework deadlines, tests and examinations should consider the main religious festivals and provide appropriate coursework deadlines and examinations. Students should take note of coursework deadlines for all their assessments and if there is a coincidence with a major religious festival should plan on handing in their assignment prior to the deadline date. The university will not accept religious observance as a valid extenuating circumstance. Students are encouraged to discuss examination and assessment conflicts with the Head of their Programme of Studies, and to seek guidance from the University Chaplains.

12.2 'Wherever possible the university will avoid scheduling, and will request, that faculties do

not propose exams, on key faith-related celebratory days.

- 12.3 Students must apply in advance for any variation in examination or assessment arrangements. The application procedure is set out in http://www.dmu.ac.uk/study-information/student_services/das/support_dmu/exam_arrangements.jsp

13. Dietary Requirements

- 13.1 De Montfort University undertakes to assess the demand for food that meets religious requirements in consultation with the relevant religious groups. Collecting data on the stated religion and belief of staff and students is one step towards this assessment. See 4 above.
- 13.2 Faculties, Directorates and Departments holding meetings or events where refreshments are offered should take into account meeting the religious or belief dietary requirements of those invited to attend. This includes provision of non-alcoholic drinks, vegetarian, vegan, halal or kosher food where notified. Contamination of foods to be avoided at all times.

14. Offensive Actions or Behaviour

- 14.1 Any behaviour or action taken in breach of this policy will be treated seriously by the university and may result in disciplinary action.
- 14.2 Behaviour that is considered to be motivated by religion or belief intolerance or hate including bullying, harassment, illegal discrimination or other criminal behaviour will be treated seriously and will be notified to the Police if judged appropriate by the Security Team.
- 14.3 Any attempt to coerce, or threaten, others to comply with a particular religious or belief system, for example, through unauthorised distribution of propaganda or through threats or offensive remarks, may result in disciplinary action.
- 14.4 De Montfort University does not tolerate offensive literature or graffiti on its premises and those found to be responsible are liable to disciplinary action.

15. Implementation and Responsibilities

All Students and Staff are responsible for:

- Familiarising themselves with this policy.
- Respecting staff and students who choose to use this policy, and supporting their use of it.
- Informing appropriate staff of their particular requirements.
- Making up any time lost as a result of cultural/religious observance, as required.

Reporting complaints and incidents through the complaints and security incidents procedures <http://www.dmu.ac.uk/aboutdmu/policy/rights-and-responsibilities/rights/complaints.jsp>

All managers are responsible for:

- Familiarising themselves with this policy statement.
- Following it in matters such as requests for leave/changes to work patterns.
- Ensuring staff, visitors and contractors are aware of this policy.
- Informing the Head of Equality and Diversity equality@dmu.ac.uk of any activity or action in relation to this policy statement.

The Directorates of People & Organisational Development and Student and Academic Registry is responsible for:

- Keeping this policy statement current and appropriate.
- Ensuring the appropriate use of this policy for staff.
- Amending this policy as necessary in line with good practice and legislation.
- Communicating this policy widely with all staff and visitors/contracts.

Deans of Faculty are responsible for:

- Familiarising themselves with this policy.
- Respecting students who choose to use this policy, and support their use of it in line with the policy requirements.
- Ensuring the appropriate use of this policy for students.
- Communicating this policy widely to all visitors, contractors, students and staff.

Furthermore:

- 15.1 Any member of staff who feels their Line Manager is not treating them fairly in accordance with this policy should first try to resolve the matter by discussion. Advice may be sought from the relevant HR partner. If that fails the Grievance Procedure may be used. The Grievance Procedure can be accessed on the DMU staff intranet site at: <https://sites.google.com/a/myapps.dmu.ac.uk/hr-intranet/home/human-resources/policiesprocedures/cabinet-pp/GrievanceProcedure.pdf?attredirects=0>
- 15.2 If staff believe that they, or another member of staff, student or visitor is being discriminated against or subject to harassment or victimisation they should where-ever possible ask the perpetrator(s) to desist. If the behaviour continues, the matter should be reported to their Line Manager who, acting on behalf of De Montfort University, will investigate the matter.
- 15.3 Students who perceive they are being discriminated against on the grounds of religion or belief either by other students or staff or visitors to the university should raise the complaint within the context of the University Complaints Procedure.

- 15.4 All staff are recommended to participate in equality and diversity training to assist them in understanding different faiths and religions, particularly to assist them in discharging their pastoral role to support students. All Heads of Department will be responsible for ensuring that this is provided. The Head of Equality and Diversity and the Training and Development Adviser are available to provide guidance on the delivery of appropriate awareness raising training programmes.

16. Review of Policy

- 16.1 Data on the religious and other beliefs diversity of DMU staff and students will be collected, monitored and reported annually. Complaints, disciplinary and security incidents involving staff, students, visitors and contractors will be monitored.

17. Further Information

- 17.1 Key religious dates together with descriptions of the principal religions are available on the equality website:

<http://www.dmu.ac.uk/about-dmu/professional-services/equality-and-diversity/information,-events-and-calendars.aspx>

- 17.2 Faith Guides on good practice in universities in support the principal religions are available from the HE Academy, York:

<http://www.heacademy.ac.uk>

- 17.3 Relevant guidance and reports on religion and belief in HE can be obtained from the Equality Challenge Unit.

<http://www.ecu.ac.uk/>

- 17.4 Advice about the interpretation of this policy and guidance may be obtained from the Head of Equality & Diversity. Religious information may be obtained from the University Chaplains.

18. Associated University Policies and Statements

Student Rights and Responsibilities

Freedom of Speech Policy

Special Leave Policy

The Student Charter

<http://www.ecu.ac.uk/>