



QAHE Limited Religious Observance Policy for Students

Prepared by: Head of Safeguarding and Student Wellbeing

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1. Introduction

This policy reflects QA Higher Education's commitment to inclusivity, equality, and respect for the religious, spiritual, and cultural practices of its diverse student body. It ensures that students may observe sincerely held religious practices without academic disadvantage, while also emphasizing their responsibility to communicate and advocate for their needs.

2. Policy Ownership Statement

This Religious Observance Policy is owned and maintained by the Safeguarding, Student Life and Wellbeing team. The Safeguarding, Student Life and Wellbeing team is responsible for ensuring the policy remains current, relevant, and aligned with applicable laws and institutional values.

The policy will be reviewed on a biennial basis or as required in response to changes in legislation, university operations, or student needs. Feedback and suggestions regarding this policy may be directed to the Safeguarding, Student Life and Wellbeing team.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all undergraduate, graduate, and post graduate students enrolled at QA Higher Education, across all courses and academic programmes.

4. Definitions

The following terms are used within this policy and should be understood as defined below:

- **Religious Observance:** Acts of worship, celebration, fasting, prayer, ritual, or abstention that are part of the practice of a particular religion, faith, or spiritual belief. This includes both daily practices and specific religious holidays.
- **Reasonable Accommodation: Adjustments** or modifications made to academic expectations or procedures that enable students to participate in their education while observing sincerely held religious practices, without compromising essential academic standards or program requirements.
- **Sincerely Held Belief:** A belief or practice that is genuinely adhered to by the student, regardless of whether it is officially mandated by an organised religion or broadly practiced by others who share the same faith tradition.
- **Academic Integrity:** The commitment to fairness, honesty, and responsibility in academic settings. Accommodations should not compromise learning outcomes, assessment validity, or the standards of the course or program.



- **Neutral Space:** A shared environment, such as a prayer or reflection room, intended for use by individuals of all faiths or none, and designed to be inclusive, respectful, and free from symbols, decorations, or materials that promote any particular belief system.
- **Discrimination:** Unfavourable or unfair treatment based on a person's religion or belief (or lack thereof), including being denied accommodations or being subjected to bias, harassment, or exclusion due to their religious practices.

5. Policy Statement

QA Higher Education recognises that students may observe a wide range of religious traditions and practices. Students are encouraged to advocate for their needs by communicating clearly and in a timely manner with QA Higher Education regarding religious observances. QA Higher Education will provide reasonable academic accommodations that do not compromise essential course requirements.

6. Responsibilities

To ensure the effective implementation of this policy and to support an inclusive academic environment, responsibilities are shared across students, faculty, and QA Higher Education support teams as outlined below:

6.1. Student Responsibilities

Students play a key role in communicating their religious needs and ensuring they meet academic expectations. Students are expected to:

- Notify faculty and relevant teams (e.g. Attendance or Welfare) in advance of any expected absences or accommodation needs due to religious observance.
- Work proactively and respectfully with faculty to discuss potential academic adjustments, where applicable.
- Remain responsible for all academic requirements, assessments, and participation expectations, regardless of accommodation.
- Use the prayer and reflection facilities appropriately and in accordance with the guidelines outlined in this policy.
- Report any concerns about discrimination or denial of reasonable accommodation to the Welfare or Quality Team.

6.2. Faculty Responsibilities

Faculty are responsible for supporting a respectful and inclusive learning environment. Faculty are expected to:

- Respond to students' religious observance requests promptly and respectfully, even if accommodations cannot be granted.
- Ensure students are not penalised for making requests or for expressing religious needs in accordance with this policy.
- Maintain academic integrity and standards while considering flexibility where appropriate.



- Avoid requiring students to disclose unnecessary personal details about their faith.
- Seek advice from the Student Relations Team or Welfare Team when uncertain about how to handle a request.

6.3. QA Higher Education Responsibilities

QA Higher Education is committed to supporting religious inclusivity and must:

- Provide accessible, neutral spaces for prayer, reflection, and quiet contemplation across key campuses.
- Ensure all staff involved in student support are aware of this policy and trained to respond to related requests appropriately.
- Monitor the implementation and effectiveness of this policy through regular review and student feedback.
- Investigate and address any complaints of discrimination or failure to provide reasonable accommodation in a timely and impartial manner.
- Promote awareness of this policy among students during induction and throughout their academic journey.

7. Related Policies and Procedures

This Religious Observance Policy should be read in conjunction with the following QA Higher Education policies and procedures, which collectively support the institution's commitment to equality, inclusivity, and academic integrity:

Equality, and Diversity Policy

Outlines QA Higher Education's commitment to fostering a diverse and inclusive environment, free from discrimination on the basis of religion or belief.

Attendance and Engagement Policy

Details expectations around student attendance and participation, including procedures for reporting absences and the potential impact of unauthorised absences on academic standing.

Academic Regulations

Provides the overarching framework for academic delivery and assessment, including procedures for extensions, deferrals, and asse circumstances.

Mitigating Circumstances Procedure

Describes the process by which students can request consideration for circumstances that impact their ability to meet academic requirements, including those related to religious observance.



Respect for All Policy

Sets out the expected standards of behaviour for all students, including the importance of mutual respect and consideration for others' beliefs and identities.

Safeguarding Policy

Supports the wellbeing and safety of students, including guidance on respectful engagement around faith and belief.

Complaints Policy and Procedure

Explains how students can raise concerns or complaints if they feel their rights under this policy have been breached or if they experience discrimination or unfair treatment.

8. Implementation Procedures

QA Higher Education is committed to the fair and consistent application of this policy. The following procedures outline how the Religious Observance Policy will be implemented across the institution:

8.1. Communication and Awareness

- The Religious Observance Policy will be made available to all students and staff via the QA Higher Education website, student portal, and staff intranet.
- Faculty and professional services staff will receive periodic briefings to ensure consistent understanding and application of the policy.

8.2. Requesting Religious Observance Consideration

- Students should notify their lecturers, course leaders, or the Attendance Team of any intended absences or needs related to religious observance at the earliest opportunity, ideally at the start of the academic term or as soon as the need is known.
- Requests should be submitted in writing (email is acceptable), outlining the nature and dates of the observance and any potential impact on academic activities.
- Students may also contact the Welfare Team for advice or assistance in making a request.

8.3. Reviewing Requests

- Faculty should review requests in a timely and respectful manner, balancing the student's needs with course requirements.
- Where the requested accommodation is not feasible due to essential academic requirements or visa regulations, faculty or the Compliance Team must clearly communicate the reasons to the student and, where appropriate, explore alternative forms of support.
- In cases of uncertainty, faculty are encouraged to consult with the Student Relations Team or Welfare Team for guidance.



8.4. Use of Prayer and Reflection Facilities

- Information on the location and appropriate use of prayer and reflection spaces will be shared with students during induction and made available online.
- The Facilities Team will oversee the maintenance and monitoring of these facilities to ensure they remain inclusive and accessible to all users.
- Any misuse of these spaces should be reported to the Facilities Team or Welfare Team.

8.5. Monitoring and Evaluation

- The policy will be reviewed every three years, or earlier if required, by the Safeguarding, Student Life and Wellbeing Team, in consultation with relevant student and staff stakeholders.

8.6. Addressing Concerns

- Students who feel that their religious needs have not been appropriately considered or who experience discrimination may raise their concerns through the QA Higher Education Complaints Procedure.
- Serious concerns or instances of misconduct should be reported to the Welfare Team, Quality Team, or where appropriate, the Safeguarding Team.

9. Monitoring and Compliance

QA Higher Education is committed to ensuring that this policy is implemented consistently and fairly across all campuses and academic programmes. Ongoing monitoring and compliance mechanisms will help maintain the integrity and effectiveness of the Religious Observance Policy.

9.1. Monitoring

- The Safeguarding, Student Life and Wellbeing Team will oversee the monitoring of this policy as part of QA Higher Education's broader commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion.
- Data on requests for religious observance accommodations, including the type and frequency of requests, outcomes, and any associated challenges, will be collected and reviewed on an anonymised basis.
- Feedback from students and staff will be sought periodically to evaluate awareness, understanding, and effectiveness of the policy in practice.

9.2. Compliance

- All staff are expected to act in accordance with this policy and uphold QA Higher Education's commitment to inclusivity and non-discrimination.
- Non-compliance with the policy, including failure to respond appropriately to religious observance requests or discriminatory treatment of students, may be addressed



through QA Higher Education's internal performance management or disciplinary procedures.

- Students are also expected to follow the procedures outlined in this policy. Misuse of accommodation requests or inappropriate use of prayer and reflection spaces may be addressed under the Respect for All Policy.
- The Quality Team will monitor formal complaints relating to religious observance to ensure concerns are addressed in line with institutional policies and regulatory requirements.

9.3. Reporting

- Staff and students who observe or experience non-compliance with this policy are encouraged to report their concerns to the Welfare Team, Student Relations Team, or via the formal Complaints Procedure.
- Serious breaches involving discrimination or harassment will be escalated to the appropriate senior staff or safeguarding leads in accordance with QA Higher Education's established processes.

10. Equality Impact Statement

QA Higher Education is committed to advancing equality, diversity, and inclusion for all students. This policy has been reviewed and developed in line with the Equality Act 2010 to ensure it promotes equal opportunity and eliminates discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief.

The Religious Observance Policy aims to create a respectful and inclusive academic environment where students of all faiths, spiritual practices, or none are supported to observe their beliefs without academic disadvantage. Reasonable accommodations are designed to balance students' rights with the need to maintain academic standards and integrity.

No negative impacts on any protected characteristics have been identified during the development of this policy. QA Higher Education will continue to monitor its implementation to ensure fair treatment for all students and to address any unforeseen barriers or inequalities that may arise.

11. Data Protection

QA Higher Education is committed to protecting the privacy and personal data of all students in accordance with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018.



Any personal information shared by students in relation to religious observance, including details of faith, belief, or requests for accommodation, will be handled sensitively and used solely for the purpose of assessing and implementing reasonable support measures. Information will only be shared with relevant staff on a need-to-know basis and will not be disclosed to third parties without the student's explicit consent, unless required by law.

Students have the right to access, correct, or request the deletion of their personal data at any time, in line with QA Higher Education's Data Protection and Privacy Policies.

12. Further Information

For further guidance on this policy or to discuss religious observance-related needs, students are encouraged to contact the following QA Higher Education support teams:

- **Welfare Team** – for support with accommodation requests and wellbeing concerns
- **Student Relations Team** – for general enquiries and use of prayer and reflection spaces
- **Attendance Team** – to report absences due to religious observance
- **Quality Team** – for concerns relating to policy compliance or discrimination

You can also access related policies, forms, and contact details via the QA Higher Education Student Portal or by emailing qahe.welfare@qa.com.

13. Review

This policy will be reviewed every three years by the Safeguarding, Student Life and Wellbeing Team, or earlier if required due to changes in legislation, institutional practices, or student needs.

The review process will include consultation with relevant stakeholders, including students, faculty, and support staff, to ensure the policy remains effective, inclusive, and aligned with QA Higher Education's values and legal obligations.

Feedback on this policy can be submitted at any time to qa.welfare@qa.com and will be considered as part of the next scheduled review.

