

Consultation Process

Group	Date	Outcome
Chaplaincy and EDI team	August 2022	Move to next stage
Networks with EIA	August 2022	Feedback received and incorporated
EDI Operations Group	22 nd September 2022	Approved

University of Kent Religious Observance Guide

Introduction

The University of Kent is somewhere that cultural, religious and non-religious or similar philosophical beliefs are respected. The Equality Act 2010 includes religion or belief as a ‘protected characteristic’, and further defines this as any religion or philosophical belief, including no religion or philosophical belief.

Religions can include well-known and lesser-known religions, as well as denominations and traditions within religions. It is estimated that there are over 4,000 recognised religions in the world. Beliefs are more than just a viewpoint or an opinion. They can determine lifestyle choices and hold a certain level of seriousness and are not in conflict with the rights of others. Vegetarianism, ethical veganism, pacifism and humanism are examples of protected beliefs.

Contents of this Guide:

- University of Kent Cultural and Religious Diversity Guidelines
- University of Kent Statement on Anti-Semitism
- Religious Observance Request Guidance
- Ramadhan Guidance
- Report and Support and Support Available

University of Kent: Cultural and Religious Diversity Guidelines

PURPOSE

1.1 These guidelines give practical advice and consideration to issues which may affect staff and students in relation to their individual and communal religious and cultural needs. They seek to present a coherent approach rather than definitive statements which cover every possible situation.

1.2 The [Respect at Kent](#) Statement is clear that 'The University of Kent aims to provide an environment, both physical and digital, which respects and values the positive contribution of all its students, enabling them to achieve their full potential and to gain benefit and enjoyment from their involvement in the life of the University'

1.3 The University is committed to protect the Freedom of Speech of all members of our community in an academic context, and we respect the right of individuals to hold differing beliefs and views. What we do not allow though is for those differences to be manifested in a way that is hostile or degrading to others. The University is clear that there is a difference between academic debate and speech and personal, individual attacks on identity. Our priority is ensuring that our students (and staff members and visitors) feel that the University is a safe environment for them to be their authentic selves in (physically, emotionally, culturally, spiritually or psychologically). Individuals should remain sensitive to, and mindful of, communications relating to an endeavour or event that may be contentious, or where that has been or is religious conflict.

1.4 The University is clear that it does not tolerate discrimination, harassment, victimisation or bullying on any grounds, including that of religion or belief. The Respect at Kent statement defines discrimination (both direct and indirect), harassment (both direct and third party), bullying and victimisation. No religious group is allowed to discriminate in terms of its membership under any grounds.

1.5 If you, or someone who know, has been subjected to discrimination, bullying, harassment or victimisation, you are encouraged to report it via the [Report and Support](#) reporting tool. Reports can be made on the behalf of another person, and can be named or anonymous. Reports can only be accessed by trained support staff in Student Support and Wellbeing who will triage the report appropriately.

2.0 Support Services

The University of Kent has a number of support services for staff and students who wish to observe religious practices. These include:

- The [Chaplaincy](#) (Canterbury and Medway): provides spiritual support and facilities for students and staff of all faith and none. At Canterbury the team is multi-faith, serving various Christian traditions as well as the Muslim, Jewish and Buddhist communities.
- Eliot College Chapel: there is a Chapel located on the lower ground floor of Eliot College and is used by many groups for worship and meetings during the week and at weekends.
- Canterbury Multi-Faith Prayer Room: there is a multi-faith prayer room located in Rutherford College, Seminar Room 18. Please ask to sign out the key at Rutherford Reception.
- Medway Chaplaincy: the Medway Chaplain is located in Pilkington 004.
- Medway Multi-Faith Prayer Room: the Medway Faith Space is located on the ground floor of the Pilkington Building.
- Faith Network: Kent Union operates a student-run [Faith Network](#), open and free to students from all faith backgrounds.

- Societies: Kent Union supports a number of religious and faith-based societies. See the [Kent Union webpages](#) for more information.

3 DRESS CODE

3.1 The wearing of religious and cultural dress (for example clerical collars, hijab headscarves, kippah-skullcaps and turbans) is welcomed by the University and must not be discouraged or disparaged. There may be exceptions where the health, safety and welfare of the wearer are compromised for example by the wearing of such dress and/or where this is likely to put others at risk. In such situations, a risk assessment should be undertaken and the employee/student and line manager/tutor or other responsible member of staff should aim to reach a satisfactory compromise. If this is not possible, the Health and Safety Director should be asked to advise both parties.

3.2 All members of the University should avoid wearing t-shirts or other dress displaying material, in any language, which may be considered offensive and likely to breach national law, for example racist slogans. Breach of this will be considered a breach of the Respect at Kent statement. The University will take appropriate disciplinary action if this comes to light.

4. ACCOMMODATION AND CATERING

4.1 The University recognises the problems that may be experienced by a small minority of students with particular accommodation and catering needs relating to religious observance. The University is seeking to increase provision of on-campus self-catering facilities. New entrants to the University may be considered for on-campus accommodation, but the University does not have a policy which allocates accommodation to any student for religious reasons.

4.2. Students who have strict dietary needs related their religion can use the kitchen facilities available within colleges or other self-catering accommodation if they are in University accommodation. All students are asked to be tolerant of each other's needs when sharing kitchen facilities. Depending on the degree of observance, some students will not wish to cook at the same time as other people who do not share their dietary rules, and sensible timetabling of use should be agreed.

4.3. The University offers a range of menus designed to suit students with disparate dietary requirements Vegetarian options are available at all catering outlets and efforts may be made to ensure the provision of labelled Halal (Muslim) and Kosher (Jewish) products and options where there is demand.

4.4. The University provides a range of social and recreational areas open to all staff and students. Many students choose to spend time socialising in the bars run by either Kent Union or the University. The University, appreciating that the use of alcohol is prohibited in certain religions, is working to increase the number of social areas which are alcohol free. There are currently a number of alcohol-free spaces at Canterbury and Medway, including:

- Keynes Lounge (above Dolce Vita)
- Keynes Red Room (next to Kbar)
- Keynes Quiet Room (Keynes College, near the laundrette)
- Eliot Lounge (above the Dining Hall)
- Rutherford Lounge (above the Dining Hall)
- Community Lounge (Chipperfield Extension)
- Woolf Lounge
- Eliot's Corner (Eliot College, next to the main entrance)

- Colyer-Fergusson atrium
- Library study spaces

5. CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE

5.1 The requirement and need to pray in a particular form is a matter of personal choice related to the nature and depth of personal belief. Practising staff and students should discuss with their line manager or tutor if they have any special prayer requirements. Line managers and tutors are responsible for ensuring that if other staff or students are affected by an individual's prayer needs, a reasonable degree of respect and understanding exists among them. The University currently strives to offer flexible working patterns to all staff within operational need, and line managers and tutors should try to exercise flexibility in allowing staff or students to comply with their prayer needs including occasional attendance for specific obligations. The individuals should be aware that they will be required to make up any time lost. Shifts and rotas should be capable of flexibility to allow staff time for key worship dates.

5.2. HR and recruitment panels will aim to be flexible in the arrangement of selection interviews if candidates are not able to attend on pre-arranged dates due to religious observance. This includes flexibility for students attending interviews.

5.3. Prayer Space: The University has a number of prayer and multi-faith spaces available. See 2.0 Support Services for more information

54. 5.1, above, implies that individuals may not be required to work for specified periods of time such as midday on Friday, Saturday or Sundays where it conflicts with the demands of their religious beliefs and customs and those needing guidance on particular requests should consult the Student Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity (EDI) Officer at Student Services, HR or the Chaplaincy for advice.

5.5 Student groups' religious observance may also fall outside of weekday 9-5 office hours. Timetabling will do their utmost to find and book appropriate rooms for these groups that are away from residential bedrooms and study space, however it is requested that groups undertaking religious observance after 10pm have due regard for the needs of other students studying or sleeping in the vicinity. Campus Security will be informed and may come to check that the students are happy with their room arrangements and to ask what time the room will be vacated so that it can be locked. They may also request that noise levels be reduced if complaints have been made and these requests should be respected. In normal circumstances and subject to booking constraint, student groups should not be pressured to leave or cease their religious observance early.

6. APPROVED ABSENCE FOR CULTURAL/RELIGIOUS FESTIVALS

6.1 Staff

Sympathetic consideration will be expected from line managers to requests for leave from employees specifically wishing to participate in cultural/religious festivals, providing this need is brought to the attention of the line manager at the earliest possible moment, i.e. at the commencement of the leave year, or on joining the employment of the University. Line managers should use the current University annual leave system or their discretion for time off in lieu, and in exceptional circumstances, unpaid leave, to facilitate these requests. In cases of dispute, line managers and staff should refer to HR for advice.

6.2. Students

When devising assessment and examination timetables, arranging open days etc. staff may take into account the impact of significant cultural/religious events. Students wishing to participate in

cultural/religious festivals should give advance notice to the appropriate member of staff for permission to be absent. However, it remains the student's responsibility to make good any missed learning opportunities. Students should inform their tutor and the examination office as early as possible of any holy days which might cause conflict and will fall within the examination period, and take relevant University regulations into consideration. Students should refer to the Religious Observance Requests section of this Guide for more information.

7. RESPONSIBILITIES

7.1 All staff and students must treat others with respect, and are expected to refrain from any discriminatory or harassing behaviour which relates to current or historical conflict between people of different religious groups. Any attempt to coerce/enforce others to comply with a particular religious viewpoint, for example through hate publicity, offensive remarks and/or misuse of the University's services or facilities, or actions that may bring the University into disrepute, may result in disciplinary action. Any abuse of this policy may result in disciplinary action.

7.2 The University welcomes the availability of information about different religious traditions, and the groups representing them in University life.

7.3 Kent Union, through the many societies it supports, seeks to expand understanding between diverse religions and cultures.

7.4 Managers are responsible for consulting with HR to ensure the fair and consistent implementation of these Guidelines.

7.5 All staff and students are responsible for making alternative arrangements for work and study missed as a result of absences for cultural/religious observance. Staff are responsible for attending appropriate training and awareness sessions as provided by the University.

10. COMPLAINTS

10.1 If you, or someone who know, has been subjected to discrimination, bullying, harassment or victimisation, you are encouraged to report this via the [Report and Support](#) reporting tool. Reports can be made on the behalf of another person, and can be named or anonymous. Reports can only be accessed by trained support staff in Student Support and Wellbeing who will triage the report appropriately.

10.2 Students

The Student Conduct and Complaints Office (SCCO) is responsible for the investigation of all student complaints and non-academic student discipline issues. They are a friendly team who are there to help conduct investigations and offer advice and support to students.

For more information, including guidance on how to initiate a complaint please [visit their website](#)

10.3 Staff

Concerns at work can often be resolved quickly and informally through a conversation with the line manager. Where concerns cannot be dealt with informally, staff should follow the process under Ordinance 42 of [Our People Practices](#) (Grievance Resolution). This ordinance outlines the process to ensure that:

- Individual complaints are settle or redressed promptly and fairly
- That, where possible, grievances are resolved informally and as close to the source of the grievance as possible; and,

- That staff have access to a fair, sensitive, timely and consistent method of raising concerns, problems or grievances with their employer.

[See the weblink for more information.](#)

University of Kent Statement on Anti-Semitism

A loose and common understanding of anti-Semitism is hostility to, prejudice towards, or discrimination against Jews. A person who holds such positions is called an antisemite. Antisemitism is considered to be a form of racism and also religious discrimination.

Kent is committed to ensuring that we are a safe and welcoming campus for students from all faith backgrounds, and following an extensive consultation with staff, students, members of the Jewish community at Kent, Ethics committee and Council, the University has adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism. Follow [this link](#) to access the full definition: **Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities**

Signing up to a definition of antisemitism is an important statement of our solidarity with the Jewish community in recognition of the hurt many are feeling due to rising discrimination. The IHRA definition seeks to build an international consensus around a non-legally binding definition of what antisemitism means to help tackle the rise in anti-Jewish hate.

There was a strong feeling during consultation that Kent should have a commitment in this area. Alongside this, following some concerns throughout consultation over some aspects of the IHRA definition being open to misinterpretation, the Jerusalem Declaration of Antisemitism (follow [this link to the JDA](#)) has been also approved to help provide further clarity and understanding.

Religious Observance Requests

Students wishing to observe a religious commitment on a particular day during the published examination period should notify the Examinations Office as early as possible of any holy days which might cause conflict and will fall within the examination period by emailing exams@kent.ac.uk. This must take place **before** the specified date when exam scheduling work begins. This date is available on the [Student Administration webpages](#)

The following information must be included:

- Full name and student number
- Details of the religious observance
- The date on which it will be undertaken
- The University will make every effort to avoid timetabling examinations or assessments on religious days or festivals for those students whose commitment to the observance of their faith would otherwise cause them to miss the examination or assessment and who have informed the Examinations office by email prior to the deadline. However, we are able to consider the needs of students only if their requirement for particular religious observance is mandatory. It is not possible to take account of casual preferences or of social or domestic reasons.
- Please note the University is not able to consider observance requests for Ramadhan where the normal expectation is that daily activities (including examinations) continue as usual. However, if the effect of fasting significantly affects your health and/or you have a medical condition, which may impair your performance or prevent you from attending an examination, you may submit [an extenuating circumstances request](#) citing Ramadhan fasting as the reason.

If a student fails to contact the Examinations Office by the deadline, the University cannot accept responsibility if students are timetabled for an examination at a time when their religious requirements overlap with the date of an exam. It remains the student's responsibility to make good any missed learning opportunities.

Ramadhan Guidance Special advice from the Muslim Chaplain and the Imam at Canterbury Mosque relating specifically to observance of the month of Ramadhan:

“Any student who has examinations during the month of Ramadhan and expect that they will encounter particular personal difficulties as a result of fasting prior to an examination must make formal contact with the relevant University authorities. This must be done in good time.

A student who fails to alert the University authorities in advance of their examination, and in line with the guidance issues, cannot expect to be eligible for any form of concession unless it is determined that they are medically unfit to sit the examination.

Students should take it upon themselves to eat well during the time of closing the fast (suhoor / dawn hours) and to get plenty of sleep throughout the period of fasting. To ensure this routine is successful, students who know that they will be fasting should start preparing for their examinations earlier in the year so as to minimise the impact of their Ramadhan observance on their examination performance.

If students struggle to fast on the day of their examination, or believe fasting will affect their examination performance then they can consider not fasting that day and making up for the fast at a later date/ Students who become unwell during the examination should consider breaking their fast by taking a snack and continuing with their examination. If a student has any issues relating to fasting and examinations they should speak to the Imam and Muslim Chaplain, or contact the relevant University authorities who will try to assist them as best they can’.

- Raschid Sohawon
- Ihsan Khan

Ramadhan tips and advice, developed by the Canterbury Mosque and the Giles Lane Medical Centre

- The fast of Ramadhan is rigorous during the best of times. During long and hot summer days, it may be required to observe the fast for as many as sixteen or more hours at a time. To ensure adequate nutrition, hydration and continued good health, follow these tips:
- Prior to Ramadhan a Muslim should always consult with a doctor about the safety of fasting in individual health circumstances.
- Even if you are generally healthy, recognize that Ramadhan will take a toll. Plan your schedule and meals ahead of time in order to make sure you get the nutrients, hydration, and rest that you need.
- Eat suhoor just prior to dawn. Yes, it's hard to get up at that hour, which is why it has many benefits and rewards. It will help you to wake up for the Fajr prayer. The suhoor meal is Sunnah. And this morning meal is generally recognized as the single most important meal of the day. Do not overeat, though.

- Focus on taking in foods that are rich in complex carbohydrates and protein, fruits or vegetables, and plenty of water. For example: an egg on whole-grain toast, a few crackers with peanut butter, some orange slices, and two glasses of water. Cucumber and yoghurt have a high water content and help delay thirst.
- During the hottest part of the day, stay in cool areas (indoors or in shade) and limit your physical activity. Rest if possible.
- Avoid gorging yourself when breaking the fast at sunset. Follow the Sunnah: break your fast with dates and either milk, water, or fruit juice. After the maghrib prayer, continue with a light starter such as soup and crackers. After a long period of fasting, you need to bring your fluids and blood sugar level up without overdoing it.
- During the early evening (after maghrib), have a healthy and balanced dinner. Do not overeat, and be sure to drink a few more glasses of fluids.
- During the evening hours, resist the temptation to drink tea, coffee, and soda. When visiting friends or family, ask for glasses of water.
- Serve yourself, your family, and guests a "dessert" of fresh fruit and nuts. There are lovely choices available in this season, and they are much healthier than chocolates and sweets.
- Sip on water throughout the evening. Aim for 8 glasses by bedtime. To help you keep track, fill and refill a water bottle with a measured amount of water, and be sure to finish it.
- Light exercise, such as walking for 15-20 minutes, is best done in the evening hours.
- Avoid fried and spicy foods as they may cause heartburn or indigestion.
- Take an appropriate multi-vitamin.
- Continue to brush and floss your teeth several times a day.
- Wash your hands regularly, and avoid those who cough or sneeze. This is important to prevent the spread of viruses and bacteria which may cause illness.
- Quit smoking! Ramadhan is an excellent opportunity for those who have been thinking to stop smoking.
- Organize your schedule so that you get enough sleep.
- If you suffer from Diabetes or kidney disease or other chronic diseases consult with your doctor
- For starting/ending of Ramadhan, fasting times, any advice or help needed, visit a local mosque website: canterburymosque.co.uk