**University of South Wales**

**Prifysgol De Cymru**

**Religion and Belief Guidance for Staff on student learning and teaching issues**

The University wishes to give every student the best possible chance to achieve their academic potential, and therefore we will endeavour to be as flexible as is practically possible in accommodating students’ needs with regard to observance of religious beliefs. With this in mind, staff may wish to make students aware at induction sessions, that they should raise any specific concerns or requirements with regard to religion or belief as soon as possible.

1. **Academic Calendar**

The Academic Calendar, timetable and closure of the University is based on the system of public holidays in Wales and the sector. It is therefore necessary and practical to deliver our programmes and courses in as time efficient way as possible and therefore teaching and learning activities are usually spread throughout the working week (Monday to Friday). The University of South Wales will advise and guide staff involved in the academic calendar and timetable in order to support inclusiveness with regard to religion and belief.

1. **Learning and Teaching Activities**

Whilst we will endeavour to support students in their observance of the requirements of their religion or belief, students are expected, wherever possible, to pray before or after lectures.

Staff at the University of South Wales should provide guidance and support in confidence to students on issues of religion and belief. Where students are absent due to religious observance staff should ensure that any handouts normally distributed, are made available or posted on Blackboard. Students who have missed learning or teaching opportunities due to participation in prayer or religious observance should make every effort to make up for missed time by proactively ensuring that they are up to date with course materials and assignments. Staff and students concerned should discuss and agree appropriate measures with a view to maintaining academic performance while enabling the students to continue their religious observance.

Students should be informed that mitigating circumstances (Mits) on the grounds of religious observances as extenuating circumstances for handing in work late, missing exams or extending course deadlines will not normally be accepted.

If students request extended leave from study to fulfil religious observances, staff will need to clarify the academic implications of their possible absence in line with academic regulations. These state that the University may be required to notify agencies such as the Student Loan Company, Local Education Authority or UKVI if a student is absent for a period of time.

1. **Assessment**

The University of South Wales is aware that certain religious festivals may coincide with the Academic Timetable. However, given the diversity of religious observance, the University is unable to arrange its timetable or coursework deadlines around the religious observance of all faiths.

Students should be informed that they should adhere to coursework deadlines for all their coursework assessments. Should these coincide with a major religious festival, students should be advised to hand in the assignment before the submission date or contact their Advice Zone or Course Tutor to make alternative arrangements well in advance of the deadline.

1. **Examinations**

University of South Wales formal examinations will not normally be timetabled to clash with the system of public holidays in Wales and the sector. Where formal examinations have been timetabled on religious festivals, students will be advised that they would normally need to participate in their religious observance before or after their scheduled examination. Timetabling constraints make it very difficult to reschedule exams. If the student chooses to keep a religious observance rather than attend for an examination it is the responsibility of the student to notify their course leader and the Advice Zone well in advance. In these circumstances staff my consider offering alternative assessment or an exam in the re-sit period, but students need to made aware that these requests are very difficult to grant due to timetabling constraints, additional workload on staff and the impact on other students.

Students will not be allowed to leave the examination room during examinations to fulfil religious observance as this can disturb other students taking their exams.

Any request to remove religious dress that covers the face in order to verify identity at examination times should be dealt with in a sensitive manner, taking account of dignity, courtesy and respect. A member of staff of the same sex should ask the individual to reveal their features, in an area as private as is possible, to validate identity.

1. **Work Placements and Clinical Practice**

University students who are required to undertake work experience or clinical practice as part of their academic course should be encouraged to review relevant professional dress codes prior to their placement. Health and Safety considerations, provision of care and interaction with the public may place some constraints on the wearing of religious dress. However, students should consult their Course Director or Tutor prior to the placement or practice to discuss how flexible this can be or how dress can be modified in relation to the students’ religious observance.

Health and allied professions have a code of ethics which requires staff and students on placement to work with and care for diverse individuals, including, men, women, older people, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual people. Students should be informed that this ethical code must be complied with, which means that religious belief cannot be used as a reason to refuse to work with a specific patient or client group.

1. **Further information and advice**

For further information and advice please contact Vaughan Rees, Director of Chaplaincy Services, ext 54060