



# **Position Statement: Religion and Belief**

**Prepared by the Religion and Belief Task Group  
on behalf of the Equality and Diversity Committee**

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## 1. Overview

This document is a statement about equality and diversity in relation to religion and belief at Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU). It is an attempt to articulate the precepts and values that underlie the University's approach to religion and belief, to present an outline of current good practice in this area and to make suggestions for further development.

The position statement relates to both students and staff and forms part of the University's Equality and Diversity Strategy (available on the University website). It has been produced by a task group comprising representatives from a range of academic and support departments from across the University.

## 2. University Context

CCCU was founded by the Church of England in 1962 and it remains a Church of England Foundation. The key features of the University's governance arrangements underpinning its relationship with the Anglican Church are outlined in Appendix 1. As a university with a particular faith identity, it seeks to be one that understands, supports and appreciates the variety of dispositions of faith and belief expressed by its staff and students.

The Anglican tradition (together with other systems of faith) can be understood to affirm the unique worth and dignity of all human beings simply on the grounds of their humanity, independent of their religion and belief. This document sets out how the University intends to maintain and express the creative dialectic between its Anglican faith identity and its desire to attract and support staff and students from a diversity of faith and belief systems. In particular, this document will elucidate three key aims:

*(i) The promotion of good relationships between those of different systems of belief:*

The University seeks to actively promote understanding of, and respect for, different faith traditions and systems of belief in accordance with its nature as an academic community.

*(ii) The prevention of discrimination on the grounds of religion and belief:*

The University seeks to ensure that every member, and potential member, of its community can participate equally whether as a student or as a member of staff. Where the constitution requires particular positions to be held by active members of the Church of England (see Appendix 1), this will be made explicit in any employment processes. For all other positions, the University undertakes to demonstrate that personal beliefs have no bearing on appointment and/or progression.

*(iii) The provision of resources for those of varying religion and belief:*

The University seeks to support its members who hold recognised dispositions of faith and belief. It will do so by providing people (the Chaplaincy Team and a

network of Faith Advisers), and, where feasible, by providing space (for example the Chapel; Quiet Rooms; Muslim Prayer Room; and Buddhist Meditation Room).

### **3. Legislative Background**

In accordance with our Equal Opportunities Policy the staff and students of the University are committed to respecting and valuing others regardless of their religion or absence of religious beliefs. In December 2003 the Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003 came into force making it unlawful to discriminate against individuals on grounds of their religion, religious belief or similar philosophical belief. In 2006 this law was extended in the Equality Act to cover the provision of goods, facilities and services, the management of premises, education and the exercise of public functions.

This document responds to this legislation, by demonstrating how the University attempts to avoid discrimination and to actively include people of all faiths and none and to promote positive relations throughout the institution.

### **4. The Notion of 'Institutional Ethos'**

Within this document it is important to articulate the nature of the University's relationship with the Church of England, particularly in terms of the stipulations in the University's governing documents (see Appendix 1). These documents refer to an 'institutional ethos' ensuing from the University's Anglican Foundation.

The University recognises that in reality the ethos of an institution is determined by the systems of beliefs and values which actually prompt actions on the part of its members. It is important therefore that all connected with the University understand that whilst the ethos that is referred to in the governing documents is derived from Anglican belief, there is no intention that sympathy with the ensuing values should necessarily entail or demand such belief.

The University's motto, 'The truth shall make you free' is a case in point. Whilst it is found in the Bible, it stands on its own terms. It can be seen to support all enquiry conducted with intellectual honesty and rigour. It does not prescribe where such enquiry must lead, but, quite the reverse, speaks of the liberation from constraint that the pursuit of truth confers.

The foundation of the University by the Church of England was motivated, at least in part, by the belief that education is a good in itself: a view demonstrated by the Church's long history of engagement in education (since the 7<sup>th</sup> century in Canterbury). This is a conviction which those engaged in education can subscribe regardless of their own personal beliefs and values.

The University's Mission Statement and Strategic Plan 2006-10 should also be read in an inclusive way. They articulate a set of values which are about placing persons above structures, subscribing to the transformative power of education, realising one's potential for the common good, and welcoming and valuing

educational, social, cultural and religious diversity. Such diversity is a rich resource for learning about ourselves and the world.

## 5. The University's Commitment to Staff and Students

The University is committed to creating a positive environment in which members of any religion, followers of any faith or belief and those without religious belief will be treated with equal dignity, respect and fairness. Furthermore the University seeks to encourage the full participation of all its members in its activities and to prevent discrimination, victimisation and harassment in all its functions.

## 6. The Promotion of Good Inter-Faith Relations

The University is not only a discrete community but also part of society. As such we should model within the University the kinds of relationships that we desire to see in society as a whole. As members of an Institution with a specific faith foundation, we have a particular duty to promote respect and mutual understanding between those who hold differing views in matters of religion and belief. Consequently, the University will seek: to provide opportunities for its members to be introduced to the basic tenets of world religions and systems of belief (including Humanism and Atheism); to encourage responsible debate; and to prevent aggressive proselytisation.

These aims will be achieved by means of a threefold strategy:

- 1) By providing a series of events which will include the following:
  - i. The **Associateship Programme**, directed by the Dean of Chapel, includes, as one of its four terms, an exploration of the rationale and diversity of different systems of faith and belief. It is open to all staff and students of the University and is conducted in a neutral, academic, fashion.
  - ii. **Lectures** relating to religion and belief are sponsored both by the University as a whole (eg the Public Lecture Series) and by its academic Departments (eg the Religious Studies and Theology).
  - iii. **Opportunities for inter-faith dialogue and encounter** both sponsored by the Faith and Belief Council (see section 8) and the Students' Union.
- 2) By encouraging, where applicable, the engagement of the academic curricula of the University with issues of faith and belief (which already takes place across a number of Programmes, undergraduate and postgraduate).
- 3) By ensuring that faith societies within the University operate within clear guidelines, the Equal Opportunities Policy and national equalities legislation (see 8 below).

## **7. Staff and Student Responsibilities: Training and Awareness-raising**

Deans of faculty, heads of department and managers are responsible for ensuring that all staff are aware of their legal responsibilities to prevent discrimination on grounds of religion, religious belief or similar philosophical belief. Individual members of staff and students are responsible for practising tolerance and if necessary, for making the University aware of their own religious requirements.

### **Recommendations:**

- i. All staff should be supported by managers to attend Equality and Diversity training or to complete the University's e-learning module, "Diversity at Work".
- ii. Information sheets about religious diversity and local places of worship should be made available to staff and students.
- iii. All staff should be aware of significant religious dates by referring to the multi-faith calendar of religious and cultural festivals (links from Student Support Services and Equality and Diversity web pages).
- iv. All staff and students should be encouraged articulate their needs and desires with regard to religion and faith.
- v. Impact assessment of the University's policies and practices should ensure that staff and students are not disadvantaged on the grounds of religion and belief.

## **8. The Provision of Resources for the Practice of Faith**

The University seeks to support staff and students of recognised faiths through the provision of space and resources, the provision of staff and the training of staff and students.

### **People**

The University provides a Chaplaincy Team co-ordinated by the Dean of Chapel. The chaplains are all recognised ministers of the Church of England and their services are available to all members of the University, students and staff, irrespective of faith and belief. Thus, while the Chaplaincy Team exists to provide opportunities for the discovery, exploration and practice of the Christian Faith, much of its work is taken up in personal support of individuals simply as members of the University.

### **Recommendation:**

The University should create a network of volunteer Faith and Belief Advisors. Where possible these will be drawn from the University community, and act as co-ordinators of sources of support and information for staff and students from particular traditions of faith and belief. They will work in conjunction with the

Chaplaincy Team under the oversight of the Dean of Chapel who would hold a budget dedicated for their use. Appropriate staff development training will be offered.

Together with the chaplains they will form a 'Faith and Belief Council' that meets termly to consider the best way to meet the religious needs of the University Community. The recommendations of this council will be communicated to the Equality and Diversity Committee.

### **Space**

The University Chapel on the North Holmes Road campus is a place of Christian worship which is open to all members of the University as a place of quiet and sanctuary. There are Quiet Rooms available at each of the University campuses which seek to provide a neutral, safe place for contemplation. The Chaplaincy Centre at the Canterbury campus also contains such a room.

The University is currently committed to providing a dedicated Muslim Prayer Room and a dedicated space for Buddhist meditation. It will keep under review the need for additional dedicated spaces in the light of its monitoring data (section 9). Students and staff of particular faith and belief are at liberty to book rooms (at no charge) to enable the expression and practice of their convictions.

Certain faith societies have it as an explicit and legitimate aim of their society to engage in mission. While the public spaces of the University may be used to publicise missionary events, and to invite people to participate in such events, the events themselves must be conducted in a space booked specifically for the purpose. Invitations to missionary events must also make explicit the nature of the event.

## **9. Communication with the Wider Community**

As a Church of England Foundation, the University should communicate clearly to the wider community (particularly those who may be considering working or studying here) what this means in practice. Every effort should be made to communicate as broadly as possible that the University fully embraces those of all faiths and none.

### **Recommendations:**

- i. The University should review how its status as a Church of England Foundation and its Christian ethos is communicated to the wider community, via its website, prospectus and other publications.
- ii. The University should consult with the wider community to investigate how it is perceived.
- iii. Depending on the outcomes of I and II above, the University should make appropriate amendments to its communications.

## **10. Staff: Recruitment, Selection and Promotion**

The University is committed to recruitment and progression based on professional merit. The University recognises that its pursuit of excellence can only be accomplished by ensuring that it is known as an equal opportunities employer which actively seeks to attract and recruit people from a diversity of backgrounds and experience. To this end all recruitment, selection and promotion procedures will be monitored to ensure they do not cause disadvantage to any particular group or individual.

The information sent to people applying to work at the University currently includes the following sentences: "Canterbury Christ Church University was founded by the Church of England and retains its special relationship with the Church. Our stated aim is to be open and inclusive and we therefore naturally welcome applications from people of all faiths and of none. The University naturally hopes that all those who join the institution can respect its position and uphold the values associated with its mission."

### **Recommendations:**

- i. All policies and practices relating to recruitment and progression should be regularly impact assessed for potential detrimental impact on specific faith groups and those of no faith.
- ii. Given the University's status as a Church of England Foundation it should continue to make every effort to communicate clearly to all staff and students that matters of personal faith are not relevant to their progression within the institution.

## **11. Monitoring**

### **Policy and Implementation Monitoring**

The Equality and Diversity Committee is responsible for monitoring the progress of the University's Equality and Diversity Strategy. Faculties and departments are expected to keep a record of issues which arise relating to this policy and to share these with the Equality and Diversity Manager.

### **Monitoring of Staff:**

The University does not currently collect data on the religion and/or belief of members of staff and is therefore unable to monitor either recruitment or progression on this basis. It is likely that public bodies will be encouraged to conduct such monitoring in the future. As with good practice in all monitoring, should the University decide to ask staff about their religion/belief, it will need to explain why the information is needed and that staff will experience no disadvantage as a result of either disclosing or not disclosing the information.

### **Recommendation:**

The University should consult with staff and with experts in the field as to

whether it should monitor the religion and belief of staff, and if so, how it should go about this.

### **Monitoring of Students:**

The University started collecting data on the religion and belief of students in 2006. In that year all students who attended registration were asked about their religion and belief. The number who replied represented just under half (6,787) of the total student body (approximately 15,000). Although this sample was representative of the campus-based student body, it excluded distance learners and students based at partner institutions.

Well over half of the sample (3998) declared themselves to be Christian and just over 35% (2383) said they had no faith or belief. Other faiths were represented as follows: Muslim – 118; Hindu – 60; Buddhist – 55; Sikh – 29; Jewish – 11; Other (not specified) – 133.

### **Recommendations:**

- i. The University should monitor student data on religion and belief on an annual basis to identify emerging trends and develop strategies in response.
- ii. The University, with the assistance of the Student Union, should consult with students of minority faiths to determine ways in which provision for them can be improved.
- iii. Student recruitment materials should be impact assessed to ensure they are encouraging students from all backgrounds to apply.

## **12. Religious Observance**

All staff, regardless of religious belief or non-belief, are required to work in accordance with their contractual terms and conditions. Heads of Department, while retaining the right to ensure service cover, should make every attempt to ensure that those whose religion requires them to pray at certain times during the day are enabled to do so through agreed flexible working arrangements.

In addition, similar effort should be made to accommodate requests from those who require variations in their hours of work (for example, an extra hour at midday on Friday, or not to work beyond sunset on Friday or at the weekends in ways that conflict with their religious belief) as long as this is not at variance with the requirements in their contract. Similar requests from students should also be considered sympathetically.

### **Leave for Religious Festivals and Extended Leave**

Requests for annual leave at times of religious significance (which may vary from year to year e.g. dictated by the lunar calendar) will be treated sympathetically. The number of annual leave days overall will remain as in the contract of employment, for all staff irrespective of their religious belief. The

University will not grant additional paid leave for religious purposes. If a member of staff requests extended leave at a particular time for the purpose of, for example, going on a pilgrimage, the Head of Department, while retaining the right to ensure service cover, should attempt to accommodate the request. If the extended leave exceeds the annual holiday entitlement, then excess days must be taken as unpaid leave.

### **Dietary Requirements**

In future, where possible, the University will attempt to monitor whether the food it serves meets with the religious dietary requirements of staff and students. Whilst consultation with relevant religious groups will be attempted, it is recognised that it may be difficult to meet all the identified needs, due to the limited number or low profile of some religious communities currently within the University. Where demand for particular food is established, the University will attempt to provide such food in its dining facilities.

### **Examinations and Assessments**

When planning courses, and in particular deadlines and examinations, staff must consider the main religious festivals and, where possible, avoid these dates for 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 does not accept religious observance as a valid extenuating circumstance.

### **Dress Code**

The University does not have a dress code and welcomes the variety of appearance brought by individual styles and choices. The following exceptions apply:

Security and examination requirements may mean that on occasion the temporary removal of such items is necessary to authenticate the identity of the individual staff member or student.

Health and safety and/or professional requirements may mean that for certain tasks, specific items of clothing such as overalls, protective clothing, uniforms, etc. 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.

When staff or students are on work placements the relevant organisational codes will apply and must be complied with.

## **13. Freedom of Expression**

Manifestation of freedom of thought, conscience and religion is not absolute and intervention may be justified where this is considered necessary to protect the rights of others as set out in equalities legislation. The University recognises

that it has a positive obligation to promote respect and tolerance and therefore no group or person has the right to engage in any activity or to perform any act that infringes the lawful rights of others.

## **Appendix 1**

### **The University's Relationship with the Church of England: Governance**

#### **Background**

When Canterbury Christ Church was established as a teacher training college by the Church of England in 1962, its charitable objects, governance arrangements and identity as an Anglican Foundation were embedded in a Deed of Trust. Today, CCCU's governance documentation is based upon a model Instrument and Articles document operated through the Privy Council. As with the other thirteen Church Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in England, the Instrument and Articles of Government overlay historic trust arrangements.

#### **The Nature of the Church's Interest**

Until 2003 the Church held in its name all land owned by the University College. In 2003 the College gained greater autonomy over its estate when it was established as a charitable company, its Governing Body was incorporated and the Church relinquished its proprietary interests. The new Memorandum and Articles of Association gave the Church the possibility of a 'golden vote' which could effectively over-rule the Governing Body if it resolved to revoke or vary any of the key provisions outlined below.

#### **Constitution of the Governing Body**

The Memorandum and Articles of Association state that 'the Governing Body shall, when complete, consist of not more than 25 persons, not less than three-fifths of whom shall be members of the Church of England...'. This provision ensures the maintenance of a faith majority amongst Governing Body members. The quorum requirements for Governing Body meetings are such that a minimum of eleven Governors must be present, of whom no less than six must be Church of England Governors. Six of the Governors must be directly nominated by the Church of England (two by the Archbishop of Canterbury, one by the Canterbury Diocesan Board of Education, one by the Church of England Board of Education, one is the Bishop of Dover and one is the Bishop of Rochester or his nominee).

These appointments ensure that the University, through its Governing Body, has close links with the Anglican Church. With regard to promoting and ensuring equality and diversity, the Governing Body is bound to operate according to institutional policies and national equalities legislation.

#### **Genuine Occupational Requirements**

In common with the majority of Church HEIs, CCCU's governing documents stipulate that the Vice Chancellor and Deputy Vice Chancellor must be communicant members of the Church of England. The Memorandum and Articles also state that 'there shall be a University Chaplain appointed by the Governing Body who shall be an ordained priest of the Church of England'. The growth of the Institution to a multi-campus University has seen the development of a Chaplaincy team operating across the institution. The

'genuine occupational requirements' for these posts do not conflict with prevailing legislation, notably the Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003. The reference to an institutional ethos in the University's governing documents, coupled with the expression of its faith position, underpins these requirements.<sup>1</sup>

### **Religious Worship and Instruction**

The University's Memorandum and Articles contain a stipulation from the original Trust Deed which states that the 'religious worship and instruction in the University shall be in accordance with the doctrines, rites and practices of the Church of England, but students shall not be required as a condition of entering or continuing in the University to attend such worship or instruction'.

Anglican worship is maintained by the Chaplaincy team who also offer instruction in the Christian Faith to those who desire it. As befits a contemporary University, the courses on offer in department of theology and religious studies cover the range of world religions as well as the philosophical objections to such belief. Whilst the University is required to provide Church of England worship, its policies also require it to support those of other religions and to ensure that they, or those of no religion, are not made to feel of lesser value to the institution.

### **Chancellor**

When CCCU gained University title in 2005, the Privy Council approved an amendment to the governing documents to enable it to appoint the Archbishop of Canterbury as its Chancellor. Rowan Williams was installed as the University's first Chancellor in December 2005.

### **Dissolution Provisions**

According to the Memorandum and Articles, if the University ever ceased to exist, on being dissolved, after the satisfaction of debts and liabilities, its remaining property would transfer to the Church of England. It would be used for the charitable educational work of the Church of England, following consultation with the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Church Board of Education.

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<sup>1</sup> As stated in the *Council of Church Colleges and Universities' Guide to Governance*. The guidance suggests that church universities, who have a religious ethos in their governing documents and express their faith position on a continuing basis, will be able to justify genuine occupational faith requirements for certain posts. The Vice Chancellor, the Deputy Vice Chancellor and Chaplains fall into that category.

## **Appendix 2**

### **Canterbury Christ Church University Mission and Aims**

#### **Mission**

Inspired by the University's Church of England Foundation and the aspirations of its students and staff, our mission is to pursue excellence in academic and professional higher education thereby enriching both individuals and society.

#### **Aims**

The University's broad aims are to:

- provide our students with excellent teaching, informed by research, scholarship and creative work thereby fostering conceptual understanding and facilitating effective learning
- enhance research, scholarship, creative work and professional practice throughout the University and maintain a national and international reputation in particular areas
- enrich the lives of our students both personally and professionally and equip them with the knowledge and skills which will help to ensure their future employability
- have a recognised identity and reputation as a broadly based university with a specific commitment to meeting the education and professional development needs of the major public services
- encourage those from a wide range of backgrounds to join our University
- ensure that all students receive appropriate support and guidance to enable them to progress and reach their full potential
- make a major contribution to the intellectual, cultural, social and economic life of our local and wider communities
- offer an attractive range of programmes and courses together with flexible modes of delivery
- encourage an international outlook amongst students and staff
- offer all students and staff opportunities for cultural and creative activities, sport and recreation, fellowship and service to the community
- work with employers and with local, regional and national organisations to realise mutually agreed objectives