



1. Title

Religious Belief

2. Purpose

To ensure compliance with Employment Equality (Religion or Beliefs) Regulations 2003

This policy aims to ensure equal treatment for everyone, of any religion or none. It is based on the principle that people have the right to their own belief system. However, they have no right to force it on others.

3. Scope

This policy will apply to all Staff, Students and visitors on The North Highland College campuses.

4. Responsibility

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Assistant Principal Student Services and the Human Resource Manager

All line managers are responsible for familiarising themselves with this policy, and for following it in matters such as requests for leave.

All individual staff are responsible for familiarising themselves with this policy.

5. Policy

5.1 Policy Statement

The North Highland College celebrates and values the diversity brought to its workforce by individual members of staff and aims to create an environment where the cultural, religious and non-religious beliefs of all are respected.

Through the implementation of the relevant policies and procedures the college seeks to ensure that:

- a) Recruitment and selection of staff and students are based entirely on relevant criteria, which do not include religious belief or non-belief (except in the case of a genuine occupational requirement*).
- b) Members of any religion or none are treated with equal dignity and fairness.
- c) Under-represented groups in society are encouraged to apply to our college.
- d) Where possible, appropriate services will be provided to meet the cultural and religious needs of all employees and students.

5.2 Dress Code

i) The North Highland College imposes no dress code on its employees or students, and welcomes the variety of appearance brought by individual styles and choices. The wearing of items arising from particular cultural/religious norms (e.g. hijab, kippah, mangal sutra) is seen as part of this welcome diversity.



ii) The only limitations to the above are that:

- a) Health and safety requirements may mean that for certain tasks specific items of clothing such as overalls, protective clothing etc need to be worn. If such clothing produces a conflict with an individual's religious belief, the issue will be sympathetically considered by the college, with the aim of finding a satisfactory compromise.
- b) Dress should conform to the current majority view in our society of what constitutes appropriateness and decency.
- c) Wearing slogans or symbols which are discriminatory (e.g. racist or sexist) is a disciplinary offence and will be dealt with accordingly.

5.3 Religious Observance

i) The North Highland College will make reasonable efforts to provide a suitable space for prayer and ablution if reasonable practical. In some cases individuals' requirements may be met by facilities in the neighbourhood. The College will provide information about these.

ii) All staff, regardless of religious belief or non-belief, are required to work in accordance with their contract. There is likely to be some flexibility over how the hours are worked. Line managers should make every attempt to ensure that those whose religion requires them to pray at certain times during the day are free to do so. In addition, reasonable efforts will be made to accommodate requests from those who require, 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 beliefs.

iii) All students regardless of religious belief or non-belief, are required to work in accordance with their designated term times and dates. Programme Tutors should make every attempt to ensure that those whose religion requires them to pray at certain times during the day are free to do so.

5.4 Leave for Religious Festivals

By custom, holiday arrangements include a day off at Christmas and Good Friday, both of which are Christian religious festivals, together with Easter Monday. In the interests of equality, those practising other religions or none will be able to book three days of their holiday entitlement on the dates of most significance to them, providing these days are booked at the beginning of the academic year/when timetables are being drawn up for the forthcoming year. Further requests for holiday entitlement to be taken at times of religious significance will be treated sympathetically.

The number of annual leave days overall will remain as in the contract of employment, for all staff, of any religious belief or none.

Students will normally be expected to take their holidays as per indicated by the colleges annual student academic calendar

5.5 Extended Leave (Staff)

i) If a member of staff requests extended leave at a particular time for the purpose of going on pilgrimage, the line manager should attempt to accommodate the request. If the extended leave exceeds the annual holiday entitlement, the excess days will be unpaid leave.



ii) Staff with relatives abroad may have particular religious/cultural needs for occasional extended leave for births, weddings, deaths. Line managers should accede to such requests if reasonable and practical.

5.6 Food Requirements

The College undertakes to assess the demand for food that meets religious dietary requirements (e.g. vegetarian, kosher, halal) regularly [at the start of each academic session] in consultation with the relevant religious groups. It will provide such food in its refectory according to the demand for it.

5.7 Offensive Actions or Behaviour

Any attempt at coercing others to comply with a particular belief system, for example through distribution of propaganda or through threats or offensive remarks, will result in disciplinary action.

The College undertakes to remove/paint over any offensive literature or graffiti found on its premises and to take action against those found responsible.

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 and if that fails, take the matter up with their Head of Section. If that fails the grievance procedure can be used.

All students and visitors with whom staff come into contact have a responsibility not to discriminate on the grounds of religion or belief. If staff feel that such discrimination is occurring, and persists after they have pointed it out to the student or visitor and asked them to stop, they should report the matter to the College Senior Management who, acting on behalf of the College, will take appropriate steps to deal with it.

5.8 Data Analysis & Impact Assessment

The college will routinely carry out and analyse data pertaining to the above policy to ensure equality of opportunity.

The college will also carry out impact assessment of all its policies & procedures in relation to the above to ensure an inclusive learning and teaching environment.

6 Definitions

None

7 References

Equality Employment (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003

8 Appendices

None.



Date First Approved by Board of Management	August 2005
Last Review	August 2008
Proposed Review Date	August 2010
Responsibility	Assistant Principal