**University of South Wales**

**Prifysgol De Cymru**

**Religion and Belief Guidance on learning and teaching issues for Students**

The University of South Wales is committed to promoting an environment which enables students to practice their religion or belief whilst studying at the University. The University of South Wales will endeavour to be flexible as is practically possible in order to observe the religion, belief and non-belief of staff and students. However, students who wish to observe the requirements of their religion should note the following:

1. Students should, wherever possible, fulfil their obligation to pray either before or after lectures/classes. 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 programmes and courses and teaching and learning activities are usually spread throughout the working week (Monday to Friday).
2. It is the responsibility of the student to make arrangements to catch up on work missed whilst participating in prayer and religious observance; however handouts for lectures distributed in class and seminars should be made available to all students regardless of attendance.
3. The University of South Wales is aware that certain religious festivals may coincide with the Academic Timetable. However, given the diversity of religious observance at the University is unable to arrange its timetable or coursework deadlines around the religious festivals of all faith traditions.
4. Attendance at religious festivals will not be normally accepted as mitigating circumstances. It is the student’s responsibility to bring any clashes between religious observance and the examination timetable to the attention of the course leader/tutor as soon as possible. Given sufficient notice it **may** be possible to make alternative arrangements and therefore a discussion as soon as the issue is identified is essential. It needs to be recognised, however, that these requests are very difficult to grant due to timetabling constraints, the additional workload on staff and the impact on other students.
5. As some faiths exempt students from religious observance at the time of study and examinations, these exemptions should be taken wherever possible.
6. Where the identity of examination candidates needs to be verified in relation to University assessment procedures, the verification of candidates wearing cultural/religious dress which covers their facial features will be carried out sensitively and by an appropriate member of staff.
7. Students who wish to take an extended period of leave from their studies due to religious observance should discuss this with the appropriate course leader to discuss how they plan to catch up study, assessment or other course requirements. The University has a requirement to inform certain agencies, such as the Student Loan Company, UKVI, LEA if a student is absent for an extended period of time
8. Students who are required to undertake work experience or clinical practice as part of their academic course should establish the 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 this can be flexible or how dress can be modified in relation to the students’ religious observance.
9. It may not be possible for students to have access to the same level of prayer facilities or time off to attend prayers during work placements. For example, a number of degrees which lead to a professional qualification have training elements which may cut across religious observances.
10. 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 aware that the 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.

The University recognises the commitment of students to pursue religious practices and actively supports their right to do so in an atmosphere of tolerance and respect. It is equally important to recognise and respect those holding religious and non-religious views. All University students should respect the opinions and human rights of others.

**Further information and advice**

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