



**Higher Education Services  
Religion & Belief  
Policy**

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## DOCUMENT INFORMATION AND VERSION CONTROL

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# Higher Education Services Religion & Belief Policy

## 1.0 Introduction

1.1 The policy recognises the importance of religious beliefs, practices, and rituals. FutureLearn is a secular organisation and does not have a commitment to a particular faith or belief. FutureLearn is committed to providing a safe and supportive environment for all who learn or engage with the organisation. Students can engage with their course or programme irrespective of their religion, belief, or non-belief.

1.2 FutureLearn is committed to the following through this policy:

- Ensuring individuals are not discriminated against, harassed or victimised.
- Promoting equality of opportunity across all FutureLearn students.
- Encouraging a collaborative approach to relationships between people who share or do not share the same beliefs.
- Where reasonably practicable the needs of students' religious or non-religious beliefs are met.

## 2.0 Purpose and Scope

2.1 The policy is applicable to all FutureLearn students. It provides information and guidance to students and staff at FutureLearn, who have or do not have a religion or belief, in relation to their programme, studies, research, academic freedom, provision of services, religious observance, dress, or support.

## 3.0 Equality Act 2010

3.1 Section 10 of the Equality Act 2010 defines religion as 'any religion and a reference to religion includes a reference to a lack of religion' and belief **as** 'any religious or philosophical belief and a reference to belief includes a reference to a lack of belief'.

3.2 In relation to the protected characteristic of religion or belief:

- A reference to a person who has a particular protected characteristic is a reference to a person of a particular religion or belief.
- A reference to persons who share a protected characteristic is a reference to persons who are of the same religion or belief.

3.3 For a belief to be protected under the Act it must:

- be genuinely held.
- be a belief and not just an opinion or viewpoint based on the present state of information available.
- be about a weighty and substantial aspect of human life and behaviour.
- attain a certain level of cogency, seriousness, cohesion, and importance, and
- be worthy of respect in a democratic society, not incompatible with human dignity and not in conflict with the fundamental rights of others.

3.4 FutureLearn aims to strike a balance between supporting religious or belief related needs and maintaining the platform's operational requirements and the interests of the wider learning community. FutureLearn, where feasible, considers adaptable solutions that accommodate individual faith practices.

As some arrangements may require time to implement, it is important that both students and course facilitators agree on a practical time limit for discussion and confirmation of any such adjustments.

**3.5** When assessing the balance between religion and belief and FutureLearn operations several factors are considered:

- The wider impacts on FutureLearn, students and partners if a request is accommodated.
- Whether there are any health and safety implications or potential breaches.
- Potential impacts on students if the request is denied.

**3.6** Other legal guidance that relates to religion and belief and fair treatment of learners includes:

- [Equality Act \(2010\) – Technical Guidance on Further and Higher Education](#) (pdf)
- [\(Equality & Human Rights Commission\) Religion or Belief Guide to the Law \(2016\)](#) (pdf)
- [Racial and Religious Hatred Act](#) (2006)
- [Human Rights Act](#) (1998)

## **4.0 Freedom of Belief and Freedom of Thought, Conscience and Religion**

**4.1** Freedom of belief, along with the rights to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, play a vital role in creating an inclusive and respectful learning environment, especially in diverse global platforms like FutureLearn. These freedoms ensure that individuals can hold and express their personal values, whether religious, cultural, philosophical, or otherwise, without fear of discrimination or judgment.

**4.2** In the context of education, these rights support and strengthen academic freedom, which is the ability to explore ideas, question assumptions, and engage in open discussion. FutureLearn's flexible and inclusive approach encourages students to think critically and exchange perspectives while remaining true to their own beliefs.

**4.3** Recognising and protecting these freedoms is especially important in online learning spaces, where people from many diverse backgrounds come together. It ensures that every student feels respected, heard, and free to participate authentically. By fostering a culture of mutual understanding and open dialogue, FutureLearn promotes deeper learning, collaboration, and innovation across all areas of study.

**4.4** All guest speakers invited to speak at FutureLearn whether in person or online will do so within the parameters of the [Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech](#) policy.

## **5.0 Admissions**

**5.1** FutureLearn's admission process is a fair and transparent process, ensuring that students are treated respectfully including those with or without religion and belief. FutureLearn ensures admissions advisors and admissions tutors do not discriminate on the groups of religion and belief or make offers or reject applicants based on religion and belief. Where applicants have concerns about studying with FutureLearn on the grounds of religion and belief they should notify the admissions advisor or student support team member with their concerns. The Director of Academic Affairs then assesses these concerns.

**5.2** As part of the admissions process, photo identification is necessary. Applicants will be asked to remove face coverings as part of this process.

## 6.0 Teaching and Learning

6.1 FutureLearn uses an inclusive framework to audit content ensuring that materials do not discriminate against students based on religion and belief. Subject matter experts are trained on this framework and author content accordingly. Academic lecturers ensure discussions surrounding religion and belief are conducted in a respectful manner, encouraging discussion and debate rather than marginalising and isolating individuals.

## 7.0 Assessment Deadlines

7.1 Assessment deadlines are provided to students in advance so students can plan their time around religious observances or festivals. It is not usually FutureLearn policy to grant extenuating circumstances for observances or religious festivals but if unsure students can discuss this further with their student support team member.

## 8.0 Discrimination

8.1 Staff and students at FutureLearn are expected to conduct themselves in a professional and respectful manner when around others. Any use of derogatory language, treatment, or behaviour towards others in relation to religion and belief are not tolerated. Students who believe they may be being discriminated against based on religion or belief should make a formal complaint through the student complaints procedure. Students can also seek support from the student support team who will be able to signpost them to appropriate wellbeing.

- [Student Complaints Policy](#)
- [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion \(EDI\) Policy](#)

## 9.0 Monitoring

9.1 The monitoring of this policy takes place every three years by the Academic Registrar.