

Procedures Manual

01.22.01 CULTURE, RELIGION AND BELIEF POLICY AS TO LEARNERS

PURPOSE To inform staff and learners of the Culture, Religion and Belief Policy for the College relating to learners. The College will not discriminate against any learner or potential learner on the grounds of culture, religion and belief.

SCOPE The policy applies to College staff learners and potential learners.

RESPONSIBILITY The Vice Principal Quality and Student Experience has overall responsibility for Equality and Diversity within the College. All staff are responsible for implementing the Policy.

PROCEDURE

The procedures are included in the Policy

- 1 All staff should ensure they are familiar with the Policy and where their particular responsibilities may lie.
- 2 Attention should be drawn to the Policy as part of the induction process for staff and learners.

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POLICY ON CULTURE, RELIGION AND BELIEF AS TO LEARNERS

1. Statement of Intent

West Suffolk College has a general public duty to have due regard (i) to the elimination of discrimination, harassment and victimisation of learners on the grounds of religion or belief, (ii) to advancing equality of opportunity between people who share a religion or belief and those who do not and (iii) to fostering good relations between people who share a religion or belief and those who do not. West Suffolk College celebrates and values the diversity brought by its learners, and aims to create an environment where the cultural, religious and non-religious beliefs of all its learners and potential learners are respected.

Everything in this policy has the aim of ensuring equal treatment for all learners, of any culture, religion or none.

Through the implementation of the relevant Policies and Procedures, West Suffolk College seeks to ensure that:

- Recruitment and selection of potential learners are based entirely on relevant criteria, which do not include cultural or religious belief or non-belief.
- Members of any culture, religion or beliefs are treated with equal dignity and fairness.
- Under-represented groups in society are, where practically possible, identified and encouraged to apply for courses
- Where possible, appropriate services are provided to meet the cultural and religious needs of all learners.

The right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion is acknowledged, but the right to manifest beliefs is qualified by the need to protect the rights and freedoms of others. Any attempt at coercion or bullying of others to comply with a particular belief system, for example through distribution of hate literature, propaganda or offensive remarks, may result in disciplinary action against learners.

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2. Dress Code

2.1 Learners are required to dress in an appropriate fashion and in some cases are required to wear a uniform. Dress must comply with health and safety requirements. The wearing of items arising from particular cultural / religious norms (e.g. hijab, kippah) is welcomed under this policy, subject to clause 2.2 below.

2.2 The only limitations to the above are:

2.2.1 Health and safety requirements may mean that for certain tasks specific items of clothing such as overalls and protective clothing need to be worn. If such clothing produces a conflict with an individual's religious belief, the issue will be sympathetically considered by the Course Director or Curriculum Manager and Health and Safety Department with the aim of finding a satisfactory compromise.

2.2.2 Dress should conform to the current majority view of what constitutes decency.

2.2.3 Wearing of clothing displaying slogans which are discriminatory (e.g. racist or sexist slogans) is forbidden.

2.2.4 Meeting the requirements of our safeguarding policy and practise

3. Cultural and Religious Observance

3.1 West Suffolk College will ensure that all learners know that if they have special prayer requirements, they should put in a request to the Student Welfare Manager who will bring their request to the attention of the Principal where necessary. The College will, when requested, and where it is appropriate and practicable to do so, provide facilities for the purposes of prayer.

3.2 All learners, regardless of cultural or religious belief or non-belief are required to attend College classes for the period stipulated in their learning agreements. Tutors will make every attempt to ensure that those whose religion requires them to pray at certain times during the day are free to do so. Those who have such requirements should be accommodated, if it is possible to do so within the opening hours of the College.

3.3 Any weekend learning agreements shall ensure that no-one is forced or pressured to study at times when their cultural or religious beliefs forbid them to do so.

3.4 Consideration as far as possible with regards to course activities should be given to those learners fasting as part of their religious beliefs

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4. *Extended Leave*

Learner's requests to take time-off study to observe days of cultural or religious significance shall be sympathetically considered by the learner's Personal Support Tutor.

5. *Food Requirements*

West Suffolk College undertakes that its catering outlets will offer vegetarian alternatives and make every reasonable effort to accommodate those with religious or cultural dietary requirements, in response to requests from learners.

6. *Implementation and Responsibilities*

- All relevant staff such as line managers, and tutors, are responsible for familiarising themselves with this policy, and for following it in matters such as learners' requests for time off to study.
- All individual learners are responsible for familiarising themselves with the effect of this policy, for informing appropriate staff of their particular requirements, and for making up any time lost as a result of cultural / religious observance.
- Any learner who feels that they have not been treated fairly in accordance with this policy should first try to resolve the matter by discussion with his or her Personal Support Tutor. If this fails, the matter should be referred to the appropriate Curriculum Manager.
- All learners 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 learner and asked them to stop, they should report the matter to the learner's Personal Support Tutor, who, acting on behalf of West Suffolk College, will take appropriate steps to deal with it.
- West Suffolk College undertakes to remove / paint over any offensive literature or graffiti found on its premises.
- All staff have a responsibility not to discriminate against or harass learners on the grounds of religion or belief. Any such discrimination or harassment should be dealt with under the College's disciplinary procedure. Staff should promote equality of opportunity for learners and seek to foster good relations between learners of different religions and beliefs or any of the other protected characteristics.

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