



Lincoln Bishop University

Document Administration

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VERSION CONTROL TABLE

<u>Version Number</u>	<u>Date Authorised</u>	<u>Summary of Key Changes</u>
1.0	June 2013	Policy first introduced and approved by the Diversity & Equality Committee
2.0	01 July 2026	Policy renamed and amended following review by the newly established Church of England Foundation Steering Group

FAITH AND BELIEF POLICY

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1. This policy sets out how Lincoln Bishop University, as a Church of England foundation institution and member of the Cathedrals Group, protects freedom of faith and belief, ensures equality of treatment, and promotes respectful participation across its community for people of all faiths and none.
- 1.2. The policy is intended to support a university culture that is deeply shaped by its Church of England foundation in being committed to the common good, to dignity, inclusion and academic freedom.

2. SCOPE

- 2.1. This policy applies to students, staff, members of University Council, volunteers, visiting speakers and visitors engaging with the University or using its services and premises. It applies across academic provision, student life, employment, chaplaincy, the use of University facilities, events, partnerships and decision-making processes.

3. DEFINITIONS

- 3.1. For the purpose of this Policy, the following terms have the meanings set out below:
 - 3.1.1. **Belief** means any religious or philosophical belief including no religious belief or no belief, so far as protected by law.
 - 3.1.2. **Faith** means a religious identity, tradition, conviction or affiliation, including Christian faith and other world faith traditions.
 - 3.1.3. **Faith and belief** means faith, religion, religious belief, philosophical beliefs and non-belief (including atheism, agnosticism and humanism), where relevant to the context and protected by law.
 - 3.1.4. **Church of England foundation** refers to the University's historical and formal roots in the Anglican Church, which today primarily signifies a commitment to inclusive, values-led education as reflected in institutional identity, governance and ethos, as well as continuing commitments to chaplaincy, the opportunity for worship, hospitality, service and the common good.
 - 3.1.5. **Chaplaincy** means the University's Anglican-led chaplaincy provision serving the University community through pastoral care, hosting events, leading Christian worship, encouraging interfaith dialogue and informing the identity and character of the University, as a Church of England Foundation institution.
 - 3.1.6. **Christian identity**: the University's Church of England foundation and values-led ethos, reflected in its commitment to welcome, service, worship, pastoral care and the common good.

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- 3.1.7. **Community or University community** means students, staff, Council members, volunteers, visiting speakers, contractors where relevant, and visitors using University services or premises.
- 3.1.8. **Reasonable accommodation** means a practical and proportionate adjustment made where possible to support religious observance or belief-related needs, without causing undue hardship, disproportionate cost, safety risk or unfair detriment to others.
- 3.1.9. **Religious observance** means acts or practices connected with a person's faith or belief, including prayer, worship, fasting, holy days, dress, diet and attendance at services.
- 3.1.10. **Respectful dialogue** means communication that allows disagreement, questioning and debate while avoiding harassment, ridicule, coercion, abuse, intimidation or exclusion.
- 3.1.11. **Harassment** means unwanted conduct related to faith or belief that has the purpose or effect of violating dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.
- 3.1.12. **Proselytising** means persistent or coercive attempts to convert another person or pressure them to adopt, abandon or participate in a faith or belief.
- 3.1.13. **Non-belief** means the absence of religious belief or adherence to a faith tradition, including atheist, agnostic, secular and humanist positions.
- 3.1.14. **Occupational requirement** means a lawful requirement linked to a role where, in limited circumstances, faith or belief may be relevant to the lawful appointment or carrying out of duties.

4. INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

- 4.1. Lincoln Bishop University is a Church of England foundation institution and a member of the Cathedrals Group, a mission group of universities within UK higher education.
- 4.2. The principal objectives of the Cathedrals Group are to advance and develop Higher Education in the church universities, universities with church foundations and other universities admitted into membership of the Cathedrals Group, and to support the churches' continuing role in Higher Education.
- 4.3. Within that tradition, the University understands education as being concerned with the flourishing of the whole person and the service of the common good, not solely with academic, technical or economic outcomes.
- 4.4. The University's Church of England foundation is expressed through its governance, ethos, chaplaincy, pattern of daily worship, public service,

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intellectual inquiry and commitment to hospitality, justice and mutual respect. It is a foundation that is a place for everyone; that welcomes everyone. The foundation does not require staff or students to be Christian and respects the equal dignity, freedom or opportunity of people of all faiths and none.

5. POLICY STATEMENT

- 5.1. Lincoln Bishop University recognises and respects the right of every person to freedom of faith and belief, including the right to adopt, change, or reject a faith or belief, or to hold no faith or belief, and will uphold that right consistently with applicable law, the rights and freedoms of others, and the University's lawful obligations.
- 5.2. The University will foster an environment in which people are able to express their faith, belief or non-belief respectfully and lawfully, and in which disagreement may be explored through scholarship, dialogue and debate without intimidation or harassment.
- 5.3. The University will maintain and articulate its Christian identity in ways that are transparent, generous and welcoming.

6. LEGAL AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

- 6.1. This policy should be read alongside the Equality Act 2010 protections relating to faith and belief, relevant human rights principles concerning freedom of thought, conscience, religion and expression, and the University's wider duties under employment, education, charity and public law. The policy applies equally to all faiths, beliefs, philosophical beliefs, and non-belief (including atheism, agnosticism and humanism).
- 6.2. It should also be read with the University's equality, dignity, bullying and harassment, safeguarding, freedom of speech, complaints, disciplinary, admissions and recruitment policies.

7. PRINCIPLES

7.1. Church of England foundation and public welcome

The University will preserve and develop its Christian character as foundational to its distinctive identity, as expressed by its values of inclusion, courage, innovation, excellence and respect.

In keeping with these values, the University will welcome and support students and staff from all faith and belief backgrounds, including people who identify as atheist, agnostic, secular or humanist.

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7.2. Equality and non-discrimination

No person will be treated less favourably by the University on the grounds of faith or belief, or no faith or belief, except where a lawful occupational requirement or other specific legal exemption applies.

The University will not tolerate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation or bullying related to faith and belief.

7.3. Freedom of expression and respectful dialogue

The University supports freedom of expression, academic inquiry and lawful debate on matters of faith, belief, religion, ethics and public life.

All members of the University community are expected to engage with others respectfully and to recognise that robust disagreement does not justify hostility, ridicule, exclusion, coercion or abuse.

7.4. Inclusion and reasonable accommodation

The University will take reasonable steps, where practicable and proportionate, to accommodate religious observance and belief-related needs in relation to timetabling, assessment, food provision, dress, prayer, festival observance and use of space.

Accommodation requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis, taking account of the nature of the request, the impact on academic or operational requirements, fairness to others, safety, cost and legal obligations.

7.5. Service to the common good

As a Church of England foundation university, the institution understands its Christian identity as a basis for service, hospitality, wisdom-seeking and human flourishing across the whole University community.

8. COMMITTEES OF THE UNIVERSITY

8.1. The University will:

- 8.1.1. Communicate clearly that it is a Church of England foundation university and explain what that means in practice for applicants, students, staff and partners;
- 8.1.2. Ensure that policies, procedures and day-to-day practices respect people having different faith and belief and those of none;
- 8.1.3. Provide access to chaplaincy and pastoral support that is rooted in the University's Church of England foundation and available to all members of the community;
- 8.1.4. Maintain or facilitate appropriate spaces for prayer, worship, contemplation and quiet reflection, subject to reasonable management arrangements;

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- 8.1.5. Seek, where feasible, to consider significant religious festivals and observance patterns when scheduling major institutional activities;
- 8.1.6. Provide suitable routes for raising concerns, seeking advice and resolving disputes related to faith or belief;
- 8.1.7. Support lawful student faith and belief societies on an equitable basis within the Students' Union and university framework;
- 8.1.8. Promote literacy, dialogue and mutual understanding on matters of faith, belief and values through teaching, staff development, events and public engagement where appropriate.

9. EXPECTATIONS OF MEMBERS OF THE UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY

- 9.1. All members of the University community are expected to treat one another with dignity, courtesy and respect irrespective of faith or belief.
- 9.2. Members of the community may share and discuss their faith and belief, invite others to events or worship, and participate in lawful debate, but they must not harass, pressure, intimidate or target others in ways that undermine dignity, freedom or safety.
- 9.3. No person may be disadvantaged for choosing to participate in, or to decline to participate in, acts of worship, prayer, faith-related events or belief-based discussion.

10. CHAPLAINCY, WORSHIP AND PASTORAL CARE

- 10.1. The University will maintain chaplaincy provision as a visible expression of its Church of England foundation and as a service contributing to pastoral care, community formation, ethical reflection and spiritual support.
- 10.2. Chaplaincy provision should be accessible and welcoming to those of all faiths and none, and the University will seek appropriate partnerships or referral arrangements to support members of faith communities.
- 10.3. The University may provide acts of worship, services, prayers and events consistent with its foundation that are voluntary to attend, ensuring that non-participation does not lead to detriment.

11. RECRUITMENT AND ADMISSIONS

- 11.1. The University will operate admissions, recruitment, promotion and student support processes fairly and transparently, in accordance with its Diversity and Equality Policy and Code of Practice for the Admission of Students.

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- 11.2. Any role-specific occupational requirement connected with faith or belief must be identified in advance, justified lawfully, applied proportionately and approved through the University's governance and human resources processes.

12. USE OF FACILITIES AND ACCOMMODATION OF PRACTICE

- 12.1. Requests relating to prayer, worship, fasting, dietary requirements, holy days, religious dress, symbols, bereavement rites or other observance will be considered fairly, respectfully, and on a case-by-case basis.
- 12.2. Reasonable adjustments or accommodations may include alternative meal provision, flexibility around deadlines or attendance where policy allows, access to suitable space, and practical management arrangements that balance competing needs.
- 12.3. The University is not required to agree to every request and may refuse or modify arrangements where there are compelling academic, operational, safety, legal or equality reasons for doing so.

13. STUDENT SOCIETIES, EVENTS AND EXTERNAL SPEAKERS

- 13.1. Student faith and belief societies are entitled to organise lawful meetings, worship, study, discussion and events in accordance with Students' Union and University requirements. The University and Students' Union may impose proportionate conditions on events and speakers to meet duties relating to safety, equality, freedom of speech, prevention of harassment or unlawful incitement, safeguarding and Prevent (to "help prevent the risk of people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism").
- 13.2. The University encourages events that build religious literacy, respectful encounter and constructive engagement across difference.

14. UNACCEPTABLE CONDUCT

- 14.1. The following are examples of conduct that may breach this policy or related procedures:
- 14.1.1. Mocking, abusing or stereotyping a person or group because of faith or belief;
 - 14.1.2. Excluding a person from work, study or participation because of faith or belief or non-belief;
 - 14.1.3. Unwanted proselytising, persistent pressure to convert, or exploitative use of authority in faith or belief-related interactions;
 - 14.1.4. Antisemitism, Islamophobia, anti-Christian hostility or hostility directed toward any other religion, faith, belief or non-belief position;

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- 14.1.5. Vandalism, interference with worship, prayer or reflection, or misuse of designated spaces;
 - 14.1.6. Refusal to respect lawful institutional requirements on safety, assessment, professional standards or the rights of others in the name of faith, belief or religious observance.
- 14.2. Allegations of such conduct will be considered under the relevant staff or student procedures, including disciplinary, complaints, dignity and respect, safeguarding and Prevent Duty.

15. DECISION-MAKING AND BALANCING OF RIGHTS

- 15.1. When faith or belief-related issues involve competing rights or interests, the University will make decisions lawfully, fairly and proportionately, having regard to the need to avoid discrimination and to the protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010. It will first identify the issue, then consider the sincerity and significance of the belief or observance; the impact on the individual; the rights and legitimate interests of others; academic and professional requirements; as well as safety, cost and legal obligations.
- 15.2. Where possible, the University will look for a practical solution that allows different rights to coexist, but it may refuse or modify a request where this is necessary to protect the rights of others, maintain standards, or meet legal or operational requirements. Decisions will be explained clearly and made on a case-by-case basis.

16. RESPONSIBILITIES

16.1. University Council

The University Council (Governing Body) is responsible for ensuring the University's identity, governance and ethos are consistent with its Church of England foundation.

16.2. Vice-Chancellor and University Leadership

The Vice-Chancellor and University Leadership Group are responsible for promoting a culture in which this policy is implemented consistently and aligned with the University's values, strategy and other regulatory responsibilities.

16.3. Human Resources and Student Services

Human Resources and Student Services are responsible for advising on implementation, handling requests and concerns appropriately, and ensuring access to relevant procedures, support and training.

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16.4. Chaplaincy

Chaplaincy is responsible for serving the whole University community by sustaining worship and spiritual life, offering pastoral care, fostering respectful dialogue across faiths and beliefs, and advising on faith-sensitive matters where needed. It is also responsible for ensuring that chaplaincy provision is inclusive, accessible, and welcoming to people of all faiths and none, while facilitating appropriate links, partnerships, or referrals for those needing support within their own faith tradition.

16.5. Managers, academic leaders and professional service leads

Managers and academic leaders are responsible for applying this policy fairly in local decisions and for escalating complex issues to senior leadership where balancing rights or legal interpretation is required.

16.6. Staff, students and visitors

All staff, students, volunteers and visitors are responsible for complying with this policy and for contributing to a respectful and inclusive university environment.

17. COMPLAINTS AND SUPPORT

17.1. Any person who believes they have experienced discrimination, harassment, exclusion or unfair treatment related to faith or belief should seek advice and raise concerns through the University's established routes. These may include line management, Human Resources, student support services, chaplaincy, the Students' Union, formal complaints procedures or whistleblowing depending on the nature of the concern.

17.2. The University will seek, where appropriate, to resolve concerns early and informally, while preserving the right to use formal procedures where the issue is serious, repeated or unresolved.

18. TRAINING, COMMUNICATION AND REVIEW

18.1. The University will provide proportionate guidance and training on faith and belief equality, respectful dialogue, lawful accommodation, freedom of speech and the implications of its Church of England foundation.

18.2. This policy will be published externally and reviewed every four years, or earlier where required by changes in law, regulation, institutional structure or Church of England guidance.



19. RELATED DOCUMENTS

19.1. This policy should be read with the following institutional documents as applicable, including the:

- 19.1.1. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- 19.1.2. Dignity Policy for Staff and Students
- 19.1.3. Code of Practice for Freedom of Speech
- 19.1.4. Safeguarding Policy
- 19.1.5. Prevent Statutory Duty Policy
- 19.1.6. External Speakers and Events Procedure
- 19.1.7. Student Disciplinary Procedure
- 19.1.8. Staff Disciplinary Procedure
- 19.1.9. Code of Practice for the Admission of Students
- 19.1.10. Student Complaints Procedure
- 19.1.11. Support for Study Procedure