

Religious Observance Policy

Policy Aim:

Imperial College Union is committed to religious tolerance, understanding and cooperation. The Union will aim to make every effort to meet the practical needs of staff and students whatever their faith background.

This policy summarises the Union's provisions and support of religious observances and prayer breaks for its members and persons who participate in Union activity. The Union shall provide a safe environment, free from harassment and discrimination, related to faith or religion, for all Union activity.

The Union Supports:

- The importance for students to be free to fulfill their religious obligations without being at any disadvantage in their academic studies. This can include religious practice for fixed, regular periods – these can be daily.
- The belief that students should have the right and access to provisions to practice their religion.
- Improving the information and recommendations that the Union provides to the College in respect to the academic timetable planning.

Overview:

1. Legal Framework
2. Protected lunch periods
3. Extended periods of religious observance
4. Friday prayers

1. Legal Framework

- 1.1. Religion or belief is one of nine "protected characteristics" covered by the Equality Act 2010. This covers individuals who take part in collective worship, belong to an organised religion or have a profound religious/philosophical belief which affects your way of life or view of the world.
- 1.2. Imperial College Union acknowledges its duty to ensure that all relevant legislation regarding health, safety and welfare is adhered to which includes ensuring the health, safety and welfare for persons practicing their religion.

2. Protected lunch periods

- 2.1. The Union recognises that several religious practices across multiple faiths occur between 1-2pm. The Union believes that this time period ought to be stipulated as a definite lunch period for staff and student timetables.
- 2.2. Religious practices that take place during lunch-times include:

- *Thursday lunchtime - Roman Catholic Mass - 1-2 pm*
 - *Friday lunchtime - Muslim Prayer Time - 1-2 pm*
 - *Friday afternoons (Autumn and Winter) - Jewish Sabbath*
- 2.3. Lunch-hour/s across campus range from 12-2pm; some departments/faculties only accommodate lunch from 1-2pm. No specific time for Lunch stipulated by college which is applicable to all departments and faculties
- 2.4. The Union takes the stance that there should exist a definite Lunch period from 1-2pm for both Staff and Student timetables.

3. Extended periods of religious observance

- 3.1. Recognising that students' religious obligations may require periods of religious observance (such as Jewish Sabbath), the Union believes that students should not be disadvantaged academically by these commitments and that College should offer suitable alternatives such as lecture recordings, where appropriate.
- 3.2. The Union will encourage and support students to make requests to make amendments for the exams timetable when there interfere with religious observance. The Union will expect that the College makes reasonable effort to accommodate these requests.
- 3.3. This policy defines that the Union's stance is that the College should take steps to ensure students who are unable to attend due to religious obligations are not disadvantaged. These alternatives may include: the provision of repeat sessions; making electronic recordings available on the relevant virtual learning environment; making available alternative learning materials, ensuring Labs sessions (or other sessions that cannot be recorded) are avoided on Friday evenings in the Winter.
- 3.4. This policy only covers fixed-time religious observance periods that have been pre-planned. Unforeseeable periods should go through mitigating circumstances. Mitigating circumstances also apply to situations where academic performance might be affected, e.g. fasting and exam performance.

4. Friday prayers

- 4.1. The Union shall provide space for Friday congregational prayers, which are an obligation for Muslims.
- 4.2. The Union shall provide at least one week's notice of changes to the Friday prayer location. This notice shall be given to the Union's Islamic Society and be shared on general communication channels.
- 4.3. The Union shall request College provide alternate space should Union space be unavailable for reasons beyond the Union's control.
- 4.4. The Union takes the stance that the College should provide space for Friday prayers for students on non-South Kensington campuses (where the Union does not have a presence).