



KAMUZU UNIVERSITY
OF HEALTH SCIENCES

Religious Tolerance Policy

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Policy Name	Religious Tolerance Policy
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Next Review	Every five years
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Stakeholders Subjected to this Policy	Staff, students, consultants, vendors, contractors and/or any other parties with a business interest with the University.
Responsible Officer(s)	Vice Chancellor, University Registrar, Director of Student Affairs, Chaplain, Examination Officer, Student Representative Council
Responsible Office(s):	Vice Chancellor

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5. FOREWORD

At the Kamuzu University of Health Sciences (KUHeS), we take great pride in our role as a beacon of knowledge, understanding, and enlightenment. Our academic community thrives on diversity, embracing a multitude of perspectives, beliefs, and identities. In our pursuit of academic excellence, we recognize the vital importance of respect for individual beliefs and the protection of religious freedoms.

The Religious Tolerance Policy is not merely a set of rules and regulations. It is a testament to our commitment to fostering a campus environment that celebrates the diversity of faiths and beliefs. It is a pledge to uphold the principles of religious tolerance, equity, and understanding. Our institution, guided by its founding principles, is dedicated to providing a safe and nurturing environment where individuals from all faiths and backgrounds can engage in the pursuit of knowledge, free from prejudice and discrimination.

This Policy serves as a cornerstone of our mission. It underscores our resolve to protect and promote the religious rights and freedoms of all members of our academic community. It upholds the principles of tolerance, respect, and open dialogue, providing guidelines for all of us to live and work together in harmony, regardless of our individual beliefs. We invite all members of the University community to join us in upholding these values and making KUHeS a place where every faith is respected and cherished.

Sincerely,



Professor Francis Moto
Chairman of Council

6. PREFACE

Our world is woven with threads of diverse beliefs, cultures, and traditions. The values and principles that guide each individual are equally diverse. At KUHeS, we recognize this diversity. Our institution stands as a testament to the celebration of knowledge and the understanding that it is enriched by a mosaic of perspectives.

The Religious Tolerance Policy emerges as a response to the call for respect, understanding, and equity in the realm of faith and belief. It is born from the fundamental principles that shape our academic community - principles of inclusivity, diversity, and the inalienable right to the pursuit of knowledge without prejudice. Religious tolerance is not a mere virtue; it is an essential foundation upon which the temple of learning is built. It allows individuals to embrace their unique spiritual journeys, cultivating not only their own wisdom but also a profound respect for the journeys of others.

This Policy is not just a set of rules but a covenant to uphold the values of respect, acceptance, and freedom of religious expression.

I invite every member of KUHeS, regardless of faith, creed, or philosophy, to embrace the principles of religious tolerance. It is a call to cultivate an environment where diverse religious traditions enrich our communal tapestry, and where dialogue and understanding transcend differences. The path to religious tolerance is one that requires mutual respect, open hearts, and open minds. I call upon every member of our academic community to join us in fostering an environment where the light of religious tolerance shines brightly.

With great hope and anticipation.



Professor MacPherson Mallewa
Vice-Chancellor

7.ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This Policy is an outcome of the hard work and dedication of different people. The University is indebted to members of staff, students, and key stakeholders who provided input during consultations: Dr Annie Msosa (Chairperson), Dr Vincent Jumbé, Dr Patrick Mapulanga, Mr Jonas Sagawa, Mr Chawanangwa Ng'ambi, Mr Mphatso Nguluwe, Mrs Febbie Tambala-Jamieson, Mrs Sheila Mponela, Mrs Chimwenwe Kacheche and Mr Jim Mtambo.

Finally, the University would like to acknowledge the valuable input of Management and Council for their contribution to the Policy.

8. ABBREVIATIONS

CPD	:	Continuous Professional Development
DSA	:	Director of Students Affairs
DFI	:	Director of Finance & Investments
KUHeS	:	Kamuzu University of Health Sciences
KUHeSSU	:	Kamuzu University of Health Sciences Staff Union
KIPs	:	Key Performance Indicators
SRC	:	Students Representative of Council

9. DEFINITIONS

Academic environment: Physical, social, and intellectual setting in which education and learning take place.

Religious belief: These are ideas and accepted tenets of religious practices and cultural beliefs in line with the Constitution of Malawi.

Religious facilities: These are spaces individuals can practise their religious faith while still fully participating in the educational and professional activities of the institution.

Religious Freedom: Also known as freedom of religion or religious liberty, is a fundamental human right that encompasses an individual's right to practise, change, or hold religious beliefs about their choice. This includes the right to worship, express one's religious beliefs, and assemble with fellow believers without government interference or coercion in line with the Constitution of Malawi

Religious Observance: The practice of religious rituals, ceremonies, and customs associated with a particular faith or belief system. These observances include acts of worship, prayer, attending religious services, fasting, participating in religious festivals, and following moral or ethical guidelines dictated by one's religion in line with the Constitution of Malawi

Philosophical belief: It is a belief and not an opinion or viewpoint based on the present state of information. The belief is genuinely held and it concerns substantial aspect in a democratic society.

Religious Tolerance: The acceptance and respect of different religious beliefs and practices, even when they differ from one's own beliefs or the dominant religious traditions within a society. This involves allowing individuals and groups the freedom to practise their faith, express their religious views, and engage in religious rituals without facing discrimination, persecution, or harassment.

10. BACKGROUND AND SCOPE

KUHeS is a place where diverse cultures, religious beliefs, and perspectives come together in the pursuit of knowledge and understanding. The institution's commitment to diversity and inclusion is central to our identity. This ethos extends to the realm of faith and belief, recognizing that religious diversity enriches our academic community and contributes to a vibrant tapestry of perspectives.

The Religious Tolerance Policy is grounded in our unwavering dedication to fostering an environment that is welcoming, respectful, and equitable for individuals of all religious backgrounds. We acknowledge that, in an increasingly interconnected world, the freedom to express one's faith and beliefs must be protected and respected. It is within this context that this Policy emerges.

This Policy is a reflection of our recognition that religious tolerance is not just a principle but a guiding imperative for our institution. It is inspired by the call to eliminate prejudice, discrimination, and bias on the basis of religious belief. It is born from a commitment to upholding the right to religious freedom, which is not only a fundamental human right but also a cornerstone of a free and democratic society. This Policy promotes the freedom of worship as enshrined in the Constitution of Malawi.

The Religious Tolerance Policy encapsulates a wide range of areas and dimensions within our academic community, promoting tolerance, respect, and understanding in various contexts. This Policy applies to members of the KUHeS community which includes students, staff, visitors, vendors, consultants, contractors, and individuals with honorary/visiting status. It is the responsibility of all stakeholders above and/or any other parties with a business interest with the University to familiarise themselves with this Policy and any other relevant policies. The Policy shall be accessed through the Registry.

The scope of the Policy encompasses, but is not limited to, the following aspects: academic environment, student life, employment, religious facilities, curriculum, events and programs, harassment and discrimination.

The Religious Tolerance Policy is founded upon the principles of inclusivity and respect for all religious backgrounds. It reflects our commitment to fostering an environment where religious diversity is celebrated, and religious freedom is upheld. As a living document, this Policy is subject to ongoing review and revision to ensure that it remains responsive to the evolving needs of our KUHeS community. KUHeS remains dedicated to the values of openness, understanding, and unity, believing that through religious tolerance, we can advance our collective journey of enlightenment and knowledge.

11. THE RATIONALE FOR THE POLICY

The primary rationale for the Religious Tolerance Policy is guided by a fundamental commitment to human rights, inclusivity, and respect. The Policy acknowledges that religious diversity is a treasured aspect of our KUHeS community. KUHeS firmly believes that by embracing and fostering religious tolerance, the University creates a more vibrant and harmonious environment for all.

12. KUHeS VISION

A world-class university and centre of excellence in health education, research, and innovation.

13. KUHeS MISSION

To advance knowledge, professional competencies, skills, and innovations in health sciences through high-quality student-centred and innovative education and research that responds to and influences global/national policy, health, and development needs in an efficient, sustainable, and result-oriented manner.

14. AIMS OF THE POLICY

The aim of the Religious Tolerance Policy is to promote and uphold religious freedom, inclusivity, and respect within the KUHeS community.

15. OBJECTIVES OF THE POLICY

The objectives of the Religious Tolerance Policy are to:

- a. raise awareness within the KUHeS community about the importance of religious tolerance, understanding, and respect for diverse religious beliefs.
- b. safeguard the religious freedom of all students, staff, consultants, vendors, visitors by ensuring that they have the right to practise their faith without discrimination or bias.
- c. eliminate all forms of religious discrimination, harassment, prejudice, and bias within the KUHeS community.
- d. establish the necessary framework to encourage interfaith communication and interaction amongst people of various religious origins, encouraging a spirit of respect and understanding.
- e. establish reporting mechanisms for incidents of religious discrimination and harassment for timely response.
- f. support organisations within KUHeS focused on interfaith dialogue and the promotion of religious tolerance.

16. POLICY PRIORITY AREAS

The priority areas for the Religious Tolerance Policy outline the specific domains and focus areas where the Policy intends to make a meaningful impact. These priority areas guide the implementation of the Policy and help create a more inclusive and tolerant environment.

16.1 Policy priority area 1: Education and awareness

This priority area promotes religious tolerance through educational initiatives and awareness campaigns. The following shall apply:

- a) This Policy shall be made available to all relevant stakeholders upon joining the University and access shall be made through the Registry, orientation programs and its website.
- b) KUHeS shall organise workshops, seminars, Continuous Professional Development (CPD) and diversity training programs on religious tolerance for staff and students.
- c) All advertisements shall be in ways that are accessible to a diverse audience. In addition, all requests regarding dates and/or timings of interviews/ selection exercises altered on the grounds of religion shall be rescheduled where possible.
- d) All teaching, learning and assessment activities shall be planned and implemented in accordance with the Policy.

16.2 Policy Priority Area 2: Protection of religious freedom and prevention of discrimination

The objective is to ensure that individuals have the right to freely practise their religion without discrimination. In addition, KUHeS shall ensure elimination of religious discrimination, harassment, prejudice, and bias. The following shall also apply:

KUHeS shall

- a) accommodate religious practices, such as providing space for daily prayers or religious holidays accordingly.
- b) implement a zero-tolerance policy for religious-based discrimination, establish clear reporting mechanisms and conduct disciplinary measures to individuals found with such malpractices
- c) accept the diversity in appearance of people with different religious and belief backgrounds and expression of cultural

diversity on religious dress or culturally affiliated dress (including for example sari, turban, hijab, clerical collars etc).

- d) consider health and safety considerations that would restrict certain modes of dress in particular contexts especially in the clinical teaching sites. In such cases, it shall be necessary for the University to consult with affected staff/students/stakeholders to see if an appropriate compromise can be reached.
- e) in cases of dispute or concern for health and safety implications about a particular form of dress or conduct, the decisions regarding such shall be in accordance with the KUHeS Occupational Health and Safety Policy.
- f) discourage the wearing of slogans and symbols which incite hatred of a person's religious belief or absence of belief shall constitute a breach of this Policy and may result in disciplinary action (refer to KUHeS Conditions of Service, Students Handbook, Code of Conduct and Ethics).

16.3 Policy Priority Area 3: Curriculum inclusivity and examination assessment

This priority area ensures curricula respect and acknowledge religious diversity. KUHeS shall encourage faculty to include diverse religious perspectives in course content and materials. The following shall also apply:

- a) As far as practicable, the Examination office and Executive Deans shall consult with both staff and Director of Student Affairs so that religious observance can be accommodated into the academic calendar, including scheduling of teaching and examinations.
- b) The assessment and examination period dates are fixed and publicised in advance and are aligned with other events in the academic calendar.

- c) The Executive Deans and Director of Student Affairs shall provide advice and support for students whose religious practices may coincide with the timing of examinations or assessments taken under controlled conditions. Proper record mechanism for the concerned parties shall be put in place to prevent abuse of the system.
- d) Any student unable to attend examinations on a sabbath, holy day or religious festival shall sit for the examinations as stipulated in the Students Assessment Rules and Regulations on deferred examinations (Ref. KUHeS Student Assessment Rules and Regulations)
- e) Any missed learning and work opportunities as a result of participation in religious festivals shall be expected to be made up in the students/staff time (Ref. KUHeS Students Assessment Rules and Regulations, KUHeS Conditions of Service and Clinical Policy).
- f) Every effort shall be made to avoid arranging examinations on a Sabbath or holy day for staff and students who have informed the examinations office as required. In such cases arrangements for the student to sit their examination and staff invigilation on an alternative date and venue shall be made.
- g) Deadlines for coursework assessment shall be communicated in advance to students. All students shall be expected to plan their work to be completed by the deadline and comply with Regulations in relation to assessment and examinations.

16.4 Policy Priority Area 4: Pastoral/spiritual support services

KUHeS shall offer opportunities for students and staff to explore and practise faith and spirituality. This includes facilities and information on places for prayer and worship, space for private reflection, opportunities to meet others, and advice on spiritual and ethical concerns.

KUHeS Chaplaincy team shall provide support for students and staff of all faiths such as:

- a) space and time for worship and private reflection within the University.
- b) confidential personal support to anyone with pastoral or spiritual needs.
- c) regular events to celebrate particular expressions of faith and spirituality.
- d) advice on spiritual and ethical concerns.
- e) support for faith networks and groups.
- f) information about local faith communities.
- g) social events and opportunities for people to meet.
- h) advice and support for the institution on religious, spiritual and ethical matters.
- i) may provide advice to students and staff on issues related to this Policy, for example, on how to manage their religious observance in regard to teaching, learning and assessment.

16.5 Policy priority area 5: Community engagements and external religious groups

The objective is to ensure that all University-sponsored events and programs respect diverse religious beliefs.

KUHeS shall

- a) consider event planning activities which shall include considerations for different religious beliefs and cultural diversity.
- b) offer a wide variety of menu options that cater for different dietary restrictions and cultural preferences such as vegetarian, vegan, halaal, gluten-free, and other dietary requirements.
- c) prescribe the appropriate dressing for each event.

16.6 Policy Priority Area 6: Interfaith dialogue and religious observance

This Policy encourages dialogue, religious observance and collaboration among individuals of different religious and cultural backgrounds. The objective is to collaborate with the University community and inter-faith-based organisations to promote religious tolerance. The following shall be adhered to:

- a) The University shall partner with local interfaith groups to host community-wide events in accordance with this Policy.
- b) All internal religious groupings and clubs shall be registered with the DSA through the Chaplain.
- c) All external religious groups shall be made aware that despite KUHeS campuses being public property, their right of access will be under permission from University Registry.
- d) Student faith societies should adhere to KUHeS policies when organising a student faith activity/event.
- e) Any distinguished external speakers invited by the KUHeS religious societies shall also be subjected to University approval procedures.
- f) All stakeholders shall be required to work in accordance with their contract regardless of religious or philosophical belief.
- g) Requests for temporary adjustments to work arrangements due to religious observance shall be respected with sufficient notice. Individuals may also wish to consider permanent adjustments to their contract of employment in order to support religious observance.
- h) Staff practising religious or philosophical beliefs shall be allowed to take annual leave on the dates of most significance to them and may request to use their annual leave grant on such dates.

- i) Staff may occasionally be required to work at times outside of their usual working hours. If staff have reasons not to work at particular times because of religious observance requirements, these needs should be raised with their line manager at the earliest opportunity and should be taken into account where possible by managers in scheduling work.
- j) Any member of the KUHeS community is entitled to observe the traditions of their religion in line with the Constitution of Malawi.

16.7 Policy Priority Area 7: Reporting and response mechanisms

The priority area seeks to establish procedures for reporting and responding to incidents of religious discrimination and harassment. The following shall be the procedures:

- a) KUHeS shall create an online reporting portal and designate an adhoc Monitoring and Evaluation Committee to investigate and address reports promptly.
- b) all staff and students shall be oriented to an online reporting portal.
- c) students' incidences of religious discrimination shall be reported to the DSA through the Chaplain.
- d) the University Community shall lodge their religious grievances as per the grievance handling procedure (Ref. Grievance Handling Procedures)
- e) in case of discrimination, the University shall follow the grievances handling procedures (refer to KUHeS Whistleblowing Policy, Grievances Handling Procedures, Conditions of Service).

16.8 Policy Priority Area 8: Legal compliance

The priority area shall ensure that the University's practices remain in compliance with the Constitution of Malawi, relevant laws and regulations related to religious tolerance and freedom of expression.

The University shall

- a) regularly review the Policy to ensure it aligns with relevant legal requirements and best practices.
- b) declare invalid any Policy statements that is in conflict with Bills of Rights in the Constitution of Malawi.
- c) involve the KUHeS Legal team in handling all issues emanating from discrimination and malpractices violating religious freedom.

17. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Monitoring and evaluation of the Religious Tolerance Policy is an ongoing process to ensure that the Policy remains effective and responsive to the needs of individuals within the University community while upholding the principles of inclusivity and religious tolerance.

17.1 Establish Adhoc monitoring and evaluation committee

There shall be an adhoc committee responsible for overseeing the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the Policy. The committee shall comprise representatives from:

- a) DSA's office
- b) Chaplain's Office
- c) Schools
- d) Staff Welfare Committee
- e) Registry
- f) Staff Union
- g) Students Representative Council (SRC)

17.2 Key performance indicators

KUHeS shall define key performance indicators (KPIs) that align with the Policy's goals. The KPI's may include increased awareness of religious tolerance, reduced incidents of religious discrimination, and improved satisfaction among the University community.

17.3 Data for impact assessment

KUHeS shall collect data on an ongoing basis to assess the Policy's impact. This shall include:

- a) Demographic data on religious affiliation and identity.
- b) Records of reported incidents of religious discrimination or harassment.
- c) Results of surveys and feedback from the University students and staff.
- d) Attendance and participation data for diversity and inclusion events.

17.4 Reports and feedback

The adhoc Monitoring and Evaluation Committee shall produce annual reports summarising the data and findings from the monitoring process. These reports shall include an analysis of the Policy's impact, challenges encountered and recommendations for improvements. In addition, feedback shall come from surveys, focus groups, awareness and open forums, to gather input from individuals within the University community. The reports and feedback shall be used for continuous improvement of the University environment.

17.5 Review and Update

KUHeS shall review and update the Policy every five years to respond to the evolving needs of the University community and align with emerging best practices.

18. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

It is important to note that while there are financial implications associated with the implementation of a Religious Tolerance Policy, the benefits of a more inclusive and tolerant University community can lead to improved staff and student retention, positive institutional reputation, a diverse and committed University body. The University

shall be responsible for financing its own planned activities related to the implementation of Religious Tolerance such as awareness campaigns, monitoring and evaluation among others while upholding the principles of inclusive and religious tolerance. Proper planning and budgeting by the individual religious groups and clubs shall be encouraged to finance their activities. It is important to note that the University shall not fund individual organisations and clubs for their planned activities.