

Religious Literacy Leadership

What you can expect from the programme

The programme is intellectually rooted in knowledge and evidence about attitudes to religious faith and the types of responses which are commonly made in higher education settings. It also draws on the range of experiences, skills and practices already present in universities and elsewhere. The briefing event for Vice Chancellors aims to explore the problems and possibilities which arise and provides four key resources for developing leadership responses:

Analysis

Based on a comprehensive review of the literature and new primary research conducted with students, staff and leaders in universities, the programme has developed a close analysis of the challenges of religious literacy in higher education. This is based on the assumption that universities help shape society and its future leaders and have a key role to play in leading

thoughtful, informed debate and practice in relation to religious faith across society.

This analysis will be presented at the event and will be available to participants in printed form. The full analysis will be published as a book later in the programme.

Network

The programme brings together a network of university leaders who are interested in developing leadership to meet the challenges of religious faith for their institutions and society more widely. A group of ten Vice Chancellors have agreed to be 'Religious Literacy Leadership Champions' (see www.religiousliteracyHE.org). In this they are champions for the programme, not necessarily champions at religious literacy.

They are a standing resource to each other and to other Vice Chancellors wishing to explore and develop their leadership on issues relating to religious faith.

By sharing knowledge, skills and experiences, the network of participants and champions stands as a collaborative resource for developing leadership stances.

Resource links

There are materials and resources for religious literacy in a number of settings. Many of these have been developed for use in community and social action contexts. A more limited number are intended specifically for higher education institutions. Based on a comprehensive review of existing materials and resources, and in a process of their translation for HEI settings, the programme maintains a resource base of practices and policies to underpin religious literacy leadership in universities.

This will be available as part of the programme pack where resources are systematically presented in terms of relevant HEI themes and issues to which they relate. This makes them simple to access and use at the same time as providing a level of analysis and interpretation.

Case study scenarios

Drawing on new primary research, the programme has developed a range of case study scenarios derived from real-life instances and episodes. These represent the full range of challenges and possibilities posed by religious faith in university settings. They relate to four key policy arenas with which Vice Chancellors engage in their everyday leadership: student experience; equalities and diversity; widening participation and social mobility; and good campus relations (including prevention of violent extremism). They are intended to bring

to life the 'faith dimension' in the practices and policies of university settings – in registries and admissions, student services, chaplaincies, food and accommodation, alcohol, bars and events, timetabling, research and curricula.

These scenarios will be used to consider the stances of universities and their leaders and the possibilities for development. They are linked to resources which can support thoughtful, informed responses and will be available in print form to participants.

Taking the Programme Forward

The programme starts with Vice Chancellors because it is their leadership that will determine how their senior staff and departments operationalise religious literacy in their institutions. They are also key communicators of the stances they take and will therefore lead the agenda in terms of shaping intelligent and informed engagement with religious faith in the wider world.

Following the Vice Chancellors' event, you will be invited to delegate other senior managers to two subsequent one-day workshops in either London or York. These will focus on operational issues and resources for developing practices which reflect a thoughtful, informed approach to religious faith.

The religious literacy leadership programme is subject to continuous reflection and evaluation. Learning will continue to inform the programme and evaluative reports will be available to leaders across the sector to inform a wider appreciation and understanding of the issues and the potential for further development. These will be published both as policy documents and in academic formats in due course.

A conference will be held in London in early 2011 to consider the evaluations, reflect on learning and consider challenges and opportunities for the continuing development of religious literacy leadership.