



Friedrich-Alexander-Universität
Office of Equality and Diversity

Code of Conduct on Religious and Ideological Diversity at FAU

November 17, 2021

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Preamble

As a cosmopolitan university, the values and basis for action of Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg (FAU) are rooted in innovation, diversity and passion. It is shaped by the diversity of its members. As part of developing a university-wide strategy, the importance of diversity is already reflected in these three values as a basis. A wide range of subjects is equally as important as the diversity of cultures and individuals and respectful cooperation within the University.

FAU wants to ensure that all members of the University enjoy equal access to research, teaching and life on campus. In addition to gender, age, nationality, ethnicity, disability and sexual orientation, religion and ideological beliefs are two further key dimensions of diversity. The University opposes any form of discrimination or disadvantage, including on religious or ideological grounds, and stands for appropriate recognition and consideration of the diverse needs of its members, including their religion and ideological beliefs.

The academic study of religions is firmly established at FAU. In addition to Christian theologies and institutions such as the Erlangen Center of Islam and Law in Europe (FAU EZIRE) and the Bavarian Research Center for Interreligious Discourses (BaFiD), the Department of Islamic Theological Studies was established at FAU in 2012 as one of the five national centers for Islamic theology in Germany. In 2003, FAU was the first university in Germany to provide training to teachers in Islamic religious education as part of the "Erlangen model".

Its vision of a cosmopolitan, diverse and innovative university means that FAU considers its responsibility to take a constructive approach to the diversity of religion and beliefs of its members, and has drafted a code of conduct for this purpose.

¹ The FAU Code of Conduct is based on the "Verhaltenskodex zur Religionsausübung" (Code of Conduct for Religious Expression) of Universität Hamburg (cf. <https://www.fid.uni-hamburg.de/verhaltenskodex-religionsausuebung-inkl-ausfuehrungsbestimmung-en.pdf>) and has been adapted to meet the conditions and special requirements at FAU.

1. The University is an institution for research, teaching, and education. As a state institution, it is open to the diversity of its members in their religions and ideologies. It is committed to the methods and standards of scientific research and teaching. Freedom in research and teaching includes freedom from influence over methods, standards, organization and facilities that must not be compromised by influences not relevant to research, which include those motivated by religion or ideology. Content of a religious or ideological nature as a topic of research, teaching and education must therefore conform to the relevant academic standards. The rejection of academic content, methods and persons in research and teaching, in particular those that criticize religion and ideology, solely for religious or ideological reasons does not meet these academic standards.

2. FAU guarantees the religious freedom of its members, i.e., its researchers, students and staff. This involves not only the freedom to profess and to exercise a particular faith but also the freedom not to have a faith. This freedom allows believers to use religious symbols that express their faith and to behave according to their faith.²

3. The exercise of religious and ideological freedom at the University is premised on recognition of others and respect for their faith or convictions, including lack of faith. A person's freedom extends only as far as another person's freedom remains unaffected. The freedom of all University members must be respected and all forms of discrimination are prohibited.³ All University members acknowledge the equality of the sexes and all gender identities and forms of sexual orientation as well as the right to equal participation in every aspect of University life.⁴

² Religious freedom may also include the use of religious symbols such as the cross, the Star of David, and various types of head covering and clothing.

³ Attempts to exert religiously or ideologically motivated pressure on the behavior of members of the University constitute coercion and will not be tolerated. The Executive Board will exercise its right to ban or expel persons from University premises in this case.

⁴ Insofar as the University decides on the deployment of its staff in teaching and research and the relevant administrative tasks, students are not entitled to request that they are not taught or examined by a person of a specific gender or by someone of a particular faith. For example, if a student refuses to accept certificates or other written documents handed over by staff members of a specific gender or religion, the student must bear all legal disadvantages.

4. In its institutional mission, the University pursues the primacy of research and teaching and considers itself neither an institution for individuals or groups to practice their religion, nor for celebrating or holding events, practices or rituals of a religious or ideological nature.⁵ In the same way, religious or ideological behavior and the use of religious or ideological symbols may not impair research, teaching and education.⁶

5. The unauthorized use of resources and institutions at FAU for one's own religious or ideological forms of expression is prohibited. FAU property, buildings and rooms may only be used in accordance with University activities.⁷ Accordingly, practices and rituals of a religious or ideological nature must be limited to the rooms provided/intended for this purpose.⁸ As part of their research and teaching mandate, academic institutions related to religion (theological chairs, academic centers) at FAU decide independently on the use of premises within their institutions.

6. The University is a place of mutual respect and tolerance.⁹ Conflicts arising from different religious or ideological beliefs and their expression as well as the demands of research, teaching, and education are to be resolved constructively. This requires all those involved to reject claims to primacy based on their religious or ideological beliefs. University members also commit to the University's primary mission and to equal participation in research, teaching, and education.

⁵ The primary purpose of the University as an institution must be respected. Thus, quiet prayer may be acceptable but not loud and demonstrative expressions of faith that interfere with the primary purpose. Ritual activities must therefore be non-disruptive or carried out in rooms assigned for that purpose.

⁶ Wearing religiously motivated clothing in the classroom is not prohibited as long as this clothing, such as full-faced veils, does not impact the self-evident demands of academic exchange, teaching and examinations (confirming the identity of the candidate). The statutory prohibitions of Bavaria regarding face covering must be observed. Section 26 (3) BayHIG: "Members of the university may not cover their faces in university facilities or at university events, unless this is contrary to university interests. In order to avoid undue hardship, the university may allow exceptions."

⁷ Section 2 (1) BayHIG; Section 4 of the FAU House Rules. https://www.doc.zuv.fau.de//G/Hausordnung/Hausordnung_FAU_english_20170526.pdf

⁸ Until such rooms are provided, religious or ideological practices and ritual activities may be tolerated in other areas of FAU as long as they do not interfere with teaching and research or general University operations or could be viewed by others as an unwelcome form of religious or ideological imposition. The relevant house rules must be observed. The University retains the right to refuse access to the premises for any violations of these rules. Events held on University premises and institutions by persons who belong to the University and those who do not must conform to academic standards and should be held with the involvement of University institutions and members where possible. Detailed information is available in the guidelines on room management.

⁹ In the context of this document, the concept of tolerance is regarded as a legal principle of values in the German Basic Law, within the meaning of the recognition of equal participation and plurality in society.

7. The plurality of religious and non-religious lifestyles at the University bars the daily organization of research, teaching and education along religious lines in all forms.¹⁰ This also applies to the scheduling of University activities and events. It is a sign of respect to acknowledge religious holidays¹¹; however, such consideration must be made in line with the demands of the University as an institution.¹² Taking dietary guidelines and restrictions into consideration is also a form of respect¹³ and should be practiced whenever it is possible without restricting the University's institutional mission.

8. University members shall champion these principles. Those responsible for ensuring that academic pursuit proceeds smoothly, such as research and teaching staff, will receive the right to ban or expel persons from the premises, effectively prohibiting the impairment or endangerment of the primacy of research and education at the University, and creating a climate of respect and mutual recognition.

¹⁰ Lectures and seminars and other University events are not organized in accordance with religious requirements such as daily routines. Students who choose not to attend lectures and seminars to participate in religious festivities bear the consequences. In individual cases, teaching staff may request that the student in question compensate for missed work.

¹¹ List of public holidays in Bavaria: <https://www.gesetze-bayern.de/Content/Document/BayFTG-1>

¹² The University does not observe any religious holidays which are not German public holidays or not days off as regulated by an employer or in accordance with the law.

¹³ The decision to include dishes in line with religious dietary guidelines and restrictions in student cafeterias and restaurants lies with the operators of these facilities. In the interests of cultural diversity, it would be desirable if Student Services to the best of their ability could include dishes that accommodate the dietary rules of the various religions.