



RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL FESTIVALS POLICY

Ashoka University recognises the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. These rights are absolute but manifestations of these beliefs are not. The right to manifest a belief may be qualified by the need to show 'respect for the differing worldviews, lifestyles, and identities of others.

The **Religious and Cultural Festivals** ²**Policy** outlines the procedures and guidelines related to organising on-campus religious and cultural festivals. Bonafide students, recognised student organisations, official clubs, and societies may organise such festivals. This policy is only applicable for festivals organised under the Student Life Office and is not a pan-University document.

Please be aware that as the campus culture grows and develops in the coming years, all policies may be reviewed, revised and updated. Student feedback on policies and implementation is welcome and encouraged.

Student Life Office

Email: life@ashoka.edu.in

¹ As an intellectual community, Ashoka attaches great value to freedom of expression and vigorous debate, but it also attaches great importance to mutual respect, and it deplores expressions of hatred directed against any individual or group. Respect for the rights and sensibilities of each other is essential in preserving the spirit of community at Ashoka. Actions that make the atmosphere intimidating, threatening, or hostile to individuals are therefore regarded as serious offences. Abusive or harassing behaviour, verbal or physical which demeans, intimidates, threatens, or injures another because of personal characteristics or beliefs or their expression, may be subject to University disciplinary procedure. Examples of personal characteristics or beliefs include but are not limited to sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, and disability. The University calls on all its members to display the appropriate sensitivity and to challenge expressions of racial, gender or ethnic bias whenever they encounter them. (**Guidelines for Protecting Freedom of Expression Article 5.1**)

²This policy covers any religion, religious belief or similar philosophical belief, but does not ordinarily cover political belief. There is no exhaustive definition of these beliefs, but in the case of law, it has been determined that in order to be protected by law a belief must be "cogent, serious and worthy of respect in a democratic society"

I. Pre-Event Procedure

A. Proposal Submission

1. Organiser(s) must reach out to the Student Life Office at least 10 working days prior to the festival event for approval. (**Refer to Annexure A**)
2. Only proposals submitted within the stipulated timeline will be considered for evaluation.
3. Organiser(s) cannot schedule or invite an external group or vendor in order to give them access to the University space(s) or community without declaring it while applying for event approval.

B. Evaluation & Approval

1. Festival events must not entail any ³religious content or rituals, but solely their spirit, essence and cultural aspect. There must not be any mandatory dress code to celebrate a festival on campus and students may only volunteer to follow a dress code.
2. Organiser(s) are expected to consider the academic calendar when selecting the date for the event. They should try and avoid the regular academic schedule so that the event does not compete with class time and access to resources. The event should preferably not occur the week before or the week of exams, or during university holidays.
3. Organiser(s) should read and understand the relevant University ⁴policies (including but not limited to *Policy against Sexual Harassment, Anti-Ragging Policy, Academic Integrity Policy, Guidelines and Regulations for Disciplinary Proceedings, and Guidelines on Protecting Freedom of*

³Harassment and discrimination of students on the grounds of religion, belief or non-belief at any festival events will not be tolerated and will be dealt as a disciplinary matter. Harassment on the grounds of religion or belief can occur for a variety of reasons, for example: a) on the grounds of a person's belief or non-belief, b) on the grounds of the belief or non-belief of someone with whom they associate, c) to join or leave a particular faith, d) to express or not express their faith, and e) because they have changed or renounced their religious/belief allegiance.

⁴Kindly go through the **Policy on Intra-University Events** for more information on the Marketing, Safety, Venue and General Guidelines for organising any event on-campus.

Expression) as well as state and national law. It is the expectation of the University that organiser(s) will reach out to the Student Life Office if/when a policy or law is unclear.

4. Organiser(s) must fully demonstrate that they have identified sufficient resources (financial, volunteers, etc.) to successfully plan and run the event for it to be approved.

C. Notification

1. Students will give prior notice to Team Operations and IT with complete logistical requirements at least 05 working days prior to the festival event after due review and approval by the Student Life Office.
2. Staff member(s) from the Student Life Office will be assigned as a Point of Contact (PoC) for facilitating the festival events.
3. The organiser(s) are mandated to submit a formalised closure report about the festival event conducted to the Office, no later than 10 working days from the event date.

II. Financial Protocols

1. The maximum approved budget for such events is INR 5000/- per festival inclusive of all costs for every academic year. The organiser(s) will be responsible for strategising and executing a financial plan to manage the event expenses within the sanctioned budget.
2. The organiser(s) must complete all financial transactions and submit the duly submitted reimbursement form enclosing all relevant receipts and bills (hard copy) within 10 working days from the date of the festival event.
3. All receipts presented for reimbursement must be legible and fully itemised. Personal expenses will not be accepted for reimbursement purposes.
4. Before any expenditure, financial approval should be sought from the Student Life Office by sharing a rough estimate of expected expenses with an itemised breakup of the total costs as well as the need for each item.
5. Kindly note that unauthorised expenditures of organiser(s) will not be reimbursed by the Student Life Office.

6. Organiser(s) may be sanctioned advance sums on a case-by-case basis for an approved festival event based upon evaluation by the Student Life Office.
7. The financial records should be available for audit whenever required and well-documented for future reference.
8. The University reserves the right to recover unanticipated and incurred event-related costs from the organiser(s).

III. General Guidelines

1. Organiser(s) must receive prior event approval from the Student Life Office before any financial commitments are made, invitations are sent out or event advertising occurs.
2. Organiser(s) will keep the Student Life Office in the loop for all communications that will be underway before, during and after with all stakeholders associated with the event.
3. Organiser(s) must notify the university authorities if an emergency or injury occurs during a festival event or activity organised by them. An incident report should be filed with the Student Life Office within 24 hours by the organiser(s). **(Refer to Annexure B)**
4. Organiser(s) are encouraged to build affiliations and collaborations with similar interest groups within the institution for mutual learning and growth as well as scale up participation.

⁵No individual or organisation may use the University's name, logos, restricted images, or other identifiers ("marks"), or any marks that suggest Ashoka University or any department, school or centre of Ashoka University except to the extent such individual or organisation has been authorised by the proper University officials or as permitted under trademark law. The Pro-Vice Chancellor (Administration and Finance) of the University is responsible for the general oversight and administration of the University's trademark policies. **(Guidelines on Protecting Freedom of Expression Article 8.1)**

All written materials that take the form of petitions, letters of protest, or declarations should have prominent disclaimers as headers and footers, examples of which follow below:

"We the undersigned, speaking in our individual capacity..."

"The views expressed above are those of the signatories alone and do not reflect those of Ashoka University."

(Guidelines on Protecting Freedom of Expression Article 8.4)

The use of the seal of the University on publications, manufactured articles, and the like is prohibited, except when specifically authorised by the University. Applications for such authorisation must be made to the Registrar of the University. **(Guidelines on Protecting Freedom of Expression Article 8.5)**

ANNEXURE A

Festival Event Proposal Form

Date of Application: _____

Name of Primary Organiser(s): _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Name of Secondary Organiser(s): _____

Phone: _____

Name of the festival: _____

I/We, hereby state that I/We have read the **Religious and Cultural Festivals Policy**, and understand all the processes and protocols stipulated. I/We will adhere to all Rules and Regulations of Ashoka University and follow all guidelines laid out, while ideating, planning and organising _____ festival.

I/We accept full responsibility for the completion of _____ festival event as per the guidelines stated in the policy document. I/We will follow all final decisions made by the Office in regard to Financials, Security, Branding, and Logistical aspects of the event.

Signature: _____

Enclose: A statement of purpose defining the proposed festival event/programme with the following indicators: (500-1000 words)

- 1) Event Description, 2) Marketing Strategy, 3) Proposed Date/s, 4) Scale and Reach,
- 5) Financials and Budget, 6) Brief Logistical Requirements, and 7) Documentation process

ANNEXURE A

Incident Report

Date of Incident: _____

Time of Incident: _____

Place of Incident: _____

Reported by: _____

Reported to: _____

Nature of Incident (policy violations/infrastructural damage/mental health/physical health/other) If other, please specify: _____

Mode (Online/Offline): _____

Brief description of the incident: _____

Action Taken: _____

Any other relevant information: _____
