

Secularism at university: what are we talking about?

“The public service of higher education and research is secular and independent of any political, economic, religious or ideological influence. It strives for the objectivity of knowledge; it respects diversity of opinion. It must ensure that teaching and research have the opportunity for free scientific, creative and critical development”. scientifique, créateur et critique”.

Article L.141.6 of the French Education Code

What is secularism?

In France, secularism is based on three fundamental principles:

- > Freedom of conscience and freedom to express one's beliefs while respecting public order;
- > separation between public institutions and religious organizations;
- > Equality of all citizens before the law, regardless of their beliefs or convictions.



Implementing secularism in higher education

The principles of secularism are applied differently depending on whether you are a student or a member of university staff.

One rule is common to all these statuses: **proselytism and propaganda are prohibited**. In addition, wearing signs or clothing expressing religious affiliation must not interfere with teaching or research activities nor disturb public order. This right may therefore be restricted in the context of certain teaching activities for reasons of safety or hygiene (for example, physical and sporting activities, practical work in certain scientific subjects).

Lastly, Law no. 2010-1192 of the 11th October 2010 prohibiting the concealment of the face in the public space prohibits the wearing of clothing designed to conceal the face. nfin, la loi n°2010-1192 du 11 octobre 2010 interdisant la dissimulation du visage dans l'espace public interdit le port d'une « tenue destinée à dissimuler son visage ».

About the students

Students, as users of the public higher education and research service, have the right to education regardless of their actual or presumed religious beliefs. They therefore have the right to wear visible religious symbols or clothing expressing a religious conviction on university campuses if they wish.

However, covering the face, even for religious reasons, is prohibited within university premises.

For employees, speakers and guests

Administrative and technical employees as well as teaching and research personnel are public agents. As such, they are subject to the duty of neutrality and must refrain from expressing their religious opinions in the performance of their duties. They must treat “all individuals equally and respect their freedom of conscience and dignity” (article L121-2 of the Public Service Code).

The French Education Code specifies that teacher-researchers have full independence and freedom of expression in the exercise of their teaching duties and research activities, subject to the reservations imposed on them by the principles of tolerance and objectivity, in accordance with university traditions and the provisions of this Code. Part-time teachers and external contributors are also subject to the same obligation of neutrality as public agents.

Persons invited to provide an occasional service, not bound by a public law contract with the university, for instance to give a conference, are not subject to the duty of neutrality.



Université de Lorraine fights against all forms of religious discriminations, and works to ensure that the principles of secularism are respected throughout the institution.

If you are a victim of discrimination or discriminatory harassment, or notice acts of proselytism, contact the Université de Lorraine's reporting system: :

+33 6 38 97 73 91

stop-violences@univ-lorraine.fr

If you have any questions about secularism, please contact the school's secularism officer:

referent-laicite@univ-lorraine.fr



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and republican
values in public
higher education
and research
establishments.
u2l.fr/charte-laicite**

