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More than £480,000 to tackle religious hate crime

Northumbria University, Newcastle, is working closely with students to create new and innovative projects to counter religion-based hate crime and harassment, thanks to new funding from the Office for Students (OfS).

The funding comes after 2016's 'Changing the Culture' report by the Universities UK Harassment Task Force revealed the nature and scale of student safeguarding issues in higher education, and highlighted a clear need for institutions to respond more effectively. Northumbria is one of 11 universities across the UK to have received a share of the £484,000 funding

and will now work closely with students and partners to tackle religion based hate crime, as part of a national collaborative network managed by the OfS.

The projects will be developed and delivered with students and cover a wide range of activity including training, raising awareness, digital innovation, and new approaches to prevention and reporting, which are specific to tackling religion-based hate crime. Professor Mike Rowe, from the Department of Social Sciences, will be overseeing Northumbria's activity.

"We are delighted that Northumbria is working with the Office for Students and other universities to address problems of religiously-motivated hate crime on campus," Mike said.

"Our project involves us working closely with students to better understand the nature of their experiences and to develop support for those directly affected. More widely, we will be developing 'myth-busting' materials around religious faith that will be used to promote a climate in which free and open debate can be had about sensitive matters but in a manner that is respectful of different religious perspectives.

"We want to help create an environment in which respect for students and staff who have religious faith, and those who have none, is fundamental and to reconcile this with principles of free speech, dialogue and debate that are at the heart of university education.

"Much of what we will be doing will be based directly on work with our students, including those from overseas, and with our colleagues to help create learning and teaching materials that can boost understanding about different religious faiths and promote dialogue among our communities. In addition, it is exciting that we will be contributing to a network of colleagues from across the country to shape good practice in the sector more widely."

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[More than £480,000 to tackle religious hate crime on campus](#) from [Northumbria University](#) on [Vimeo](#).

The OfS Chief Executive, Nicola Dandridge, said: “All students should feel safe and supported during their time in higher education so that they can continue with their learning and realise their potential. Universities are making progress in tackling the issues of hate crime and harassment on campus, but there is much more to be done.

“With student safeguarding and wellbeing a priority for the OfS, we are delighted to fund this network of new projects to tackle these issues. We will make sure that good practice and successful outcomes over the coming months are shared widely so that students across the country can benefit from this important initiative.”

Universities Minister Sam Gyimah said: “Our universities should be free of any form of hatred or discrimination – students have the right to feel safe and valued – so I’m delighted that this funding will be used to help tackle religion-based hate crime and harassment.

“The OfS was set up to champion students and it’s right that they are working closely with, and funding, universities to tackle important issues they face. I am taking a keen interest in the progress of this work.”

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Contacts



Rik Kendall

Press Contact

PR and Media Manager

Business and Law / Arts, Design & Social Sciences

rik.kendall@northumbria.ac.uk

07923 382339



Andrea Slowey

Press Contact

PR and Media Manager

Engineering and Environment / Health and Life Sciences

andrea.slowey@northumbria.ac.uk

07708 509436



Rachael Barwick

Press Contact

PR and Media Manager

rachael.barwick@northumbria.ac.uk

07377422415



James Fox

Press Contact

Student Communications Manager

james2.fox@northumbria.ac.uk



Kelly Elliott

Press Contact

PR and Media Officer

kelly2.elliott@northumbria.ac.uk



Gemma Brown

Press Contact

PR and Media Officer

gemma6.brown@northumbria.ac.uk