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Press release

## Code of Conduct for Religious Expression at Universität Hamburg

“The University is an institution for research, teaching, and education. It is secular and committed to ideological pluralism together with scientific methods and standards in research and teaching.” Thus reads the initial and simultaneously seminal sentence of the Code of Conduct for Religious Expression at Universität Hamburg, published today. The Code of Conduct and the corresponding executive decision of the Executive University Board will regulate from this day onwards respectful and peaceful relations between all members of the University relating to the practice of different faiths, thereby also guaranteeing the obligation to academic research and teaching.

“Isolated incidents have raised a number of questions on how to deal with religion in studies, teaching, and research, as well as in daily life at the University, and to clarify these, we have called upon the expertise of scientists and scholars from various disciplines,” says University president Univ.-Prof. Dr. Dieter Lenzen. “I am impressed by the result of the commission, which concisely summarizes the theological, sociological, psychological, and legal aspects of this challenging issue.” An executive decision of the Executive University Board consisting of 10 points based on the Code names its concrete ramifications. Both documents will be made available to all members of Universität Hamburg and to the public today.

### **Fundamental right to freedom of religion, use of religious symbols, and standards of scientific and scholarly research**

The Code of Conduct for Religious Expression sets forth that there be no restrictions on the right to freedom of religion for the members of Universität Hamburg, as stipulated in the Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany. Freedom of religion includes freedom of religious expression, including the use of religious symbols such as the cross, the Star of David, or the headscarf. In its Code of Conduct, Universität Hamburg calls upon its members to respect the freedom of religion and equality between the sexes for all members of the University.

The Code emphasizes, however, that as a secular institution, Universität Hamburg is obliged to follow the methods and standards of scientific research and teaching. This means that religious freedom ends where the scientific mission of Universität Hamburg is restricted or endangered: academic and scientific standards, for example, preclude the rejection of scientific content, methods, or persons on religious grounds. Research and teaching, for example lectures, may not be compromised by daily religious practices. In the case of religious holidays not covered by legal

regulations, the Code stipulates mutual consideration between all parties concerned, without any disruption to academic practice. Religious and ritual activities must be restricted to non-disruptive activities that take place in the Room of Contemplation.

In general, the Code of Conduct calls for respect, tolerance, and constructive solutions for all matters relating to religious expression.

### **The expert commission**

The University appointed an expert commission chaired by the philosopher Univ.-Prof. Dr. Birgit Recki to compile the Code of Conduct. The commission comprised 10 scientists and scholars from various disciplines at Universität Hamburg: Islamic theology, Catholic theology, Japanese Buddhism, Protestant theology, philosophy, child- and youth psychiatry, Islamic studies, (constitutional) law, Jewish philosophy and religion, and Islamic law.

#### **Link to the Code of Conduct for Religious Expression:**

<https://www.uni-hamburg.de/en/uhh/profil/leitbild/verhaltenskodex-religionsausuebung.html>

#### **Queries:**

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