

# Empowering Student-Led Advocacy: A Manchester Case Study in Fostering Sustainable Support for Muslim Medical Students and Staff in UK Universities

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Muslim medical students and staff face significant challenges in raising concerns within higher education institutions (HEIs), often encountering dismissive attitudes, inadequate responses from programme leaders, or short-lived superficial symbolic wins. Such attitudes contribute to a culture where Muslim concerns are trivialised and advocates for change are labelled disruptive. To address the pervasive issue of marginalisation within HEIs, the authors introduced the Manchester Muslim Medical Student Guide (MMMSG), aimed at fostering tangible and sustainable change [1].

This study explores the implementation and impact of the MMMSG at a medical school in Northern England. The authors engaged stakeholders, including faculty leaders and legal teams, to develop a comprehensive guide catering to the unique needs of Muslim students and staff. Informed by student questionnaires, focus groups and the authors' lived experiences, the MMMSG covers vital topics like accommodation, religious practices, attire and combating Islamophobia. It offers practical advice, email templates and university contact details for assistance and escalation. The guide maintains Islamic integrity while ensuring comprehensive coverage of

essential issues. Faculty engagement during its development ensured the department's deeper understanding of overlooked issues and equipped them with tools to address concerns effectively. The guide's effectiveness stems from its high-quality content and the accountability it establishes for faculty members.

The release of the MMMSG sparked nationwide interest, with the team supporting twelve healthcare-related faculties across the UK in tailoring the guide to their specific university and degree programmes, including dentistry, pharmacy, nursing and midwifery. Its impact led the Medical Schools Council (MSC) to develop a staff faith guidance document, providing recommendations on fostering inclusivity for students of faith [2]. Positive feedback from the General Medical Council (GMC) prompted plans for a document review and dissemination of a second edition.

The host university awarded the MMMSG a Highly Commended Award [3] and submitted the work for the Times Higher Award, highlighting its significant impact on student welfare and institutional inclusivity.

The MMMSG's success lies in its transformative impact on institutional culture and student experience. Through the data-driven approach and active involvement of students and faculty in its development, the guide became a catalyst for meaningful change, ensuring Muslim concerns were validated and compelling faculty leaders to address previously overlooked issues. The MMMSG has initiated a new era of collaboration between students and institutions, fostering positive transformations in healthcare education across the UK.

## References

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[2] Medical Schools Council [Internet]. Active Inclusion, Challenging Exclusions: Supporting students of different

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