

# MEMBERSHIP ADMISSION POLICY OF THE INTER FAITH NETWORK FOR THE UK

## 1) Membership of the Inter Faith Network for the UK

The Inter Faith Network for the UK (IFN) is a body which, as part of its work to promote inter faith understanding and co-operation for the public benefit, links organisations in membership.

IFN has four categories of membership<sup>1</sup>:

- National faith community representative bodies
- Local inter faith organisations
- National and regional inter faith organisations
- Educational and academic bodies with a focus on inter faith or multi-faith issues

IFN's member bodies share a commitment to the development of inter faith understanding and co-operation and to working together for this. IFN warmly welcomes applications from eligible bodies which share this commitment.

IFN operates where possible on a consensus basis, and its member bodies play an important role in promoting good inter faith relations in the UK through co-operative and mutually supportive working and in the governance of the organisation (through attendance at general meetings). This Membership Admission Policy has been agreed by IFN's member bodies and all decisions on membership ultimately rest with them.

Organisations may apply to join IFN if, in their view, they meet the eligibility criteria set out in this policy.

This document also contains information on the application process.

## 2) Eligibility Criteria

All organisations applying for membership of IFN should:

- i. support IFN's charitable aims; be ready to adopt the set of principles set out in *Building good relations with people of different faiths and beliefs*, and any statement of aims or values which is in place at the time that their application is to be considered by a general meeting;
- ii. be willing to abide by any Code of Conduct for member bodies in place at the time that their application is to be considered by a general meeting;
- iii. be formally structured with a written constitution<sup>2</sup>; and
- iv. meet the eligibility criteria relating to one of the categories of IFN membership as set out below.

### a) National Faith Community Representative Bodies

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<sup>1</sup> Note: 'National' in this document refers either to the UK as a whole or to any of its constituent nations. 'Regional' in this document refers to any area larger than a county within any of the constituent nations of the UK.

<sup>2</sup> A constitution is a written document that establishes the purposes of an organisation and the procedures by which it is governed.

A national faith community representative body may apply to join IFN if it:

- i. has an established presence in multiple localities within the UK or its constituent nations;
- ii. has been in existence for at least 5 years; or is a more recently established national faith umbrella body with a membership that includes a broad spectrum of established individual national faith community bodies;
- iii. has members / adherents who participate in inter faith activity at local level; and
- iv. demonstrates either a track record of engagement in inter faith activity or a commitment to the support of inter faith work.<sup>3</sup>

Note: Such bodies, if eligible under these criteria, may authorise a department or committee to apply for IFN membership where this would be more relevant than the whole organisation itself applying. Where a department or committee of a national faith community representative body joins instead of the organisation as a whole the written constitution of the organisation as a whole shall be required as part of the submitted application, as well as the Terms of Reference (or equivalent) of the department or committee.

**b) Local Inter Faith Organisations**

A local inter faith organisation may apply to join IFN if it:

- i. is working in a local area in the UK to promote understanding and cooperation between two or more faith communities;
- ii. has been in existence for at least 2 years;
- iii. shows genuine ownership by all the faith communities involved in its work, with representation in the governance structure of a range of faiths present in its local area (if multi-lateral) or of the faiths involved (if bi/tri-lateral); and
- iv. demonstrates a track record of regular inter faith activity.

**c) National and Regional Inter Faith Organisations**

A national or regional inter faith organisation may apply to join IFN if it:

- i. is a body which, as part of its primary purposes, is working nationally or regionally, to promote understanding between two or more faith communities and/or is engaged in co-operative working between two or more faith communities;
- ii. shows genuine ownership by all the faith communities involved in its work, with representation in the governance structure of the main faiths in its area of operation (if multi-lateral) or of the faiths involved (if bi/tri-lateral);

OR

is a recognised inter faith programme or centre connected to one or more national faith community representative bodies (or to one or more members of a national faith community representative body if this is an umbrella body) which are in membership of IFN;

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<sup>3</sup> Some bodies which have thus far been ineligible to apply for IFN membership in this category argue this has impacted on their ability to participate in local, regional or other inter faith organisations/ projects. Therefore, a track record of engagement may not be evident, but a demonstrable commitment to inter faith activity could be, for example, having produced publications encouraging their members to engage in inter faith activity and/ or a record of participation in Inter Faith Week, which is open to all.

- iii. has been in existence for 2 years; and
- iv. demonstrates a track record of regular inter faith activity at national or regional level.

**d) Educational and Academic Bodies with a focus on inter faith or multi-faith issues**

An educational or academic body may apply to join IFN if it:

- i. is either:
  - a) a UK or national educational or academic body, or a part of one, which, as a significant part of its work, focuses on, or promotes understanding of, relations between two or more of the major religions represented in the UK;
  - OR
  - b) a UK, national or regional institution, or a part of one, which, as a significant part of its work, is offering inter faith resources and educational programmes for use by the general public;
  - OR
  - c) an educational or academic unit which specialises in inter faith issues, linked to a faith tradition of which one or more representative bodies is in membership of IFN;
- ii. has been in existence for 2 years; and
- iii. demonstrates a track record of regular inter faith activity.

Note: Where a part, such as a department or committee, of an educational or academic body as at (i)(a) or (i)(b) above applies with the permission of the educational or academic institution as a whole, the institution must provide written authorisation as part of the application, and the written constitution of the organisation as a whole shall be required as part of the application process, as well as the Terms of Reference (or equivalent) of the part. Criteria (ii) and (iii) must be met by the part.

Note: In the case of a higher education institution, a multi-faith chaplaincy may be authorised to join being a part of such an institution.

**Notes to all eligibility criteria**

- 1) Where a body in membership of IFN wishes to change category of membership, it must apply afresh to the new category following the same process as other applicants. Where it does so, any length of existence required for eligibility within the new category shall be halved. It must meet all of that category's other eligibility criteria, and the rest of this Policy shall apply. If the body is applying to a category which enables a part of it to join instead of the whole, it is the overall institution which should meet the 'length of existence' criterion and the part which must demonstrate the relevant track record. This option shall not be open to bodies that are still in provisional membership.
- 2) Where in the opinion of the Board of Trustees a body is demonstrably a successor to another body which was in membership, and there is no substantive change to the body's aims and work, it shall be

permitted to 'take over' the former body's membership within the same category without submitting a fresh application. Where a body is demonstrably a successor, but there is substantive change to its aims or work, or where bodies have merged, it must apply afresh, but the length of existence of the former member body shall be taken into account. This option shall only be available for up to 18 months after the formal closure and/or withdrawal from membership of the former member body. Bodies admitted in this way shall be admitted to provisional membership in the same way as other bodies admitted to membership, and the rest of this Policy shall apply.

### **3) Application process**

Applications for membership shall be handled according to the following process:

- i. Applications are normally considered at the AGM, once a year. The date of this shall be announced on the IFN website.
- ii. Applications normally need to be received three months in advance of the AGM at which it is anticipated that they will be considered.
- iii. An applying body completes an application form and returns this to the IFN office along with a copy of its constitution and a statement about how it believes that it meets the criteria for eligibility for membership.
- iv. Applications are given preliminary consideration, in the light of the criteria, by the Membership Subcommittee, which is a subcommittee of IFN's Board of Trustees. The Subcommittee may request additional materials and / or a meeting with representatives of the applying body if it thinks this will be helpful.
- v. The Membership Subcommittee shall advise the Board of Trustees as to whether the applying body meets the relevant criteria. If the Board of Trustees agrees that the applying body meets the criteria it shall, subject to Section 4, recommend to IFN's member bodies in a general meeting that it admit the applying body to provisional membership.
- vi. If the Board of Trustees is uncertain on eligibility or has a concern relating to some aspect of this or relating to paragraphs 1 or 2 under Section 4 below, it may, in the course of its consideration, request that the Membership Subcommittee ask for further information or a meeting with representatives of the body. If the Board of Trustees concludes that the applying body does not meet the relevant criteria or for any other reason ought not to be admitted to membership, it shall inform the applying body of this, inviting it to submit any supplementary material and / or for its representatives to meet with the Membership Subcommittee (or any other of the Trustees), where this opportunity has not been afforded to it already.
- vii. If, after considering any additional material or submissions which have been provided, the Board of Trustees still concludes that the applying body does not meet the relevant criteria or for any other reason ought not to be admitted to

membership, it shall recommend to IFN's member bodies in general meeting that the application be rejected, stating its reasons for this recommendation.

- viii. If the Board of Trustees recommends that an applying body be admitted to provisional membership, the applicant shall be so admitted if approved by resolution passed by at least 75% of the eligible category members present and voting in person or by proxy and at least 50% of all other eligible members present and voting in person or by proxy. 'Eligible' means eligible in accordance with IFN's Articles of Association and 'category members' means members of IFN in the category of membership to which the applying body is applying.
- ix. If the Board of Trustees has recommended that an applying body not be admitted to provisional membership, the application shall not be put to a vote unless a demand for such a vote is made by at least 10 member bodies present at the relevant meeting in person or by proxy.
- x. If such a vote is so demanded, the applying body shall be admitted to membership if a resolution is passed by at least 75% of the eligible members present and voting in person or by proxy that the applying body be admitted to provisional membership.
- xi. Following admission to provisional membership, a provisional member shall have all the rights and responsibilities of any other member body for the period of its provisional membership.
- xii. Provisional membership shall last until membership is affirmed or revoked, which shall be decided, in a review at a general meeting, within 3 (but normally 2) years after admission as a provisional member.
- xiii. Before the general meeting's review the Membership Subcommittee shall assess the provisional member body and recommend to the Board of Trustees either that the provisional member's membership be a) affirmed (making it a full member body) or b) revoked or c) that its provisional membership continue until another review to be held at or before the second AGM after the first review. The Board of Trustees shall consider the Membership Subcommittee's recommendation and then propose a resolution to the general meeting. If the Board of Trustees proposes b) or c) it shall state its reasons for the proposal.
- xiv. A resolution to affirm or revoke a provisional member's membership or to continue provisional membership for a further period shall be passed if approved by at least 50% of eligible members present and voting at the meeting in person or by proxy.
- xv. If a resolution to affirm or revoke membership is put to the meeting and lost, the provisional member's provisional membership shall continue until a second review meeting as in point xiii above.
- xvi. If a resolution to continue provisional membership for a further period is put to the review meeting and lost, the provisional member's membership shall be revoked.

- xvii. At a second review in general meeting the Board of Trustees shall propose either a resolution that the provisional member's membership be affirmed or (giving reasons) a resolution that it be revoked.
- xviii. If a resolution to affirm membership is put to the meeting and lost, membership shall be revoked. If a resolution to revoke membership is put to the meeting and lost, membership shall be affirmed.

#### **4) Other considerations**

1. If an applying body has a remit similar to that of IFN; or if it has a name, working name or other identifier which is similar to that of IFN or is likely to cause confusion with the name, working name or other identifiers used by IFN, and the applying body is unwilling to make changes proposed by the Board of Trustees, the Board of Trustees may recommend to member bodies in general meeting that the application not be accepted. Admission to, and continued membership of, IFN shall be conditional on not using any name, working name or other identifier likely to cause confusion with the name, working name or other identifiers used by IFN.
2. If an applying body meets the criteria but the Board of Trustees considers that it would not be in the interests of the IFN for the applying body to become a member body of IFN, it may recommend to member bodies in general meeting that that application not be accepted, stating its reasons for this recommendation.
3. Membership is seen as involving a common commitment to working together for good inter faith relations which is taken forward in many ways and that it is recognised that within different traditions there are different policies and approaches to inter faith engagement. Membership does not imply a particular approach on the part of any organisation beyond that set out in IFN's guidelines *Building good relations with people of different faiths and beliefs*, a document to which all member bodies sign up.
4. Inclusion in the category of membership of national faith community representative body does not constitute endorsement by member national faith community bodies of the beliefs, practices, provenance or traditions of any other member national faith community representative bodies.

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## Annex to the Membership Admission Policy

