

Genuine Occupational Requirements (GORs)

This summary sheet has been developed for parishes, who are wishing to recruit to a vacancy which may require a genuine occupational requirement (there is a genuine need for the jobholder to be a practising Christian in order to undertake the role). This guidance is relevant for PCC employees and volunteers.

What is a GOR?

In very limited circumstances it will be lawful for an employer to treat people differently if it is a genuine occupational requirement that the job holder must be of a particular religion or belief. When deciding if this applies, it is necessary to consider the nature of the work and the context in which it is carried out. Jobs may change over time and organisations should periodically consider whether the requirement continues to apply, particularly when recruiting (*ACAS Guide on Religion and Belief in the Workplace*).

Implications to think about when applying a GOR

These are the types of questions an employer needs to ask itself before applying a GOR. This list is not exhaustive, and employers should undertake further research and obtain further advice if required.

- GOR argument is limited to matters which are absolutely necessary in order to undertake the professional activity in question.
- Need to be able to demonstrate and justify the reason for a vacancy requiring a GOR and relate it to the overall ethos of the organisation.
- A central function of the job must reflect the GOR
- There are clear links between the Christian purpose and ethos of the organisation, described in the organisation context section, and the job as stated in this description
- The GOR is clearly featured in the list of the main tasks in the job description
- The knowledge/skills/experience required to carry out the GOR and so reflect the ethos are clearly stated in the person specification
- It is important to remember that (as the ACAS guide makes clear) employers should consider whether there are alternatives to applying an occupational requirement. For instance, if only a small part of the job requires a Christian then it may be possible to redistribute work or re-organise roles in such a way as to avoid applying a religious requirement to a particular post. Alternatively it may be sufficient for an employee to have some awareness/knowledge of the Church rather than active belief.

- Think about whether the GOR needs to be denomination specific – in many cases it is likely to be sufficient for the GOR to cover a practising Christian in the CoE or another member denomination of Churches Together in England.

Useful websites

ACAS Guide on Religion and Belief in the Workplace

This covers information in relation to the Equality Act legislation and the implications for employers to consider in relation to religion and belief. Appendix 1 provides detail on GORs and the things for employers to consider.

http://www.acas.org.uk/media/pdf/f/l/religion_1.pdf

Diocese of London

The Diocese of London has a webpage about GORs and has listed seven main questions which employers should ask themselves before applying a GOR to a role

<http://www.london.anglican.org/kb/occupational-requirements/>

Examples of wording for Job Descriptions

The following are examples only of the types of wording which could be used/adapted to include in job descriptions and person specifications for where there is a GOR and/or duties reflected. Parishes and employers need to review the requirement for a GOR and include wording on the job description and person specification to reflect the actual requirements for their role/vacancy.

- Note: In accordance with the equality act 2010 it is a genuine occupational requirement that the post holder is a practicing Christian and we would expect our <job title> to adhere to our values as a church.
- There is a genuine occupational requirement for the successful applicant to be a committed Christian. It will be necessary to work on <number > Sundays, <number> Saturdays per month and some evenings. There will be a requirement to work on those Public Holidays which are also major Christian feasts.
- There is a Genuine Occupational Requirement for the job holder to be a practising Christian: -
 - Vibrant and active Christian faith: this is essential for the credibility and performance of this role
 - Secure understanding of the Christian faith and ability to engage young people in faith issues
- Committed to:
 - Being an active member of the church.

- Prayer, evangelism, bible study and worship and to personal spiritual development.
 - Develop, communicate and implement the vision for youth ministry within the church and in the community.
 - Engage in the vision, prayer and pastoral life of the church and to contribute to church-wide events.
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- Hours of employment: <number> hours per week, including Sunday mornings and some evenings. One designated free day per week.
 - Participate in the delivery of “special” services and events targeted at families and children
 - Attend PCC and other church meetings as required

The information contained in this document is guidance only and is up-to-date at the time of writing. However, you should not rely exclusively on this document and certainly not replace it for professional advice. Parishes should always consider gaining further advice (including legal advice) before applying a GOR. The Chelmsford Diocesan Board of Finance cannot accept liability for people’s acts or omissions that are based solely on the contents of this document.