

Section Four: Religion

(Relevant legislation includes, in particular, sections 319(2)(e) and 319(6) of the Communications Act 2003, and Articles 9, 10 and 14, of the European Convention on Human Rights, and the BBC Charter and Agreement.)

The rules in this section apply to religious programmes.

Principles

To ensure that broadcasters exercise the proper degree of responsibility with respect to the content of programmes which are religious programmes.

To ensure that religious programmes do not involve any improper exploitation of any susceptibilities of the audience for such a programme.

To ensure that religious programmes do not involve any abusive treatment of the religious views and beliefs of those belonging to a particular religion or religious denomination.

Rules

- 4.1 Broadcasters must exercise the proper degree of responsibility with respect to the content of programmes which are religious programmes.

Meaning of a “religious programme”:

A religious programme is a programme which deals with matters of religion as the central subject, or as a significant part, of the programme.

- 4.2 The religious views and beliefs of those belonging to a particular religion or religious denomination must not be subject to abusive treatment.
- 4.3 Where a religion or religious denomination is the subject, or one of the subjects, of a religious programme, then the identity of the religion and/or denomination must be clear to the audience.
- 4.4 Religious programmes must not seek to promote religious views or beliefs by stealth.

- 4.5 Religious programmes on television services or BBC ODPS must not seek recruits. This does not apply to specialist religious television services. Religious programmes on radio services may seek recruits.

Meaning of “seek recruits”:

Seek recruits means directly appealing to audience members to join a religion or religious denomination.

- 4.6 Religious programmes must not improperly exploit any susceptibilities of the audience.

(Regarding charity appeals in programming and appeals for funds by broadcasters, television broadcasters should refer to Rules 9.33 and 9.34, and 9.36 to 9.39. Radio broadcasters should refer to Rules 10.11 and 10.12).

- 4.7 Religious programmes that contain claims that a living person (or group) has special powers or abilities must treat such claims with due objectivity and must not broadcast such claims when significant numbers of children may be expected to be watching (in the case of television), or when children are particularly likely to be listening (in the case of radio), or when content is likely to be accessed by children (in the case of BBC ODPS).

(For the meaning of “likely to be accessed by children” see Section One: Protecting the Under-Eighteens.)