



Code of Conduct for Shariah Councils

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Summary

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This Code sets out minimum standards for Shariah Councils and similar service providers, to ensure fairness, accountability, gender equity, and sensitivity to the needs of service users, particularly women. Organisations adopting this code commit to transparent, ethical, and rights-based Islamic divorce processes.

This is a summary of the full Code of Conduct

1. Transparency

Clearly publish panel members' names, qualifications, organisations' address, and decision-making procedures. Provide written reasons for decisions, referencing relevant Islamic legal principles.

2. Costs

Display all fees upfront.

Offer reductions or waivers for those with low income or hardship.

Never charge for complaints or appeals.

3. Timeframes

Publish clear timeframes (e.g. max. 6 months).

Provide refunds or fee reductions if delays occur without justification.

4. Complaints and Appeals

Maintain a fair, confidential complaints process with timely responses (within 14 working days).

Offer an appeals mechanism, ideally involving external or independent reviewers.

5. Step-by-Step Process

Follow a consistent process from application to outcome: eligibility check, any conflict with state law, any impact of domestic abuse, optional reconciliation, hearing (if needed), written decision, divorce certificate, post-divorce support.

6. Gender Representation

Aim for 50% women on decision-making panels and set clear targets to achieve this.

Include women in all public-facing roles and case support.

7. Visibility of Women

Ensure women are visible throughout the organisation to reflect and support the female-majority user base.

8. Panel Training

All panel members must complete accredited training in:

- Domestic abuse and coercive control, trauma-informed approaches, and safety planning.
- Safeguarding for women, children, and vulnerable adults.
- UK family law basics, including marriage validity, divorce, and parental rights.
- Equality law, including obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and gender equality in service provision.
- Trauma-informed counselling, using compassionate, non-retraumatising approaches.

Training must be renewed every two years, and recorded in a training log.

9. Gender Representation

Offer all Islamic divorce routes: Talaq, Khul', Faskh. Prioritise the quickest and least burdensome option - recognising that applicants have usually exhausted other options.

10. Financial Responsibilities

Where no legal marriage exists, apply Islamic principles to encourage maintenance, deferred mahr, and mut'ah. Support voluntary compliance through written agreements and community accountability.