

POLICY

Management of Multi-Faith Spaces Policy

Contact Officer

Head of Student Services

1. Introduction

The University of Worcester is a secular institution but recognises the commitment of individual staff and students to pursue a spiritual and religious practice and actively supports their right to do so in an atmosphere of tolerance and respect. The University supports the diversity of staff and student population and acknowledges the need for suitable facilities to enable staff and students to pray/reflect/contemplate during the standard academic day. The University will, as far as is reasonably practicable, provide space appropriate for the purpose of prayer, reflection and contemplation at key campus locations.

2. Overview

The University of Worcester is committed to promoting equality and diversity and aims to provide an inclusive learning and working environment where staff and students of all religions and beliefs, or those who have no belief, can thrive.

The University seeks to ensure that:

- Individuals are not treated less favourably than others because of their actual or perceived religion, belief or non-belief
- Policies, practices and provisions are based on relevant criteria, which do not discriminate on the grounds of religion, religious belief or similar philosophical belief, and do not put people of any specific religion or belief at a disadvantage when compared with other people
- Individuals and groups are treated with dignity and fairness whatever their religion and/or belief
- Where possible, appropriate services are provided to meet the cultural and religious needs of all staff and students

3. Scope and Responsibilities of the Policy

This policy applies to all staff and students at the University of Worcester. Visitors (including contractors and other individuals) will be expected to abide by this policy.

The University acknowledges that flexibility is needed in order that individual needs can be met.

The legislation relating to this area includes:

- The Equality Act 2010
- The Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006
- The Human Rights Act 1998

The Management of Faith Spaces Policy should be read in conjunction with the University's [Code of Practice on the Freedom of Speech](#) and the [Equality Framework](#)

4. Policy

4.1 Facilities for Prayer, Contemplation and Reflection

It is appropriate that students and staff should have space on campus to be able to pray, contemplate and reflect away from the constant noise and interruptions of modern university life.

There are designated multi-faith rooms at the St John's and City Campus.

- At the City Campus the Prayer and Quiet Room is located in CHLG030, with adjacent washing facilities. The Jenny Lind Chapel is also available for prayer and quiet reflection when not in other use.
- At the St John's Campus the Prayer and Quiet Room is located in BB179, with adjacent washing facilities
- The Multi Faith Chaplaincy Meeting Room, BB178, is available to all faith groups and for services

4.2 Purpose of the spaces

The University does not in any way wish to duplicate or replicate the provisions that students and staff can access within the community and information about local provision can be accessed via the University website (<http://www.worcester.ac.uk/student-services/664.htm>)

Prayer space on campus is intended to enable students and staff to pray, reflect or contemplate, in a location that does not remove them from campus for extended periods during the standard academic day.

These spaces are for use during standard building opening hours and appropriate community facilities should be used at all other times.

4.3 Guidance on the use of spaces

The following provides guidance on protecting students' and staff's right to worship whilst complying with the University's duty to protect them.

- Prayer room speakers and prayer leaders are to be treated the same way as external speakers invited to events and the University's [Code of Practice on the Freedom of Speech](#) should be consulted to ensure that a risk assessment is carried and if required a request is submitted 28 days ahead of the events (see paragraph 4 of the Code). All faith, and philosophical speakers must be treated equally in accordance with current legislation.

- Prayer and Quiet Rooms are managed by the Chaplaincy and are not to be controlled by any single student population or group. All prayer rooms are considered to be multi-faith.
- Where prayer room events are contentious or driven by single denominational allegiance, they need to be monitored closely and this means deploying appropriate (and specialised) Chaplaincy resources to the area. This can only ever be sanctioned as a single event and where previously approved by the University under the terms of the [Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech](#).
- Prayer rooms are to be checked carefully for posters, materials and contact details on a daily basis. Only material that has been approved by the Chaplaincy is to be permitted to be posted or left therein.
- With the exception of prayer books and scripture, only English should be permitted for written materials in the prayer rooms or on white boards were permitted.
- All Student Union (and any other University based) faith leaders should be formally briefed (annually) on the use of prayer room protocol by the University and this briefing should include an SU representative
- All external prayer room speakers and prayer leaders should be briefed on prayer room protocol and sign to signify compliance, and this should include a briefing on the University's Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech and Prevent.

The above are based upon good practice across the HEI sector in England; they are not about policing but firmly about protecting students, which is an institutional requirement. They are not exhaustive, but do provide a sound basis for facilitation of spiritual and safe religious practice.

Date Approved	5-10-2016
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Related Policies, Procedures, Guidance, Forms or Templates	Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech Equality Framework
Policy/Policies Superseded by this document	N/A