

Prayer and contemplation facilities policy

1. Introduction

This Policy sets out the Birmingham City University's commitment and arrangements for managing prayer and faith facilities; this includes the advice and support available to staff and students.

Birmingham City University's primary purpose is the advancement of education through its status as an exempt charity within the meaning of the Charities Act and borne out by the mission, "To transform the prospects of individuals, employers and society through excellence in practice-based education, research and knowledge exchange."

The University will strive to ensure its practices do not disadvantage any groups because of their religion or belief (see language and definitions), based on the principle that individuals have the right to their own belief system without preaching to others who may not share their religion or belief and that all religions and beliefs are treated with respect.

The University is committed to creating a welcoming, inclusive learning community where everyone has an equal chance to succeed based on merit. We have a large and diverse student population from 80 countries, with over a third of staff from Black and minority ethnic (BME) backgrounds and a wide range of religions or belief amongst our student population. As part of our commitment to support the welfare of our students we aim to make sufficient chaplaincy and pastoral support available to students. Prayer rooms and other faith related facilities that are available will be for the benefit of all students and all faiths.

2. Scope

This Policy applies to all current staff and students at Birmingham City University.

3. Definitions ¹

¹ Source- [ECU – Religion and Belief](#)

- Religion - any religion or reference to religion, including a reference to a lack of religion
- Belief - any religious or philosophical belief or reference to belief, including a reference to a lack of belief.

'Religion or belief' means the full diversity of religious and belief affiliations within the United Kingdom (UK), including non-religious and philosophical beliefs such as atheism, agnosticism and humanism.

4. Principles

General

1. The University will try to facilitate the observance of religion and belief by students, staff and visitors in a safe environment free from unfair or unlawful discrimination and harassment as reflected in various policies such as the *Equality and Diversity in Employment Policy*.
2. The University's facilities for prayer and contemplation are for permitted users only (Birmingham City University's staff and registered students²), who must observe and uphold the applicable Conditions of use set out in this policy
3. The University will not allow segregation³ on the basis of religion and belief or any of the protected (equality) characteristics in any academic meetings or at events on campus or organised in the University's name.
4. Any designated university or non-university facility directly or indirectly supported by Birmingham City University for religious observance, prayer or relaxation and contemplation must not be used to advance extremist views and ideologies that could draw individuals into terrorism.
5. All designated University facilities are open to all staff and students and use of the facilities cannot be restricted or prohibited by an individual or group over other permitted users.
6. If the University becomes aware that facilities for prayer and contemplation are not being used for the intended purpose, use of the facilities will be restricted or prohibited.

Specific

7. When a student embarks upon a programme of study at the University they make a formal commitment to attend and to engage fully with their studies. This is both for the benefit of the individual student and the cohort with whom they are studying as our students learn greatly from one another. Where a student wishes to participate in religious observance and there is not a University based facility available, the student

² Invited guests or visitors to the University can use prayer or contemplation facilities with prior permission from the University.

³ Segregation on the basis of gender is permissible during collective religious worship as it is except from equality law – please refer to *Exceptions from equality law for religious practice and observance* in **Annex 1**.

may wish to attend such a facility away from the University, but must be mindful of complying with the University's [Student Engagement Policy](#) if they do so.

8. Institutional procedures such as the *Exceptional Circumstances Procedure* or *Student Withdrawal and Interruption of Studies Policy* should be used as appropriate by students to request time off for observance of religious holy days or extended submission deadlines for assignments on the basis of religious holy days observance.
9. The University, in its duty of care, safeguarding and welfare of students, will try to provide sufficient chaplaincy, pastoral and wellbeing support for all students - please refer to Chaplaincy, Pastoral and Wellbeing Support in **Annex 1**.
10. If a designated facility for prayer or contemplation (as listed in **Annex 1**) will feature an external speaker, then the University's *External Speaker Event Form and Policy* must be used.

5. Conditions of use

Use of the University's prayer and contemplation facilities by all permitted users are subject to the University's *Health and Safety, Equality and Diversity in Employment and Dignity at Work Policies*; and governed by the following general conditions of use:

- For health and safety reasons, the maximum capacity of each facility cannot be exceeded;
- Each facility should be left in a clean and tidy state; and free of religious objects, publications or imagery after use; and
- Each facility should be available to all regardless of location and is for the exclusive use of permitted users i.e. Birmingham City University's staff and registered students.

Equality Impact Analysis Statement

Birmingham City University's commitment to equality means that this policy has been screened, paying due regard to the general duty in relation to the relevant protected characteristics, the use of comprehensible, inclusive language, and the avoidance of stereotypes. This document is available in alternative formats on request.

ANNEX 1: Guidance to the Birmingham City University Policy for Managing Prayer and Contemplation Facilities

Prayer and contemplation facilities

The current complement of designated prayer and contemplations facilities at BCU for students and staff is as follows (correct as of December 2015): source - Campus Management & Services

University Site/Building	Prayer/contemplation facility	Wash/ablution facilities
City North Campus	Yes	Yes
City South Campus	Yes	No
Parkside	No	No
Millennium Point	Yes	Yes ⁴
Curzon Building	No	No
University House	No	No
Birmingham Conservatoire	No	No
School of Jewellery	No	No
School of Art, Margaret Street	No	No
BCU International College	Yes (Ruskin Hall only)	No

Details of where [prayer facilities are available across all University sites](#) can be found in the Health and Wellbeing Section of Student Services' iCity pages.

Chaplaincy, Pastoral and Wellbeing Support

The University offers chaplaincy and pastoral care for students and staff via the [Chaplaincy Team](#) (faith, pastoral and spiritual advisers). They work closely with our counsellors and specialist advisers in supporting all aspects of a student's wellbeing, whether spiritual, mental, emotional or physical. All teams are based within Student Services.

The Chaplaincy Team is an inter-faith team from different religious backgrounds and offers support in a confidential and safe space to all students and staff of all religions and belief or of no (religious) belief. Their support can be summarised as providing: *Friendship and support; opportunities for spiritual growth; prayer and worship; a chance to meet other students; advice on spiritual and ethical concerns; and information on places of worship for all religions.*

Exceptions from equality law for religious practice and observance⁵

- A religious student society or association may organise a gender segregated event, for the duration of any religious service as Equality law does not apply to religious worship; and
- With regard to the above exception, the University will not allow gender segregation beyond acts of religious worship or practice, including meetings which follow on from acts of religious observance.

⁴ Currently only available for men; situation under review

⁵ [EHRC Gender Segregation at Events and Meetings: Guidance for Universities and Students' Unions](#)