

Title: *Faith Policy and Recommendations*
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Issue

A report for Council from the PVC-Academic regarding the development of policy for faith on campus.

Recommendation

Members are asked to agree the key underpinning principle of a future UEA faith policy for the provision and organisation of facilities for prayer and religious observance on campus, and the recommendations which follow.

Resource Implications

Resource implications will involve the identification of a suitable small space for prayers with 24 hour access. Further space for use by Muslim staff and students will also need to be identified within existing buildings or incorporated into future building plans. Further details on specific costs will be provided when the discussions outlined in the paper have been completed.

Risk Implications

Closure of the Muslim Prayer Facility without adequate consideration of alternative provision had presented a risk to the University of alienating of a section of the University community over a specific grievance.

The current recommendations seek to address that risk and to provide an overarching faith policy, governance arrangements and consideration of the needs of all faiths, intended to mitigate risk. If the current recommendations are adopted, it is our view that no material risk remain.

Equality and Diversity

This report and recommendations have been drawn up in consultation with the Head of Equality and Diversity. The University's obligations under the Equality Act 2010 have been

considered and, we believe, addressed. An impact assessment has been carried out and will be available prior to the Council meeting.

Timing of decisions

Temporary planning permission for the Islamic prayer facility has been extended to June 2014. A faith policy needs to be established, so that arrangements for prayer facilities on campus can be put in place in an orderly and timely manner prior to June 2014.

Further Information

Requests for further information or queries may be addressed in the first instance to Assistant Registrar, VCO Lisa Williams lisa.williams@uea.ac.uk Tel: 01603 593612.

1. Background

- 1.1 In 1965 Council decided that there should be a Chaplaincy financed from outside sources on University Plain¹. Council and Senate were of the opinion that the Centre be equally available to all religious groups. The Centre would “contain several small rooms for use as offices and personal meetings with members of the University, a room for committees and a small theological and periodical library... plus a large room for devotional use by up to 60-80 students for the use of groups within the student community.... The Centre would be used by and available for all groups of Christians [who comprised the original working group]. Other non-Christian religious groups, such as Muslims and Jews, would be invited to use appropriate rooms in the Centre.”²
- 1.2 An appeal committee was therefore set up to launch an appeal for funds to meet the cost of the £20-£30,000 cost, with the University agreeing to match funds. Charles Jewson, father of the present Chair of Council, was chairman of the appeal and under him sufficient funds were raised for the Chaplaincy to open in 1971. The opening ceremony in 1972 contained Jewish and Islamic participants and prayers and VC Frank Thistlethwaite underlined the right of all the world’s great religions to use the Centre³.
- 1.3 During the early 1980s it is understood that the University agreed to a request from Muslim students for the provision of two rooms for separate male and female Muslim prayers in Suffolk Walk. Later, in the 1990s, additional provision was made for Muslim students in a temporary building at the far end of the main car park, on the site of the current Nursery. This building included a large prayer room for men, and a small room for women, together with separate washing facilities. The Suffolk Walk rooms continued to be used until the current Chancellor’s Drive building was in place. Between 2002 and 2004, negotiations took place with a potential donor from one of the Arab states who had indicated that he might be prepared to fund the construction of a permanent Islamic Centre incorporating new prayer facilities. One potential location suggested was the EDU Courtyard. As these aspirations were not fulfilled, the end-of-car park site was needed for the new Nursery and Health Centre development. ET therefore decided to move the temporary prayer facilities to a new temporary site, the current site on Chancellor’s Drive, which opened in 2007. In recognition of a growing Muslim student population, these facilities were larger and contained separate male and female provision, separate washing facilities, an office, kitchen and storage space.
- 1.4 This new site was always a temporary provision, with temporary planning permission for the building. Planning permission expired in November 2012. Prior to expiration of planning permission, ET decided to explore the transfer of facilities for Islamic prayers into the multi-faith Chaplaincy. Practical arrangements were considered for separate washing facilities and segregated space for males and female worshippers.

¹ Minutes of Council 8.11.65

² Minutes of Senate 9.3.66

³ History of UEA, Michael Sanderson p.126

- 1.5 Some Muslim staff and students already use the Chaplaincy for prayers, in preference or in addition to the dedicated Islamic prayer facility. The Chaplaincy welcomes worshippers of all faiths and none; and was (and is) very happy to welcome Muslim staff and students.
- 1.6 However the potentially imminent closure of the Islamic prayer facility in summer 2012 (prior to expiration of planning permission) occasioned a considerable amount of disquiet and concern on the part of the Islamic Society and others. There was a major campaign mounted, both within and outside the University, to retain the present stand-alone Islamic prayer centre.
- 1.7 Separate University Islamic prayer space is valued by Muslim students and staff for the reasons set out in the Islamic Society's response (attached at Appendix 1). Whilst there are practical/logistical considerations to housing the particular requirements of the Muslim faith, as noted in para 1.4 it was felt that these could be met within the Chaplaincy; albeit with some difficulty and cost.
- 1.8 It is acknowledged that dealing with the inevitable disquiet caused by the expiration of planning permission could have started sooner and more attention could have been given to exploring options. It is the case that the transitional arrangements could have been handled more sensitively. Notwithstanding this, it became clear to the VC and Executive Team that the University was dealing with highly complex issues with wider implications than simply providing space for prayer; and that these matters should be considered afresh after first establishing through Council an underpinning faith policy for the University.
- 1.9 An extension to the temporary planning permission for the Islamic prayer facility was sought, to provide time for consultation and the development of a policy for Council's consideration. UEA has recently been notified that an extension to June 2014 has been approved. Beyond June 2014, it is not known with any certainty whether further extension would be possible as there are related Academic Building West site considerations.
- 1.10 The University has not previously had an explicit policy on faith. As the University community grows and becomes more diverse, it was recognised that such a policy, laid down by Council, would help the University's Executive Team to achieve greater transparency in decision making and to manage in the fairest way possible all the competing demands upon scarce resources.
- 1.11 As part of this exercise, during October 2012 the University's senior management consulted the University community about the provision of facilities for prayer and religious observance on campus.

Brief written submissions (up to 1500 words) were invited, setting out how respondents thought prayer facilities should be organised on campus and the principles which should guide future policy developments.

Respondents were also invited to address the following questions if they wished.

1. What are the practical and religious considerations which the University needs to consider in the provision of facilities for prayer and religious observance?
2. How can the University best ensure safety, fairness and equality of opportunity in the allocation and organisation of facilities for prayer and religious observance?

The consultation was open to all staff and students on campus including all staff and students, UEA Chaplains and the Students Union.

Out of a potential student and staff body of some 18,000, 136 responses were received. In order to share these views with the wider University community, it was agreed to publish responses anonymously, where permission was granted by respondents. Of the 136 respondents, currently 105 have given permission for publications. Responses are available at: <http://www.uea.ac.uk/vco/faith-consultation>

By way of context, the following table from the 2012 HESA return indicates declared religion or belief amongst students with a current enrolment record at UEA by headcount (as opposed to FTE, excluding intercalating students and dormant records).

Row Labels	PGR	PGT	UG	Grand Total
Buddhist	38	169	221	428
Christian	351	1019	3490	4860
Hindu	18	53	170	241
Jewish	7	11	42	60
Muslim	112	105	382	599
No Religion	582	1551	5347	7480
Other	56	125	300	481
Prefer not to say	186	305	804	1295
Sikh		9	41	50
(blank)		7	2	9
Grand Total	1350	3354	10799	15503

%				
Row Labels	PGR	PGT	UG	Grand Total
Buddhist	2.8	5.0	2.0	2.8
Christian	26.0	30.4	32.3	31.3
Hindu	1.3	1.6	1.6	1.6
Jewish	0.5	0.3	0.4	0.4
Muslim	8.3	3.1	3.5	3.9
No Religion	43.1	46.2	49.5	48.2
Other	4.1	3.7	2.8	3.1
Prefer not to say	13.8	9.1	7.4	8.4
Sikh	0.0	0.3	0.4	0.3
(blank)	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.1
Grand Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

1.12 Consultation Summary

Responses have been approximately categorised as follows, with the health warning that it is not straightforward to summarise carefully thought out personal responses often covering several points to a single category. However the table below gives an approximation of the main preferred arrangements for each respondent.

Category	Number
Multi-faith provision with shared facilities	30
Multi-faith provision with separate facilities where needed	13
Multi-faith provision + separate Islamic prayer facility	74
Multi-faith provision + better provision for other spiritual pastoral needs	4
Legal minimum provision only	2
Secular campus - no religious facilities	10
Other	3
Total	136

- 1.13 Out of 136 responses received, over half (74 responses) were from members of the Muslim community indicating their wish to retain the Islamic prayer facility and the need for separate facilities for Muslim staff and students and members of the wider community. (Many of these responses were based on a common template attached as Appendix 1).
- 1.14 Thirty respondents felt strongly that all faiths should find ways to share the same space and this (original UEA) model was the best way to achieve fairness of provision. Thirteen respondents preferred to see multi-faith provision with separate facilities where style of worship required different provision.
- 1.15 Ten respondents indicated that as UEA is a secular institution, it had no responsibility for faith provision on campus whatsoever and that University funds should not be used to provide for this purpose; local provision should instead be used.
- 1.16 Support for the existing Chaplaincy was voiced and a wish for extended opening hours, particularly out of semester time was noted. The needs of other faiths were also noted.
- 1.17 A joint response from UEA Chaplains was received and is attached as Appendix 2.
- 1.18 Two responses were received from the Students Union – a joint response from the Faith Committee which addressed matters of the consultation process and urged greater transparency in decision-making; and a motion passed by Union Council termed “Protect Faith on Campus” which calls for UEA to provide “faith facilities and resources on campus that meet the differing needs of faith groups on campus”. These are attached as appendices 3 and 4. The Buddhist and Hindu responses will follow as appendix 5, once permission from the authors has been confirmed.
- 1.19 In November 2012 PVC-ACAD met with the Faith Committee at their invitation to discuss their response. There is clearly still residual disquiet about a lack of transparency in the University’s decision-making following closure of the School of Music and a consequent lack of trust over recent decisions relating to the Islamic prayer facility. A request for better communication and earlier notification of decisions was made.
- 1.20 PVC-ACAD also met with the UEA Chaplains at their invitation to discuss the consultation process and the joint Chaplaincy response. The Chaplains include representatives of Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish and Muslim faiths. It was clear that they had been surprised by both the intended closure of the Islamic prayer facility and by the Faith consultation; and that they would value closer communication in future together with wider recognition for their role in balancing the needs of all faiths in the University.
- 1.21 The Chaplaincy perspective is outlined in their response: “Adequate spaces and staff are needed for support of students and staff of all faiths and none, for reasonable

observance in all faiths on campus (for example dedicated facilities are needed to meet the needs of Muslim students, but there are other faith group requirements.)
“Reasonable observance” for each faith group needs to be worked out with the relevant chaplain and the chaplaincy team, and with the University.”

2. Discussion

- 2.1 **UEA’s response to growing diversity in faiths on campus.** The original premise for the Chaplaincy was that it should be a multi-faith provision. As UEA’s students’ backgrounds became more diverse, for understandable practical and logistical reasons, the University was not alone in providing a multi-faith facility together with an additional Muslim prayer facility. The survey conducted by the Dean of Students amongst other Universities shows multi-faith plus additional Muslim facilities as not uncommon. In considering other Universities’ provision, particular attention has been paid to other campus or edge of city Universities where alternative provision is limited, such as at UEA. (Attached as appendix 6). In some institutions there are no separate spaces and all faith groups share the same facilities.
- 2.2 **Building Access.** Safety concerns about open access buildings suggest that the University should impose similar controls over the Islamic prayer facility as over other University buildings. There is no other building with open access to undergraduate students on campus during the night (without Security presence such as in the Library)⁴. Until recently the Islamic Society controlled opening hours in order to facilitate early morning/late evening prayers and access to the building by the wider Muslim community.
- 2.3 Current opening hours at the Islamic prayer facility are approx. 7am to approx. 10pm and a swipe card system has been introduced. The Muslim Chaplain advised in person that the opening hours meant UEA Muslims had been physically restricted from being able to pray at all the required times during the night. Whilst opinion differs as to the requirement for Muslims to pray congregationally (as opposed to in their own rooms) at five prescribed times during the day and night, the clear wish indicated by Muslims in our consultation is that facilities should be provided / continue to be provided for this purpose.
- 2.4 **Current Chaplaincy and Islamic prayer facility provision.** The Muslim Chaplain is part of the University’s Chaplaincy Team. The Islamic prayer facility is run on a day to day basis by the Islamic Society in collaboration with non-UEA members of one of the three local Muslim communities. The Islamic Society is a UEA Students’ Union student society and has a representative on the SU Faith Committee.
- 2.5 The Chaplaincy describes itself as “a place of conversation and of stillness for all UEA students and staff..... open for the UEA community from Mondays to Fridays in term time from 8.45 am to 5 pm, and on Sundays around Mass time.” As noted above, the Islamic prayer facility has wider opening times.
- 2.6 The main Muslim congregational prayers are held in the Islamic prayer facility on Fridays between 12 and 2. Two sets of prayers are held in order to fit with students’ timetables. The ‘sermon’ is delivered at one of these in Arabic and at the other in English. The Islamic Society recommends prayers five times each day, at varying but specified points between dawn and dusk, according to the hours of daylight. There is a regular social event for men at 5.30pm on Thursday and other social and family events are also held on other days. Further details on the website www.ueaisoc.org/

⁴ Apart from the Library, all doors to University buildings are locked by 10.30pm, for general access. The only exception to this are IT hubs used by postgraduate students who may be granted consent to remain in the hub beyond the closure time of the building.

(It should be noted that no other student faith group in the University has open and exclusive access to space for their social activities. All other student groups book UEA rooms via room bookings for any social activity or meeting that they wish to hold).

- 2.7 The Islamic Society's template response to the consultation survey contains a paragraph on "non-exclusivity" which states: "Prayer halls should be open to all members of the Muslim community in addition to students and staff. However UEA should not prioritise them nor be obliged to consider them when deciding capacity. The Muslim community should include family members of the UEA students and staff, as well as local Muslims from the Norwich and Norfolk community."
- 2.8 Currently, by default rather than by agreed policy, the Islamic prayer facility is used by families and the wider community. (By contrast the Chaplaincy is used by UEA students and staff, and others by invitation.)

There is a range of provision for Muslim worshippers within the local community, although the number of international students now being recruited by UEA has increased the local demand for prayer facilities, particularly during term time. This may explain the interest shown by the wider community in attending prayers at the UEA Islamic prayer facility. There is a well-established small mosque in the city centre at Chapelfield. We understand that the community using this mosque consists of a core of British-born converts as well as a diverse group of other Muslims. It is not widely used by those from the Arab states from which UEA recruits but other UEA students do pray there. There is another Mosque in the city centre in Rose Lane, managed by the Bangladeshi community, and a community Centre used by the mainly Arabic Muslim community on Dereham Road. Currently this centre does not have the status of a mosque but it is fully equipped for prayer, and our understanding is that it will operate as a mosque in the near future.

- 2.9 **Governance.** Currently the Chaplaincy (which includes the Islamic Prayer facility) is managed by the Dean of Students. It has permanent representation on the fortnightly Student Affairs Group (SAG), where matters of concern are raised and information is disseminated (the minutes of SAG are widely circulated beyond its membership). The Dean of Students also raises matters affecting the academic, social and practical aspects of students 'of faith' at key UEA committees, including Learning and Teaching Committee, Student Experience Committee, Equality and Diversity Committee and Senate. Much of the day to day responsibility for the management of provision and arrangements for faith on campus has been handled by the Dean of Students, who has been required over the years to deal with many difficult issues in collaboration with the Chaplaincy team and members of the relevant faith groups as appropriate. Over the eight years in which she has held her role, she has had many meetings with representatives of faith groups, and in particular with the Islamic Society. However, the separate and slightly distant location of the current Islamic prayer facility has presented some challenges in respect of governance. Policy and practice for the other faith groups are well coordinated by the group of Chaplains who work together within the shared Chaplaincy building.
- 2.10 **Marketing and Prayer Facilities.** One important issue raised by some of the respondents is the fact that they came to UEA because of its prayer facilities for Muslim students. Had these not been available, they would have gone elsewhere; to remove these facilities could be construed as a breach of trust at best or breach of contract at worst. The Muslim prayer facilities feature in the current prospectus but have been removed for 2014 entry, pending a decision by Council. In the current prospectus facilities are mentioned for students not the wider community: "Prayer facilities for Muslim students are available in the Islamic Prayer Centre on campus"⁵.

⁵ Page 43 , 2013 UEA Prospectus: Religious Activity

2.11 Legal background. Head of Equality and Diversity Helen Murdoch's legal briefing is attached, which outlines requirements for public sector bodies, including Higher Education Institutions under the Equality Act 2010. (Attached as Appendix 7).

2.12 Key Themes Arising from the Consultation

A number of key themes emerged from the consultation and wider discussions with the Chaplains and Student Union Faith Committee which have informed our deliberations and recommendations below.

2.13 University Priorities and Opportunity Costs

An important question for the University is the extent to which it should give priority to the provision of facilities for religious observance and worship and the related question of what the opportunity cost of so doing might be. A small number of respondents indicated in rather different ways, that religious facilities and considerations should not be a major priority. For example that:

- the University should limit provision to the legal minimum,
- no special spaces should be provided for prayer and that religious groups should use the facilities in the local community and / or should book rooms for prayer;
- providing religious facilities should not detract from other provision for all students, such as the library or other educational resources.

2.14 Enhanced Provision

In contrast to those who argue for a minimalist commitment to the provision of religious facilities, others want to see improved provision for various faith groups. For some this is about being able to offer meetings for worship in vacations (a recognition of the needs of staff and post-graduate students). For others provision would be enhanced if opening hours could be extended. Concern was expressed by the Dharma Society, for example, about policies that prevent them from displaying religious imagery in the Chaplaincy; for them provision could be enhanced by finding ways in which they can use religious imagery in their worship.

2.15 Pastoral Care

The consultation and wider discussions with the chaplains has indicated that the Chaplaincy and wider religious groups of the University play an important role in offering pastoral care and support to students. This is a role that is perhaps rather overlooked by the wider community, but is valuable in providing support to students who are some distance from their families and home-based sources of support.

2.16 Spiritual Space

In different ways a number of respondents stressed the need for what might be called a spiritual or sacred space (safe, respectful, quiet space) that is set aside from the ordinary, everyday business of the University: a space where spiritual needs (religious and non-religious can be accommodated).

2.17 Equality and Diversity

Two significant themes that emerged from the consultation were equality and diversity; where equality referred to the importance of fairness in the treatment of different faiths and diversity emphasized the importance of individual and group differences in beliefs, practices and needs. Many of the responses from Muslim students, for example, indicated that each faith community has its own particular traditions and needs and that these needs should be reflected in the nature and organisation of prayer facilities. At the heart of this view is the belief that common shared facilities are unlikely to meet the requirements of Muslim students. Other respondents to the consultation process emphasized the importance of a multi-faith Chaplaincy catering for all religious groups

on campus, which is seen by some as the only practical and efficient way of giving expression to the principle of equality, or advocated because of the belief that inter-faith dialogue and shared facilities will encourage dialogue and mutual tolerance. Some have argued that the provision of a separate building for Muslims undermined the ideal of a multi-faith chaplaincy for all.

2.18 Cultural Maintenance and Community

The values of equality and diversity are related to concerns about cultural maintenance (efforts to sustain particular ways of life) and different expressions of community. An important and consistent theme was the role that organized religion plays in fostering a sense of belonging; acting as a counter-weight to the feelings of alienation and dislocation that some students have when they come to University. This may be especially the case for international students who find themselves in a strange and at times disconcerting host culture where alcohol, for example, is pervasive. For many, religious beliefs are intimately connected with their sense of cultural, group and personal identity. The provision of dedicated culturally appropriate religious facilities is part of making people feel that they belong somewhere that embodies or expresses their culture and religion and that they therefore have a place in the wider community.

3 Key Underlying Principle to be agreed by Council

- 3.1 Taking all the matters above into consideration, a proposed key underpinning statement is as follows:

The University of East Anglia has no religious affiliation and is a secular institution. Subject to resources and in line with its duties under the Equality Act 2010⁶, we are committed to making reasonable provision for religious observance, prayer and spiritual/pastoral care on campus. This is also recognised as supporting the wellbeing of our students and staff. The organisation and management of facilities for religious observance, prayer and spiritual/pastoral care is carried out in such a way as to ensure that facilities are safe, secure and properly managed to accommodate a reasonable range of users fairly.⁷

- 3.2 In the light of this underlying principle, the following recommendations are proposed.

Recommendations

1. Facilities for prayer, religious observance and worship should be provided for staff⁸, and students and, subject to resource considerations, their immediate families (i.e. spouses and children) only. The University has no responsibility to provide access to religious facilities for people who are not members of the University and access to the University's facilities for prayer, religious observance and worship should not be extended to the wider community.
2. The University should actively manage all the facilities for prayer, religious observance and worship on campus; which should include clearly articulated opening and closing times and written policies with respect to access and use.

⁶ see Appendix 7

⁷ Although the academic year is broken by breaks at Christmas and Easter this is a matter of cultural practice reflecting current and historic British societal structures and in part allows the University to facilitate family friendly practices for students and staff. The primary focus of the University is to ensure delivery of teaching and research in the programmes it promotes.

⁸ The spouses and children of visiting academics may use the University's prayer facilities.

3. The feasibility of establishing a small, safe, secure and managed space/s in the University for prayer that is open permanently should be explored.
4. The feasibility of providing better access to prayer facilities outside of semesters should be explored, through discussion with the University Chaplains.
5. Ideally the University would wish to accommodate all faiths in one multi-faith building, thus reaffirming the original intentions at the founding of the Chaplaincy building. However practical considerations lead us to recommend that special prayer facilities should continue to be provided for Muslim students. (Given the current temporary nature of the planning permission for the prayer facilities for Muslim students, alternative special space for prayer should be identified, or arrangements should be put in place for further extending the planning permission for existing facilities.) Discussions should take place with representatives of the Buddhist and Hindu communities on campus to enable, where practical and reasonable, their specific needs to be better addressed.
6. A formal Multi-Faith Consultative Committee should be established, Chaired in the first instance by a PVC, with a membership drawn from the major faith groups on campus; including the Chaplains, the Dean of Students, members of the SU, and a lay member of Council; reporting to the Equality and Diversity Committee and thereafter to Council, on faith issues and matters concerning the management and organisation of faith facilities on campus.
7. The costs of additional provision for prayer, religious observance and worship should be clearly identified and reported to Council for its future consideration.