

Protocol for the multi-faith and quiet contemplation rooms

Agreed at the Interfaith Forum meeting 19 June 2013

Executive Summary

All current and potential users of the multifaith and quiet contemplation rooms must familiarise themselves with this protocol. This document includes guidance on:

Consideration of others, the standard of conduct expected from, and the responsibilities of, all users of the rooms: (see point 2)

Who is permitted to use the rooms, how to make a booking, (see point 4)

The physical set up of the rooms: (see point 6)

Rules regarding the use of the rooms -including those regarding noise and the consumption of food- and how to report any concerns about the rooms' upkeep: (see point 8)

Useful contacts: (see point 9)

Guidance for all external guests to the multifaith and quiet contemplation rooms form: (see Appendix 1)

Guidance on ablutions: (see Appendix 2).

1. Introduction

SGUL is committed to creating a campus environment characterised by good relations between all its staff and students and to the promotion of tolerance, mutual understanding and inter-faith dialogue.

Members of the Interfaith Forum urge all users of this facility to:

'Respect people from other faiths and ensure that you use the multifaith and quiet contemplation rooms in a manner which is least restrictive to other users'.

The institution recognises that prayer and meditation may be performed in different ways within the different faith traditions. Thus the institution provides a multi-faith and quiet contemplation space which has three rooms for the use of all its staff and students. These are all 'neutral' spaces which can be used by people of all faith groups, and none, within the university.

Therefore, these three rooms may be used as a quiet space for people to sit and contemplate, to pray, to take a few moments to de-stress from a busy day, or to recover from a traumatic life event such as a bereavement. The Large Rooms and Rooms 1 are provided as bookable space and Rooms 2 is retained as a non-bookable space for spontaneous quiet contemplation, prayer or meditation.

To ensure the smooth running of all room bookings and so that all potential users can fairly access the rooms, members of the University's Interfaith Group - which includes the presidents of all the student union faith societies, as well as some staff members representing different faiths - have formally agreed this protocol which outlines the institution's procedures for the use of all three rooms.

2. Consideration of others

2.1 The standard of conduct expected

The multi-faith and quiet contemplation area should be a safe space for all users. This means that everyone has a duty to respect other users and to ensure the environment remains welcoming to people of all faiths and none.

It is therefore of the utmost importance that all users of the multi-faith and quiet contemplation area behave reasonably and considerately towards others who use this space. SGUL values diversity and is committed to creating a positive working and learning environment free of harassment and bullying, where all people are treated with dignity and respect. SGUL wants to enable staff and students to fulfil their personal potential and will not tolerate bullying and harassment of any kind.

The multi-faith and quiet contemplation area's environment must be free from discrimination and harassment and users of the area must not discriminate against people of the same faith, people of different faiths, or people of no faith.

All allegations of bullying and harassment will be promptly and thoroughly investigated and, if appropriate, disciplinary action will be taken.

The Estates team ensure that this protocol is displayed on the notice board in the lobby to the multi-faith and quiet contemplation area, so that all users are aware of the terms and conditions under which they may use the rooms

There are also notices displayed on the door of the entrance to the rooms reminding users that only current staff and students from the university – not NHS Trust staff or the public- may use the rooms (see 4.2).

It is also recommended that all users of the rooms familiarise themselves with the following SGUL policy:

- **'Promoting Good Campus Relations: Policy on Events and Meetings'**
- **'Dignity at Work and Study Policy'**.
- **'Guidance on External Speakers and Visitors'** (please see item 4.8 - events with External Speakers are not permitted in the Multifaith and Quiet Contemplation Rooms)

2.2 The responsibilities of all users

All users must be aware that the university only permits them to use the rooms on the understanding that:

- this is a shared space lent by the university for the benefit of all staff and students
- all users must be welcoming to others who may use that space.

Student union faith society presidents and some staff representing different faiths make up the Interfaith Forum (see point 5). As part of their duties, all Interfaith Forum members are responsible for upholding this protocol and ensuring that the highest standard of conduct is sustained when the rooms is used.

All concerns regarding the multifaith and quiet contemplation rooms are discussed at the termly Interfaith Forum group meeting.

3. Location and opening times

3.1 Location of the multi-faith prayer and quiet contemplation rooms

The multi-faith and quiet contemplation rooms are situated at Jenner Wing, 1st Floor, by staircase 20.

3.2 Opening times

The multi-faith and quiet contemplation rooms are available for bookings from 8.am – 10pm (11pm by request in summer months to accommodate evening prayers after sunset), seven days a week during the university's academic year only. Outside of these times, the rooms are locked.

1. Who can use the room

4.1 Persons permitted to use the rooms

The multi-faith and quiet contemplation rooms are only permitted to be used by **current** students and **current** university staff.

Members of the public, ex-staff, ex-students, current or ex- NHS staff and hospital patients are not permitted to use the university's multi-faith and quiet contemplation rooms.

4.2 Making a booking

It is only permitted to use the Large Room and Room 1 if a formal booking is made.

All requests to book the multi-faith and quiet contemplation rooms must be agreed at the termly Interfaith Forum. They will then appear on the university's room booking system and plasma screens around the university. All rooms bookings must be made in the name of the relevant student union society president or staff member and the following information provided:

- the name of the society or staff member hosting the religious observance meeting
- date and time of the meeting
- name of the meeting
- whether it is planned that food or drink be consumed as part of a religious ritual
- a description of the activity using up to 15 words.

4.3 Who may book the rooms

Only current university staff and students may book the rooms for religious observance or meditation activities as the organiser. All activity organisers assume responsibility for ensuring the multifaith and quiet contemplation rooms' protocol is upheld while their booked activity takes place. It is the responsibility of all organisers to ensure they are aware of any activities being carried out in their name.

It is not permitted for any individual to allow others to gain entry to the rooms. The University will view this as a serious breach of security and such staff or students may be subject to disciplinary action. This may include the use of sanctions such as banning groups or individuals from using the rooms.

4.4 Gaining access to the rooms

The Multifaith and Quiet Contemplation Rooms area is on swipe card access.

4.5 Timetabled bookings

All regular weekly religious activities will be timetabled a term in advance and formally agreed by the Interfaith Forum and will appear on plasma screens

This termly timetable will be displayed by Estates on the door of the rooms.

4.6 Display of bookings

All room booking information is openly displayed on the meeting location plasma TV screens around the university. A plasma screen is situated in the lobby to the multi-faith prayer and contemplation rooms and this will show the bookings for that day.

4.7 Vacating the rooms

It is important that at the end of any reserved session, users vacate the multi-faith and quiet contemplation rooms promptly. Therefore when making a booking the faith society president should ensure enough time has been booked to accommodate the packing away of any items and that the dividing curtain is in the correct place, so other users may find the rooms left clean and tidy ready for their use.

4.8 External speakers

It is not permitted to use the multi-faith and quiet contemplation rooms as a venue for external speakers

4.9 External guests

However the university is aware that from time to time a meeting organiser may wish to invite an external guest to a religious activity held in the multifaith and quiet contemplation rooms. For example, sometimes student alumnus may wish to worship alongside existing students.

All external guests must be formally invited to visit the multifaith and quiet contemplation rooms by the event organiser. The event organiser must always be a current member of staff or current student at the university.

As part of their duties, the event organiser signs the '**Guidance for external guests to the multi-faith and quiet contemplation rooms form**' (see Appendix 1) agreeing that they will take responsibility for ensuring that the external guest is familiarised with the institution's '**Protocol for the multi-faith and quiet contemplation rooms**' and '**Promoting Good Campus Relations: Policy on Events and Meetings**'. Their guest also signs to state they agree to comply with the guidance set out therein.

The '**Guidance for external guests to the multi-faith and quiet contemplation rooms form**' must be completed **EACH TIME** the external guest is invited to visit the rooms. This form must be returned to the Assistant Director Estates & Facilities (Facilities) via the university's reception team.

All external guests to the multifaith and quiet contemplation rooms are subject to web and other security checks as standard practice by the university.

5. Management of the rooms: Interfaith Group

The rooms are managed by the Interfaith Group. As part of its duties the group meets once a term to discuss any proposed block room bookings, to ensure all room users feel happy and respected and to help provide solutions to any practical problems which may arise from the use of the rooms. Group membership consists of:

- the Presidents of the Student Union's Religious Societies (currently Christian, Hindu, Islamic, Jewish and Sikh)
- staff faith representatives -currently Christian, Humanist, Islamic, Pagan and Sikh faiths
- the Students Union President
- the Students Union Equality & Diversity Officer(s)
- the Assistant Director of Estates and Facilities (Facilities)
- the Equality and Diversity Adviser
- a member of staff representing academic staff –currently the Dean of Staff and Students
- the Director of Student Services
- the Student Centre Manager.

6. Physical set up of the rooms

6.1 Disabled access

The multi-faith and quiet contemplation rooms are fully accessible to disabled people.

6.2 Furniture fittings and equipment

The university provides a mixture of stacking chairs and floor cushions for rooms users.

Only furniture, fittings and equipment belonging to the university can be used and stored in the multi-faith and quiet contemplation rooms. Any furniture, fittings or equipment left in the rooms without the university's permission will be removed and disposed of.

6.3 Carpeting

The comfortable carpet provided has a deep enough pile to enable users to prostrate themselves in prayer or meditate on the floor. Therefore if any user wishes to bring a prayer mat into the rooms for worship, this must be stored in the storage space allotted to their faith group. It is not permitted to leave any personal or religious objects in the rooms and any left will be removed and discarded.

6.4 Lighting

The multi-faith and quiet contemplation rooms has an overhead lighting system. Users may use lamps provided by the university to create an environment more conducive to prayer or contemplation.

6.5 Storage

Two adjoining storage rooms provide storage space for all the student union faith societies and regular users of the rooms.

Regular users may request permission to store items in the storage rooms provided. To arrange this, individuals should contact the Assistant Director of Estates and Facilities (Facilities).

6.6 Curtain blocking off storage space

There are two curtains within the largest rooms. One is pulled across the width of the rooms at all times to curtain off storage space so there is a screened off thorough-fare for people to deposit any belongings in storage or to get out equipment.

6.7 Shoes

Some faiths require users to keep their shoes on to pray, other require users to remove their shoes. A shoe rack is provided for users within the storage rooms for individuals who wish to remove their shoes before prayer or contemplation.

However the multifaith and quiet contemplation rooms is a shared space. Therefore there is no need for any individual to remove their shoes in order to use this facility.

6.8 Curtain dividing the rooms and its proper use

The university does not want to 'hardwire' any gender divide into the neutral multi faith and quiet contemplation rooms space.

However the institution is aware that some faiths require women and men to pray separately, others permit women and men to pray together. Therefore the largest rooms contains a curtain which may be used to divide the rooms into separate male and female sections, if a faith society has formally booked the rooms for its exclusive use in line with the rooms booking system.

At all other times the curtain must be drawn back so that the whole rooms is available for use by both women and men.

6.9 Ablutions

There are male and female washrooms situated all over the university's premises. All ablutions must be performed with consideration for other users, see Appendix 2 for further details.

7. Rules regarding the use of the rooms

7.1 Regulations regarding noise

The multi-faith and quiet contemplation rooms may be used for quiet contemplation, reflection and meditation. Unless group prayer is taking place, people using the rooms must be silent. Staff or students may wish to use the rooms for silent prayer, mediation, to de-stress from their busy lives, or as a place of calm after a bereavement.

It is permitted to use the rooms for devotional song, chanting or hymn singing if participants are engaged in an act of group worship, contemplation or meditation -and have thus reserved the rooms for their exclusive use in accordance with the rooms booking system.

It is not permitted to use this space to:

- nap
- work
- study
- chat.

7.2 Display of objects

People of some faiths cannot pray in a rooms where imagery, signs, or icons or written materials from other religions are displayed. Therefore it is not permitted to **permanently** display imagery, statues, or written materials in the multi-faith and quiet contemplation rooms, or just outside the rooms. All users must be sensitive to others who may also wish to use the rooms.

During booked group prayer, a group is permitted to display religious materials during the course of their booked session.

At the end of prayer, meditation or contemplation all these items must be immediately collected and either removed from the rooms or stored in the specific storage assigned to that group. This is so all users feel equally free to use the rooms. All rooms users should be considerate and understand that any paraphernalia left in the rooms - including books, prayer mats, religious pictures, etc - can be very off-putting for people from other faiths or no faith who also have an equal right to use the rooms.

Therefore anyone booking the rooms should make sure that sufficient time is calculated within the rooms booking to enable all rooms to be left clean and tidy for future users.

Any breaches of this policy will be reported directly to the Interfaith Forum.

7.3 Use of personal objects within the rooms

It is permissible for users to take hand held objects into the rooms to aid personal prayer or meditation such as prayer beads, prayer or meditation cards, hand held books, but no items larger than this.

It is not permitted to leave these items within the rooms itself; all users must take personal items with them.

7.4 Notices, posters, leaflets

Notices, posters, leaflets, or advertisements for forthcoming events must not be left in the multi-faith and quiet contemplation rooms.

Instead, the university provides a lockable notice board outside the Multi-Faith and Quiet Contemplation Rooms for such displays. Permission to display all such materials must be sought:

by students	from the Students Union in line with Student Union policy.
by staff	the Assistant Director Estates and Facilities (Facilities).

Any printed matter to be displayed must be in English (please see '**Promoting Good Campus Relations: Policy on Events and Meetings**' for further details).

Any printed matter left in the multi-faith and quiet contemplation rooms without permission will be removed and thrown away.

7.5 Use of equipment in the rooms

Mobile phones, personal laptops, or amplifying equipment are not permitted to be used in the multi-faith prayer and quiet contemplation rooms at any time.

However, individuals may pick up portable projectors and computers from the university's AV and Multimedia services for use at specific events.

7.6 Security and valuables in the rooms

No charity box, monies or valuables are permitted to be kept within the rooms including the storage rooms. Any personal possessions left in rooms will be removed and may be thrown away.

7.7 Tidiness and cleanliness

The university realises that it is very important the rooms is kept clean for all users, therefore the rooms will be cleaned by the university Monday to Friday during term time. Users are asked to ensure the multi-faith and quiet contemplation rooms are left in a clean and tidy condition after use. Any rubbish must be taken out of the rooms and disposed of by the user.

In general, there is no charge for use of the rooms. However, if the multi-faith and quiet contemplation rooms are left in an unsatisfactory condition, SGUL reserves the right to recover the cost of any loss or damage to the rooms caused by any user or society.

7.8 Fire regulations

The multi-faith and quiet contemplation rooms are a no smoking facility. The lighting of candles and burning of incense in the rooms is not permitted. The Fire Doors in the rooms are for use only as a means of escape and must not be opened for any other purpose.

7.9 Food

Consuming food or beverages in the rooms are strictly controlled. It is not permitted to use the rooms to eat lunch or to have a snack.

Food and drink are **only** permitted in the multifaith prayer rooms if they are a specific compulsory part of religious worship, such as the breaking of a fast during the Islamic month of Ramadan, or the sharing of bread and wine during a Christian service. Food or drink may only be consumed during a group booking.

Therefore when a rooms booking is made, the person booking the rooms needs to state that food and drink will be consumed during group prayer. The person booking the rooms will also be responsible for ensuring that the rooms are left clean and tidy after the consumption of any food and drink.

Breaking of this rule may result in the university deciding that no food or beverages will be allowed to be consumed in any of the rooms.

8. Upkeep of the rooms

8.1 The university's responsibility

The multi-faith and quiet contemplation rooms remains the property of the university. The facilities provided in the rooms and the rooms' upkeep remain the sole responsibility of the university. Any resulting costs are borne entirely by the institution. This is to ensure that the rooms are seen to 'belong' to all staff and students who may wish to use the rooms.

8.2 Concerns about the rooms upkeep

If users of the rooms have any practical concerns about the upkeep of the rooms such as heating, ventilation, cleaning issues or concerning the fabric of the rooms itself, they should contact the Estates and Facilities help desk immediately on extension 1234 and choose option 2.

A record will be kept of all comments and complaints and these will be discussed at the termly Interfaith Group meeting.

The University reserves the right to refuse bookings or use of the rooms from societies or individuals where there is a breach of the conditions of use.

8.3 Monitoring use of the rooms

In line with St Ethelburga's Centre for Reconciliation and Peace guidelines, SGUL may monitor the use of the rooms to check it remains inclusive for SGUL staff and students, and to ensure is treated with respect. Users should be aware that the rooms remain the property of the university. Staff and students should be aware that from time to time the institution may carry out spot checks to establish that use of the rooms is in accordance with this policy. Please note that members of the university do not need advance permission to do this, however any such checks will be done as sensitively as possible.

8.4 Giving feedback

Users of the space may wish to give feedback, ask questions or raise complaints. They may contact the Students Union, the president of a particular student society or the Equality and Diversity Manager. Any concerns or complaints regarding the multi-faith prayer and quiet contemplation rooms will be reported back to the Interfaith Group.

Occasionally the University may also invite users of the rooms to give feedback via consultation or questionnaire.

9. Useful contacts

Job Title	Name	Email Address	Telephone Number
Student Union President	Dheemal Patel	President@su.sgul.ac.uk	0208 725 2709
Student Union Vice President	Natasha Lee	vpeducation@su.sgul.ac.uk	0208 725 2709
Equality and Diversity Adviser	Rochelle Rowe	rrowe@sgul.ac.uk	0208 725 0605
<i>Any heating, ventilation or cleaning issues</i>	Estates and Facilities Help Desk		0208 725 1234 option 2
Assistant Director of Estates and Facilities (Facilities)	Elizabeth Gilby	egilby@sgul.ac.uk	

Appendix 1:

Guidance for all external guests to the multifaith and quiet contemplation rooms form

The university realises that from time to time, event organisers may wish to invite external guests to visit the multifaith and quiet contemplation rooms. (Please note this policy does NOT apply to external speakers who must apply under the '**Guidance on External Speakers Policy**' instead).

All external guests to the multifaith and quiet contemplation rooms are subject to web and other security checks as standard practice by the university. Event organisers may use this form to notify the university that they have invited an external guest

I, full name of the event organiser: _____

I wish to invite:

Full name of external visitor: _____

to attend an event to be held in the multifaith and quiet contemplation rooms, namely

Name of event: _____

Time of event: _____

Date of event: _____

As my guest.

I confirm that I have provided my external guest with copies of institution's **Protocol for the multi-faith and quiet contemplation rooms form** and the '**Promoting Good Campus Relations: Policy on Events and Meetings**' and impressed upon them the need for them to abide by the guidance contained in both these documents.

I am aware that if an external visitor contravenes this guidance, the university reserves the right to immediately ban this individual/and or a particular group from using the multifaith and quiet contemplation rooms in the future.

Signature of event organiser: _____ Date: _____

I confirm that I have read and understood the institution's '**Protocol for the multi-faith and quiet contemplation rooms**' and the '**Promoting Good Campus Relations: Policy on Events and Meetings**' and I agree to abide with all guidance contained within these documents.

Signature of external visitor: _____ Date: _____

The event organiser should return this signed document to the university Reception desk staff who will pass it on to the Assistant Director Estates & Facilities (Facilities).

Appendix 2:

Guidance on Ablutions

1. Everyone must use the washrooms respectfully and with consideration for other users.
2. Individuals must not use the hand basins to wash their arms, head or feet. Instead they may use the showers for this purpose.
3. Individuals must not get water on surfaces surrounding the hand basins or on the floor. If any water is inadvertently spilt, then it is the responsibility of that individual to clean up the area immediately and make it safe and dry for other users.
4. Individuals who use bottles of water to wash must not leave these lying about but either take them with them in their own bags, or throw them away in the bin provided.
5. To avoid blocking the toilets individuals must not use toilet paper for washing. Instead they should bring their own towels from home and once used take these away with them in their own bags.
6. Any security doors on swipe access must not be propped open with fire extinguishers or any other object.

The multi faith and quiet contemplation rooms may be closed to groups who abuse these facilities.

Reporting any difficulties

Any issues regarding difficulties with the washrooms should be reported directly to the Estates helpdesk.

Helpdesk telephone number: 020 8725 1234 (option 2)
Helpdesk email: estates@sgul.ac.uk

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