



# 'Around the World in Many Faiths'

Aberdeen University



national union of students

### **What was your interfaith project?**

'Around the World in Many Faiths' took place on Tuesday 5th March between 12-4pm at the Butchart Centre as part of the Student Festival. It was a celebration of faith and diversity at the University and gave students a chance to explore the several of the world's major religions. The various Faith Societies of the University took part (Christian union, Catholic Society, Buddhist Society, Muslim Students Association and the Jewish Society). There were also contributions from the Chaplaincy Centre, Aberdeen Interfaith Group, Grampian Racial Equality Council, the Muslim Woman's Group and the Sikh community. Throughout the day food was served to students visiting the exhibition, and opportunities for dialogue occurred during the entire event. The event attracted a large number of students and was one of the headline events of the first AUSA Student Festival.

### **How did you ensure students were involved in the development of your project?**

Students were involved in the event from the inception of the project. The Students' Association and the Chaplaincy Centre worked closely in managing the project, ensuring that maximum student input was attained for the event. Before the planning stages began, meetings were held with each of the faith societies in order to gauge opinion and find out if they would be interested in taking part. Once commitment was established, we set about creating a timetable for the event. Regular meetings were held with faith society presidents to ensure that what they had planned for the day was progressing. Time was also spent advertising the event to the wider student body with flyers, posters, banners and a heavy social media presence being utilized in ensuring maximum student engagement in the project.

### **What impact did this project have on students you work with and within your students' union or college?**

The project has had a significant impact on the cohesion of faith societies on campus. Throughout the planning stages and during the event itself, the societies mixed and learned a lot about each other's faith and cultural traditions. This is the first event we have managed to get all the faith societies to attend and all the feedback we have received has been 100% positive with many looking forward to participating in future events and dialogue. Not only was understanding fostered amongst the student faith societies, the wider student body has also had the chance to explore and ask questions about the different world religions in an open and friendly setting. With

over four hundred students attending the event throughout the day, we feel many cultural barriers and stereotypes were broken down. With the event being incorporated into the Student Festival, we hope to have set a precedent for the years to come. The event was also featured on the University website and had the support of the University Secretary, Mr. Steve Cannon who visited the event and hailed it as a great success. The event also helped to profile the fantastic work of our University Chaplaincy Centre and its Chaplains and Faith Representatives. This has given further impetus in the development of the new multi-faith Chaplaincy Centre which will be a fantastic space for future dialogue and provision for students of faith and those with none.

### **What lessons did you learn in delivering the project that might be useful to other students' unions?**

I learned a number of valuable lessons. It is always best to engage as many interested parties as possible, as early as possible. This also gave us a bigger funding scope and we were able to receive additional money and support from the University. I learnt that one should always leave lots of time to plan an event as large as this one, this way you will be able to engage and reach more students which is always of benefit, especially when trying to raise the profile of faith and diversity on campus.

### **Do you have any feedback from participants at your event?**

Feedback has been very positive from both students who participated in the exhibition and those that visited throughout the day. We received many positive messages of support and encouragement and were humbled by the large attendance, which we were not expecting. The event was a resounding success and we are already working on a number of follow-up events and planning for a larger event next year.

### **Photo/Video evidence of your event:**

