

Multi faith spaces

Multi-faith spaces are hard to define and there is no accepted overall definition in practice they are spaces within in public institutions that cater to a range of faith and spiritual activities.

They are not always sacred spaces or places for worship but operate as secular and reflection space as well. Multi-faith spaces normally are created in large institutions where separate faith space is not a possibility or created in order to foster interfaith and belief activities.

Multi-faith spaces are defined primarily by their use so can be used from everything from group worship and events to solitary reflection.

Why multi-faith spaces?

Multi faith spaces cater to those of all faiths and therefore present a solution to colleges and universities who have increasingly diverse students and staff but cannot possibly have capacity for all types of faiths. Multi-faith spaces are not prayer or reflection spaces but can be used by the religious and non-religious alike. In general they act to mitigate against tensions for resources, giving institutions a better idea of the support they can give to students of faith.

As they often appear out of necessity, multi-faith spaces often reflect the social policy and makeup of the student and staff body at that time. Multi-faith spaces, as opposed to particular faith spaces, set out to be neutral spaces for all thus aim at pluralism.

In short, they act as a means to create cohesion between different groups but leave a space which does not define what faith based activity should go on within. So the architecture of the space reflects a multi-purpose facility and for this reason they are mainly found in larger institutions.

A collaborative project entitled '[Multi-Faith Spaces: Symptoms and Agents of Religious and Social Change](#)' between the Universities of Manchester and Liverpool explored multi faith spaces in more detail and provides useful insight into the topic.

Management of multi faith spaces

Multi faith spaces require effective management so that all students are able to use the facility and that it does not turn into a single faith space.

Some useful questions to consider are:

- How can the space be divided so multiple groups can use it at the same time?
- How can students book out a space at a time relevant to their needs whilst meeting the needs of other groups of students?
- Where will articles of faith be stored so they are easily accessible when needed by each faith or belief group, yet maintain the neutrality of the space?
- How will the space be managed so that groups know when their use of the space is over?
- If groups are not respecting the purpose of the space, how will this be challenged constructively?
- How will you mitigate the risk of and monitor any external speakers such as those giving sermons or preaching who are coming into the space?

Creating positive relations between different faith and belief groups

Sometimes it is assumed by creating a multi-purpose space for multiple faith groups, positive interfaith and belief relations between groups will naturally develop. This is not necessarily the case, as groups who are using the space may not be interacting with each other at all, especially if the space is timetabled so that only one group are using it at a time.

Other strategies should be undertaken if this is an objective of the space. Please see the section on [good campus relations](#) for further information on how this can be achieved.



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Campus Cohesion, Faith and Belief Project – Prayer Space Guidance

Further guidance

For FE specific advice see [LSC's Multi Faith Chaplaincy Guide](#) for further information about how colleges can establish a multi-faith facility for reflection, meditation or prayer.

The Religious Literacy Leadership in HE project developed a [case study](#) on creating a multi faith prayer space in HEIs.

