# **New and Improved Prayer Room for Muslims on Campus**

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## **Background:**

1. Prayer is an obligatory action for ALL Muslims. There are 5 prayer times every day, which means that Muslim students require an accessible prayer space multiple times each day.
2. There are 600+ Muslim students who actively engage with prayer activities at the very least (not formally assessed, an underestimate).
3. Currently, there are two prayer spaces available for use. However, these spaces do not meet the needs of Muslim students, mainlyregarding capacity.
4. Woodland Road Prayer room is only catering 5-10 people at one given time. Senate House Prayer Room, although slightly larger capacity (~30), is still not big enough. It also has restricted timing access (it is open accordingly to Senate House’s opening days and times), not private (subject to noise and disruption), and is unsafe (an incident occurred at the beginning of the academic year whereby the ablution facility was desecrated with urine).
5. Jummah (Friday prayer) is an obligatory prayer for men (although women are encouraged to join) and is very time-sensitive; meaning that Jummah must be done at a certain time in the afternoon.
6. This may have clashes with lectures/academic teaching sessions. Since there is no mosque in the immediate vicinity of the University, this provision is essential in ensuring that Muslim students can attend and perform this prayer.
7. Jummah is currently held at the Carpenter room because the current prayer rooms are very small. This is booked by ISoc under regular room bookings.
8. However there has been instances in which the Carpenter room is unavailable due to events such as graduation which may go on for weeks at a time.
9. In these instances, a smaller space, or no space at all would be allocated for Jummah.
10. To adjust to these changes, men are given priority to attend Jummah at a limited capacity, given that it is obligatory for them, or Jummah is cancelled entirely. This limits the accessibility for Muslim students to engage in their worship.
11. For context regarding the importance of Jummah, the following details the severity of it: The Prophet (ﷺ) said: He who leaves the Friday prayer (continuously) for three Friday on account of slackness, Allah will print a stamp on his heart. (SunanAbi Dawud 1052).
12. When the Carpenter Room is available, there are still some major problems.
13. Firstly, it is far out from campus, meaning that students may need to compromise on teaching (or compromise on their prayer) if their timetable is packed.
14. Secondly, recently we have had capacity issues where many people have had to pray and listen to the Friday sermon by the corridors due to lack of space. This is morally not acceptable.
15. Additionally, this means that often men end up praying behind women (which is prohibited in Islam and invalidates their prayer). To overcome this issue, we temporarily have been creating 2 prayer sessions which is inconvenient and frowned upon.

## **Purpose:**

1. Our purpose of this motion is to promote the welfare of Muslim Students in the University of Bristol by campaigning for a prayer space that has adequate capacity, safety, accessibility and convenience to ensure that they flourish in their worship.
2. This motion will also advance the education of Bristol students because they will no longer have to pick and choose between prayer and teaching, creating a positive experience for them.
3. This space, if sufficiently large and accommodating, can also better support the personal development of Muslim students as other relevant activities could also be held in the same space e.g., iftars (breaking fast meals), Qur’an and discussion circles.
4. Lastly, it will ensure Bristol SU is an effective representative channel for its members by improving the overall experience of Muslim students as a liberation group by supporting their needs and causes.

## **Action:**

1. Bristol SU to fully support the efforts of University of Bristol Islamic Society to obtain a larger prayer room that meets the needs of Muslim students in the University to practice their faith; including supporting gathering accurate statistics in research and lobbying.
2. Bristol SU Officers to lobby the University for CCTV surveillance in the vicinity of the Senate House prayer rooms to prevent the reoccurrence of desecrating acts.