

Muslim Prayer Room

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Background:

- Prayer is an obligation for all Muslims. There are five daily prayers, meaning Muslim students on campus require accessible and adequate prayer spaces that can be used easily and conveniently accessed multiple times each day.
- 1,989 students have declared Islam as their faith (University records, 2024/25), with an estimated 800+ students and staff actively using the prayer spaces.
- Currently, there are two permanent allocated prayer spaces for Muslim prayer use. However, these do not meet the needs of the Muslim student population (specifically in reference to capacity):
 - Space 1 - Woodland Road Prayer Room: accommodates 5-8 individuals at one time.
 - Space 2 - Senate House Prayer Room: accommodates ~ 30 individuals.
- During peak prayer times, these spaces overflow, forcing students to wait outside. Access is also limited by Senate House opening times, restricting access to one of the two permanent prayer facilities designated for Muslim students, which require ongoing access beyond set opening times.
- Jumu'ah (Friday) prayer is an obligatory, time-sensitive prayer for men (with women encouraged to attend) and is held in the afternoon, often clashing with lectures and teaching sessions. As there are no mosques within the immediate vicinity of campus, students rely on ISOC-hosted Friday prayers on campus, highlighting the essential role of ISOC prayer spaces in enabling students to fulfil their religious obligations.
- Currently, Jumu'ah prayer is held in the Hawthorns Basement (SU basement): A shared space with multiple uses throughout the week. The venue has not been adapted or configured for use as a prayer space and lacks appropriate layout adjustments, making it suboptimal as the primary Friday prayer venue. This has led to a range of issues, including (but not limited to):
 - Firstly, capacity is a recurring issue, with the space unable to accommodate weekly attendees in a single Friday prayer; this necessitates holding two prayers, placing logistical pressure on the ISOC committee (who are students themselves) and weakening the sense of community among attendees. This arrangement is not preferred and reflects the lack of a permanent solution, which this motion seeks to address.
 - Islamically, this arrangement is not preferred and highlights the need for a permanent solution, which this motion seeks to deliver.

- Most importantly, with the two Jumma segments (to ensure safe numbers within the Hawthorns building) there has been a consistent turning away of Muslim students at the door due to capacity limits. This action is directly preventing muslim students from practicing their faith; putting their religious observance in jeopardy. Proving counter intuitive to the values promoted by the University. This motion seeks to combat this, ensuring the inclusivity, and the upholding of the right to practise faith.
- Secondly, the space was unused for many years prior to reinstatement, meaning bathroom facilities are outdated and poorly maintained. Ablution (wudu) is required before prayer; however:
 - A. There are no wudu facilities in the current space.
 - B. The condition of the existing bathrooms contributes to stress and inconvenience, undermining the purpose of Friday prayer.
- Thirdly, the use of a single shared entrance for men and women before separating into designated areas has caused discomfort for a number of female attendees.
- Fourthly, the floor plan and lack of spatial adjustments make it difficult to establish an appropriate prayer layout. Fixed furniture restricts mandatory directional positioning, while hard floors and thin prayer mats reduce comfort and in some cases cause physical pain.
- These requests are basic necessities for Muslim students and directly impact their university experience and sense of support. This issue has persisted for several years and, with a growing Muslim student population, requires a permanent solution and an end to all the listed issues in full.

To note, Comparable universities have addressed similar needs; this motion provides the support needed to do so institutionally

Purpose:

- The purpose of this motion is to promote the welfare and wellbeing of Muslim students at our University by campaigning for a prayer space that has adequate capacity, facilities, safety, accessibility, and convenience. This ensures that issues which hinder Muslim students' obligatory prayers and negatively impact their wellbeing (due to neglect) are actioned, and that a streamlined solution is reached through SU support.
- This motion will also advance the education of Bristol students, as they will no longer have to choose between prayer and teaching, creating a more positive academic experience. By improving wellbeing and representation, a supportive environment is cultivated, positively impacting educational performance and academic commitment.

- This space, being large enough to accommodate the Muslim population, will positively contribute to personal development, as other relevant activities could also be held in the same space, e.g. iftars (breaking fast meals), Qur'an reflections, understanding and learning sessions, weekly educational sessions, and discussion circles that foster critical thinking, positive emotions, and all-round learning, all of which contribute to improved academic performance and commitment.
- Finally, 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 through supporting their needs and causes.

Actions:

1. Bristol SU to fully support the efforts of the University of Bristol Islamic Society to obtain a larger prayer room that meets the needs of Muslim students at the University to practise their faith; including:
 - a. supporting the gathering of accurate statistics for research, lobbying and advocacy;
 - b. advocating for the campaign productively in spaces where change can be lobbied for or streamlined, with or without the presence of ISOC and the Prayer Room campaign fraction;
 - c. where possible, ensuring ISOC and its prayer room campaign fraction representatives are included in meetings and discussions where prayer space advocacy can take place.