

- [Further Education](#)
- [Higher Education](#)

The Church of England's involvement with universities is long-standing and profound. Through chaplaincy there is an Anglican presence in the vast majority of England's Higher Education Institutions.

Further Education

Your local college is part of a big network: between them, the 288 colleges in England educate almost 3.5 million people.

Students follow all sorts of courses, from basic skills in English to A Levels to degrees. Some are preparing to go on to university, others qualifying for a particular career, others are already working and want to improve their qualifications.

College students can be as young as 14 or into their 80s and 90's. The colleges range from small specialist centres, to Sixth Form Colleges to very large institutions, serving tens of thousands of students.

Colleges also matter a great deal to their local communities. They are often one of the biggest local employers and work really closely with businesses, schools and universities.

How are we involved?

Just like anyone else, college staff and students sometimes face tough times and want to talk about what matters in their lives. They also want to understand other people and what makes them tick and to celebrate the good things that happen in their college, on their course and in their lives.

We think that's important too. So, the Church of England:

- Helps provide chaplains – around 80% of colleges have a chaplaincy, with chaplains from all faiths and none, often local volunteers
- Offers a listening ear and pastoral support to people
- Helps run activities that build up better understanding between faith groups
- Provides ideas and resources for staff and students to explore spiritual and practical issues.
- Helps college and church leaders set up chaplaincy services
- Works with other faiths and beliefs, so that chaplaincy can serve everyone
- Works with government departments and other organisations, to speak up for the needs of colleges and their students

Higher Education

The church has always been involved in higher education. Some have even claimed that the very first ‘universities’ were set up by cathedrals and monasteries, to train people who could help run the church.

Things have changed a great deal since then:

- There are now around **2.3 million** students in universities in the UK – and another 150,000 studying in Further Education Colleges.
- Over 500,000 students are doing higher degrees (like an MSc or MA, or a PhD)
- Almost half of all 18-19 year-olds in the UK now go to university.
- While most students come from the UK, others come from all over the world, especially to do higher degrees: in total, about 440,000.

UK universities are really varied in size and character: they are part of their communities and also a major employer. They bring in almost £22 billion a year to the UK economy and play a huge part in research and innovation.

Read our '**Faith in Higher Education - A Church of England Vision**' [here](#)

How is the church involved?

We support university chaplaincies

There are around 1,000 people providing chaplaincy support to staff and students, many of them volunteers.

Chaplains are there for all – staff or students – and for those of all faiths and none.

We provide training, professional development for new and continuing chaplains, mentoring and a range of resources to support chaplains. We also offer advice to dioceses and universities on **?appointing chaplains and faith advisers.**

One chaplain's view of chaplaincy

"If you ever travel through Paddington station on a Friday evening you will hear the sound of the Paddington Brass Band. A group of amateur musicians who give up their Friday evening to help others to dance and sing on their journey home. The band are neither passengers nor crew, they have no agenda. They turn up out of love.

Chaplains, too, are like roving musicians. Embedded in the university, but not really part of it, we exist as 'ministers without portfolio'; tasked with helping others to dance and sing on their journey.

We separate ourselves from our religious institutions, to tell our story, and to hear the stories of others. We are 'outsiders' with a purpose. So we know how hard it is to leave home, or to be living a life which feels fragile and insecure, we understand the discomfort of change and the longing for new life and growth.

In the Christian tradition Jesus says that stepping out of our comfort zone - 'losing our life to gain it'- is the only way to achieve 'Life in all its fullness', so we have stepped out of our comfort zones, to see if we can share that journey together. We are a bit like a brass band on a railway station. Playing and singing in the hope that others might dance."

The Cathedrals Group

There are 16 universities which were originally set up to train teachers for church schools. All are now universities in their own right and 12 of them include a Church of England foundation. They educate around 100,000 students a year.

Here's how the Group explains what it stands for:

"Our members are the only grouping in the UK higher education landscape based on ethical principles informed by faith-based values. Members share a common faith heritage and a strong commitment to values such as social justice, respect for the individual and promoting the public good through our work with communities and charities. Within Cathedrals Group institutions there is a strong commitment to providing a high quality education for students, supporting personal and spiritual development within a challenging learning environment. Our Member institutions make a significant contribution to the intellectual, cultural, social, spiritual and economic life of the communities they serve.

Our faith-based values are to contribute to a 'whole person' student experience, support a positive working environment for staff, link with research and knowledge exchange activities, and shape our partnerships and community engagement."

If you'd like to find out more, visit the [Cathedrals Group website](#), which also has individual contact details for each of the Cathedrals Group universities, and a link to their own websites.

There is also a world-wide network of Anglican Foundation Colleges and Universities of the Anglican Communion ([known as CUAC](#)), which organises conferences and enables matters of common concern to be discussed. The current chair is Prof. Peter Neil, Vice-Chancellor of Bishop Grosseteste University, Lincoln.

Higher Education Policy

The Church wants to see people flourishing in all aspects of their lives. For us that means getting involved in national debates about what universities are for. We also get work with government departments, Parliament and agencies that oversee universities and colleges.

We work with other faith bodies to tackle harassment and violence on campus, especially with a religious motivation. We also want to see a vigorous debate about ethical and moral issues. Universities need to be places where we can be challenged and helped to look at things we may have previously taken for granted, and to broaden our understanding of the world and of others who don't share our beliefs.

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