

Faiths in Higher Education Chaplaincy Executive Summary



Jeremy M S Clines

A report commissioned by
the Church of England Board of Education

Church of England Board of Education
Church House
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ISBN 978-0-9558096-1-3

Published 2008 by the Church of England Board of Education

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This report was funded by the Faith Communities Capacity Building Fund of the Department of Communities and Local Government. It was commissioned by the Church of England Board of Education from Jeremy M S Clines, on secondment from the chaplaincy at York St John University, as a contribution to discussion about the development of chaplaincy in higher education in England and Wales.

Cover design by Neil Hunter
Typesetting by Iain Beswick

Printed by Office Services, Church of England

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1. Further Copies of the full Report and the Executive Summary

For information about obtaining further copies please write to:

Faiths in Higher Education Chaplaincy
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Church House
Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3AZ

Telephone: 0207 898 1505
www.cofe.anglican.org/info/education/hefe/

2. Responses to the Report

The Church of England Board of Education offers this report into the discussion about the development of chaplaincy in higher education and expresses its commitment to engage with interested parties – including chaplains, faith communities, higher education institutions and sector agencies – to improve provision.

Contact:

The National Adviser for Higher Education and Chaplaincy
Education Division
Church House
Great Smith Street
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3. Preface

During 2006 and 2007 the Church of England hosted what has come to be known as the Faiths in Higher Education Chaplaincy project, commissioned by the Board of Education and based in the Education Division, but relating as far as possible to all chaplaincies in England and Wales, and to all nine major faith communities. What follows is a summary of what took place and discovered together with key questions for further consideration by chaplains, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and the faith communities themselves.

The project was funded to fulfill these four main purposes:

- to identify the participation of different faith communities in university chaplaincies;
- to identify different chaplaincy models that have developed or are developing;
- to make recommendations for best practice to enable the most effective inter faith participation, collaboration and activity;
- and to disseminate findings to faith communities, HEIs and interested parties throughout England and Wales.

The Church of England's bid to the FCCBF arose out of its experience of its chaplains working in almost every higher education institution, and of emerging models of chaplaincy. Its conviction is that wider representation of the faith communities in chaplaincies is essential to ensure that the faith needs of students, staff and institutions are met, that the possibilities of inter faith working are increased, and that each of our faith communities can speak with integrity in a context of open dialogue. All these factors help embed chaplaincies in the life of the institutions that they serve.

We recognise that in the ever more diverse world of higher education two things are becoming increasingly important for members of the faith communities to do together. First, we should work together, which will enable us to put our own points of view not just because we have always done so or because we have a particular platform, but because we do so in a context where all are encouraged to be authentically themselves and to speak with integrity. This is not about "watering down" convictions or glossing over difference. It is certainly not about suggesting that someone without an allegiance to a particular faith community could in some way serve everyone's needs by being there as a lone 'multi-faith chaplain' (which is why for some the term 'multi-faith chaplaincy' is problematic). The contention is that for a chaplain to work alongside chaplains of other faiths will actually liberate them to be themselves, each being freed to express their own faith in the context of open dialogue. This will serve Christian chaplains well, as it will serve others.

Second, those working together as members of extended teams in chaplaincies in higher education, drawn as they are from various faith communities, have a wonderful and important opportunity to model good inter faith relationships. At a time when 43% of our 18-30 year olds are entering higher education, it must surely be the case that the relationships they forge and the strategies they learn as they encounter diversity and difference are going to help form the attitudes they will take with them into the rest of their lives.

The Right Revd Dr Kenneth Stevenson
Chairman, Church of England Board of Education

(This is an abridged version of the full preface that appears in the Report.)

4. Introduction

The Consultation Process

Initial consultation began with representatives from across the faith communities engaged in chaplaincy work in higher education. Discussions about the project were held with chaplains, faith advisors, students, student workers and others with an interest in chaplaincy.

Visits

Initial visits were made to eight Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and chaplaincies. During the project a further 16 HEIs and chaplaincies were visited.

Wider consultation and critical readers

A consultation was begun with the faith communities. These nine faiths are Baha'i, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Judaism, Sikhism and Zoroastrianism. Representatives from these nine were identified and asked to identify key partners in the project. From this, a list of critical readers was identified and subsequently they were asked to review sections of the Report.

Contacts were also established with representatives of national student faith organisations and with the National Union of Students.

Project Activity

Survey

Contact was attempted with all HEI chaplaincies in England and Wales. Contact was made with chaplaincies that serve 111 of the 128 HEIs in England and Wales (at the time of the survey).

Narratives

Arising from visits to HEI chaplaincies, narratives about chaplaincy practice were written by the Development Officer and the chaplaincy practitioner visited.

Dialogues

Seven regional practice workshops took place in January and February 2007, where practitioners working in, or associated with, HE chaplaincy met for dialogues on key themes.

Report Conclusions

Findings

In the findings the report explores exemplary practice, shares practitioners' expertise, and offers a new map of the terrain of inter religious working in HE chaplaincies.

Recommendations

Recommendations arising from the findings are made. These suggest approaches for improved working for HEIs, routes to enhancing the activities of HEI chaplaincies, and opportunities for effective engagement by the faith communities themselves.

For further consideration

Suggestions are made for further consideration with exemplary practice serving as the foundation from which developments and improvements can be made to existing provision.

Conclusions and Next Steps

The 'Findings', 'Recommendations' and suggestions 'For further consideration' are summarised and 'Next Steps' arising from these are identified.

5. Survey

Findings

'Multi-faith' is not a common term used to describe HEI chaplaincies.

95% of chaplaincies report some provision for prayer spaces at their HEI(s).

58% of chaplaincies report their HEI(s) as having multi-use prayer spaces, 51% chapels, and 65% Muslim prayer rooms.

52% of chaplaincy staff are volunteers. Of those 371 volunteers, 31% (114) come from the Baha'i, Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh faiths.

75% of all chaplaincy staff (voluntary and salaried) are Christian. 95% of all salaried staff have a Christian role in their chaplaincy team.

During the last five years 53% of chaplaincies have received new funding for existing and new activity.

Recommendations

HEIs should coordinate more inter religious activity to improve understanding between people from different religions.

An assessment of who benefits most from prayer space is important to ensure that all equalities strands are being considered as space provisions are put in place.

Chaplaincies should note that there have been many successes in obtaining new money in recent years, and should consider making strategic funding applications to support their work.

For further consideration

What are the advantages and disadvantages of changing the nomenclature of the title of a chaplaincy and the job titles of its staff?

How valid are the reasons chaplaincies may be staffed only by Christians? These reasons may include:

- confidence of the existing chaplaincy staff in offering support to all HEI members
- the specific context
- a lack of aspiration to change
- a lack of contacts with other religions.

What would be an equivalent level of staffing provision for different religions in any particular HEI? This is complex because aspirations are best set in relation to several factors:

- numbers of faith adherents at the HEI
- specific needs of respective groups
- anticipation of future need
- representation for religious and belief groups.

6. Dialogues

Findings

Inter religious teams are developing in many HEI chaplaincies.

If faith and belief needs are to be understood better at an HEI, it is essential that there is closer collaboration by the chaplaincy with local faith communities, staff in other departments and student faith societies.

Chaplaincies assist their HEIs with shaping vision and mission in relation to:

- responding to internationalisation
- building a holistic learning environment and collaborating for well being
- developing social cohesion and promoting good relations
- improving access and participation and increasing community engagement.

Volunteers play an essential part in diverse teams. These teams require effective leadership.

Literacy about matters of religion and belief among the students and staff at an HEI assists in promoting good relationships between people holding diverse beliefs within an institution.

Recommendations

It is essential that HEI senior management teams engage with chaplaincies when religion and belief topics are being considered.

HEIs should ensure that provisions for religious and belief needs do not disadvantage individuals on the basis of gender, disability, sexuality, race, ethnicity and social background.

Chaplains and chaplaincies should be willing and able carefully to articulate their purpose and expertise to the HEIs they serve.

Leaders, governors and managers in HEIs and faith communities should be champions for chaplaincy work.

Developing the skills of team leaders in coordinating teams and implementing best practice for volunteers is a priority.

HEIs should recognise that chaplaincy work can support the process of personal development and help to foster a desire for mutual understanding between individuals and groups.

New modules designed to be inter-disciplinary that address social, moral, cultural and spiritual issues would be beneficial for students and staff, and should be considered as part of curriculum design and staff development planning.

As HEIs develop their engagement with the local community, local faith communities and employers, chaplaincies should be seen as effective leaders in helping establish these relationships.

For further consideration

Might an HEI's market success depend in part on an effective response to religion and belief needs and aspirations of those who want to study and work in higher education?

When new funding for faiths is sought, how can the meeting of diverse needs be anticipated in order to strengthen and enhance initial ideas for bids?

7. Narratives

Findings

Built spaces for religious use have the potential both to validate and to marginalise, particularly in relation to:

- different needs for space from diverse groups
- difficulty in maintaining equal access to space.

The main ways that chaplaincies and HEIs currently provide for diverse religious needs are through the provision of:

- prayer space
- volunteer chaplaincy staff.

Students' own faith identities, and their assumptions about others, are likely to be challenged while at an HEI. Chaplaincies can play a significant role both in challenging expectations and supporting a person who finds his or her identity is challenged.

Student faith societies make a substantial contribution to the expression of religious identity at an HEI. These societies are at their most successful when:

- external groups are used for appropriate support
- the Students' Union and chaplaincy liaise and collaborate with societies.

Successful inter religious activities result from careful planning and consultation with the faith communities before during and after the activities take place.

Recommendations

HEIs should ensure that new facilities do not disadvantage individuals on the basis of gender, disability, sexuality, race and ethnicity.

A 'one size fits all' approach to establishing new prayers facilities is unlikely to succeed.

Building inter religious teams requires the fostering of sustained relationships with local faith communities. HEIs and faith communities should actively promote such relationships.

Inter religious co-operation and dialogue in each specific context should be encouraged in order to ensure that provisions at an HEI and in its chaplaincy are more closely matched to need.

For further consideration

Inter religious working together requires:

- clear team structures
- team building
- sophistication in dialogue.

What commitments can an HEI and local faith communities undertake to support this development work?

Many Christian chaplains are working in ecumenical groups. Transforming that setting into a team representing different religions requires a range of skills, patience and an investment of time. How can this best be resourced?

8. Next Steps

A national Inter Religious Working Group

Arising from the consultation that has taken place during the work of this project with representatives from nine world faiths, the HE sector, the practitioner groups and interested parties it would be possible and practical to set up a national working group to continue to give further consideration to the issues that have been raised in this report. The Working Group would require adequate funding to be viable.

A national Faiths in Higher Education Forum

The findings of a national working group could provide the suitable context and relevant content to equip a national 'Faiths in HE Forum'. This would be effective in bringing experts together, representing the world religions, to consider the opportunities for holistic learning and positive relationships between diverse religious groups participating in higher education. It would also establish a context where common concerns of faith communities, the HE sector and related government departments could be shared.

Training

This project has clearly identified training needs for chaplaincy staff, HEI leaders and managers. Training is partly the responsibility of the faith communities who provide chaplains, and partly that of HEIs. But the existence of the above-mentioned Forum and Working Group could also better enable the production of training materials to include:

- fact-sheets on some of the basic religion and belief needs of student and staff
- web-based training in a tool-kit style
- training events for chaplaincy staff, leaders, governors and managers

Guidance

Guidance that is considered and written collaboratively is urgently needed as follows:

- Further advice on how to develop dialogue as a way of resisting religious intolerance and challenging extreme perspectives
- Further advice on how equitability (or dynamic equivalence) can be built into provision for the faiths
- Advice on possibilities for increasing the number of salaried religious professionals working in chaplaincies from all the faith communities
- Ensuring consideration of the suitability of existing faiths provision for people in an HEI who belong to a specific strand or tradition within a world religion that may be marginalised
- Ensuring access to religion and belief provision for those who may currently be disadvantaged due to their gender, disability, sexuality, race, ethnicity, social background etc.
- Increasing the opportunities for inter religious dialogue
- Increasing the opportunities for dialogue between people who hold diverse religious and belief perspectives
- Suggestions on how it could be appropriate to collect voluntarily provided data from students about their religion or belief.

Best advice will be that which is drawn up, in dialogue, by experts in the field such as national chaplaincy advisors, Universities UK, GuildHE, the Equality Challenge Unit, the Association of Managers of Student Services in Higher Education (AMOSSHE), the National Union of Students and the Inter Faith Network, drawing on the experience of their various members and networks.

9. Contributors to the project

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- How are different faith communities participating in chaplaincies in higher education institutions in England and Wales?
- What different models of working are developing?
- What practice enables most effective participation, collaboration and activity of faiths in universities and colleges?
- What are the key questions for chaplains, for institutions and for the faith communities themselves to reflect on?

These were some of the questions that the Faiths in Higher Education Chaplaincy project set out to discover.

This Executive Summary presents key findings, recommendations and issues for further consideration from the report, which reveals the valuable and surprisingly diverse roles chaplaincies play in engaging with faith communities, building good campus relations and contributing to social cohesion.

The project was funded by the Faith Communities Capacity Building Fund of the Department of Communities and Local Government.

£1.95



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