

**Imperial College Union
Union Council / 04/02/2025
Prayer Space Provision**

Authors: Nico Henry, Deputy President (Welfare)

Seconder: Ashay Divekar, ICU Interfaith Officer
Idrees Mahmood, Islamic Society President
Zaynab Choudhury, Islamic Society Vice President – Head Sister
Camille Boutrolle, Union President
Christian Cooper, Deputy President (Clubs & Societies)
Emina Hogas, Deputy President (Education)
Stephanie Yeung, Deputy President (Finance and Services)

Decision: To approve

Union Notes

1. Imperial is prioritising its outreach to key target markets, including the UAE and Saudi Arabia, both of which have predominantly Muslim populations.ⁱ
2. Data from the academic years 2020-21, 2021-22, and 2022-23 shows a steadily increasing Muslim student population, with 1841, 1991, and 2112 students, respectively.ⁱⁱ
3. Muslim students' religious practices involve five daily prayers at specific times that vary with the seasons. In winter, prayer times are particularly closer together due to the shorter daylight hours. Additionally, Islamic prayer spaces must be separated by gender.
4. The current prayer facilities are in the Chaplaincy basement at 14 and 15 Prince's Gardens, approximately a 7-minute walk from the Abdus Salam Library (verified via Google Maps and university-provided maps)ⁱⁱⁱ. These spaces are not wheelchair accessible.
5. There are no alternative prayer spaces in the South Kensington area to accommodate Muslim students.
6. As of this date, 1131 men and 686 women hold active access cards for the designated prayer spaces.^{iv}
7. Jumma is a mandatory congregational prayer for Muslims held every Friday at midday. It requires sufficient space to accommodate a larger gathering than daily prayers. The Students' Union currently provides space for Friday prayer. A recent headcount showed 330 attendees, highlighting the high demand for adequate space. Due to health and safety concerns about overcrowding, security monitors access to ensure only students and staff use the space.
8. The university has stated that, following the Great Hall refurbishment, Friday prayers will be hosted there starting in September of 2026.
9. Ramadan is the Islamic holy month of fasting, prayer, and reflection. In 2025, Ramadan is expected to begin on Friday, February 28, and end on Sunday, March 30.
10. Many students and staff have reported inadequate prayer facilities, leading them to resort to praying in staircases, lecture theatres, or free spaces they can find.

Union Believes

1. Imperial is making great strides in diversifying its student population, we commend the university for fostering a global community. We are pleased to see an increasing number of students from different cultural and religious backgrounds.
2. As a university located in the heart of London—a city celebrated for its multiculturalism—we believe it is essential to provide facilities that reflect and support the diversity of our students and staff.
3. We believe that prayer rooms should be wheelchair accessible and located within a realistic walking distance from central locations such as the library, ensuring inclusivity and convenience for all.
4. Students already face significant time constraints due to their academic responsibilities. Adding logistical challenges to meet basic religious needs exacerbates stress and affects their overall well-being. Providing accessible and adequate facilities is not just about meeting religious requirements but also about supporting student mental health and academic success.

Union Resolves

1. For the Deputy President (Welfare) to lobby the university to acknowledge that students have religious requirements, and the lack of adequate facilities negatively impacts their well-being and therefore academic success.
2. To request that the university provides temporary, accessible prayer spaces on campus for at least the period of Ramadan, ensuring availability from 12 PM to 5 PM to accommodate prayer needs during this period.
3. To ensure that all students have access to a prayer room within 3 minutes' walk from any location on campus where teaching might take place. This includes working with departments and building managers to coordinate and provide temporary prayer spaces where needed, ensuring accessibility for all.
4. To lobby the University to send a campus-wide email calling for academics to provide flexibility to Muslim students who may be late for academic study during this period owing to their religious requirements.
5. To advocate for the university to consider the needs of an increasingly diverse student body, specifically by incorporating dedicated prayer spaces into long-term, permanent facilities planning and future building designs
6. To require the union to annually review the prayer facilities to ensure they are fit for the student population

ⁱ <https://imperial.shorthandstories.com/3ab98d2c-ad7f-4c38-9e57-800fe3df5a10/index.html>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/admin-services/secretariat/request-report-and-access/disclosure-log/student-information/student-information-characteristics/>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/media/imperial-college/visit/public/SouthKensingtonCampus.pdf>

^{iv} Data provided by security, campus services.