

Wednesday 13 September 2023

NERUPI Convention 2023: The Power of Partnership

Welcome

#nerupiconv23 Wifi: FriendsHouseLDN / WeAre_Mindful



With faith, anything is possible - *integrating multi-faith prayer spaces into library areas*

Dr Julie Vuolo, Deputy Head
Widening Access and Student Success
University of Hertfordshire



Presentation outline

- What we did (in a nutshell)
- Why we did it (drivers for change)
- How we did it (the role of student-staff partnership and multi-professional collaboration)
- Student feedback (what did they say)
- Embedding change (what next)

Snapshot 2022...

Post '92

31,000 Students

7,000 Part-Time

24,000 Full-Time

14,000 UG / 10,000 PG

13,000 Home

11,700 Overseas

51% Black, Asian, Minority Ethnicity

17% Declare a disability

26% Household income <25k

NB All figures approx.



What we did



2022: pop-up multi-faith prayer space piloted in both study centres (LRCs) for spring exam period; well-used in one LRC, less so in other; +++ positive feedback.



2023: pop-up multi-faith prayer space piloted in just one LRC for winter and spring exam period, also encompassing Ramadan; well-used, +++ positive feedback.

Why we did it (otherwise known as what Maryam said)

- Muslims have a mandatory obligation to pray five times a day.
- The only time Muslims are not mandated to pray is if they are sick or are menstruating.
- Students can use the multi-faith centres on each campus to pray. Muslim students have set-aside areas within these, but they were not leaving the LRCs to pray in the designated spaces, instead they were staying and praying in unsafe areas, 'blocking exits and disturbing' others.
- Students were being 'forced to decide between religious obligation and academic aspiration'.

Why we did it (still what Maryam said)

- Would be better to provide a suitable prayer space within the LRC.
 - ✓ Benefits - less disruption to study.
 - ✓ Benefits - improved accessibility for students with disabilities.
 - ✓ Benefits - improved sense of safety for female students if not having to walk out at night to reach the multi-faith, esp. in the winter months.
- Student survey - sent to members of the Student Islamic Society found 91% (n=61/67) of respondents agreed/strongly agreed that an integrated prayer space would greatly enhance their student experience.



One student's view

Many times, I have to walk across campus, up and down many stairs to get to the Key for sometimes for three of my five daily prayers. I am a strong, fit male and even I find it quite a strenuous task, so I dread to think what other students and staff members who aren't as physically fit or suffer from a disability must be going through. A small space to pray in the LRC would be amazing. I believe everyone's mental health and determination to study and achieve higher would grow substantially.

Drivers for change



A lack of sense of belonging can impact Muslim student retention, degree attainment and progression (Gholami, 2021).



Nationally, Muslim student good degree attainment is 64.5% compared to Christian students (76%) or students who have no declared faith (78%) (Advance HE, 2020).



UH Muslim student attainment is above national average at 74% but below Christian students (76%) or those with no declared faith (85%).



UH has approximately 5400 self-declared Muslim students (17.9% of the total student population), more than double the national average in higher education institutions (Advance HE, 2020).

Integrating prayer and study spaces was seen as a means of enhancing academic outcomes by reducing study disruption and improving students' sense of mattering to the University.

How we did it – what the students asked for

- A peaceful, quiet area with enough space to move in and out without disturbing others e.g., no one can pass in front of a praying person.
- Separate spaces for men and women.
- Clean of all contaminants and odour free.
- Carpeted with somewhere to place shoes (a rack).
- No idols, statues or pictures
- Somewhere to perform ablution (Wudu) before prayer takes place.



How we did it - student-staff partnership and multi-professional collaboration

Formed a group with Students' Union, Chair of the Student Islamic Society, a former female student of Muslim faith; LRC Student Experience Lead; Chaplaincy Lead; Head of EDI; Dean of Students; Widening Access and Student Success.





How we did it - student-staff partnership and multi-professional collaboration

- Sought senior management 'buy in': joint student/staff presentation to EDI Board for support.
- Assessed for Impact on Equality.
- Changed from Muslim to multi-faith space.
- Worked with students to decide individual responsibilities during pilot period e.g., provide prayer timetable, storage for prayer mats, signage, student comms about space.
- Talked to those likely to be affected at operational level: security, cleaners, front-of-house management team.
- Consulted with other student faith societies
- Agreed measures of success and evaluation points

Evaluation measures

- a) Feedback from students and staff (survey and conversation)
- b) Student behaviours in and around spaces (informal observation)
- c) Evidence of impact on the wider faith provision (reported incidents / comments)
- c) Operational impact on LRC staff including housekeeping and security aspects (measured through group feedback)
- d) Feedback from key stakeholders e.g., Dean of Students, Head of EDI (through feedback at meetings)
- e) Space usage – unable to monitor

Student feedback

- Online feedback survey via QR code displayed outside each of the spaces.
- 157 responses, 75% (n=118) from College Lane LRC users and 25% (n=39) from De Havilland users.
- Question areas - met my needs, felt welcome, one thing to keep, one thing to change.
- Overwhelmingly positive with similarity between both LRC spaces i.e., positive comments about the provision of the space, the cleanliness, and the convenience of the locations.
- Many students put forward ideas for improvements such as supplying the Qibla (direction of prayer) in each space, prayer mats, shoe racks, seating for students unable to stand/kneel for long periods; more space and proper wash facilities (e.g., a Wudu basin).

Student feedback

'I really liked this initiative by university. During the month of Ramadan, I didn't have to rush back home for the prayers because I could easily perform prayers in the library without any inconvenience. Thank you for this effort'

'It should be available throughout the year. LRC is my favourite place to work and study. Previously I was going to key at each prayer time. That was of-course difficult as I used to lose my place. Thankfully now we have got a place. Thank you, University of Hertfordshire for understanding my need. Feeling proud of being a Herts student'

'It was so convenient and helpful. Otherwise, you have to walk from the LRC to multi faith space when you might not want to pack up your stuff etc. or saves you from praying in a random place in library where some people could feel 'intimidated' / you could feel nervous to do so"

Embedding change



Problems - fears of inappropriate use of spaces; opportunities for radicalism; lack of space availability now that everyone back on campus; no dedicated space for ablution, space limitation and the need to ensure LRCs remain first and foremost study spaces for all, student involvement turn-over



Positives - new relationships forged, surprise supporters, COVID-19 enabled change to happen, data made the difference

Acknowledgements

Thank you all so much once again for your time and efforts into something so dear to us on behalf of the Muslim community, Shaheer

Maryam Zaman, Ramees Nazir and Shaheer Nasan - students.

Pete Hanna – Student Experience Lead.

Mohammed Ilyas – Head of EDI.

Fiona Souter – Head of Chaplaincy.

Claire Hartridge – Deputy Dean of Students.

Ian Grimes – Head of Estates.

Mathew Maddock – Student Success Officer.

References

Advance HE (2020), Equality and Higher Education: students statistical report 2020. Available at <https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/equality-higher-education-statistical-report-2020> [Accessed 5th September 2023]

Gholami, R. (2021), Critical Race Theory and Islamophobia: challenging inequity in Higher Education, *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 24:3, 319-337, DOI: 10.1080/13613324.2021.1879770 [Accessed 11 August 2023]

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Arysha Lemmers, Janna Michael &
Anne Wijtzes



Engaging Students, Transforming Futures: Building Strategies to Increase Multicultural Student Ambassador Participation using the CLEAR Model

Erasmus University Rotterdam
Making Minds Matter



What's on the agenda

Introductions

- Arysha & Janna
- Academic Outreach Programma Erasmus University Rotterdam

Strategy breakdown:

- How to attract & engage multicultural student ambassadors using the CLEAR model

Conclusions

Tips & Tricks



Who are we?

Arysha Lemmers, BSc.

Event Manager Academic Outreach Programme



Dr. Janna Michael

Postdoctoral Researcher Academic Outreach Programme



Erasmus University Rotterdam
Making Minds Matter



Academic Outreach Programme

Increase access to, progress through, and graduation from higher education

Part of

I nclusion

D iversity

E quity

A ccess

center



Learnings from our outreach efforts



Impact of stakeholder management and co-creation



Increase in university-wide awareness of & action on outreach



Role models are key!



Collaborating with student-ambassadors is a 'win-win'

Erasmus

42 student ambassadors

14 Nationalities

All faculties are
represented

All study years are
represented



Our approach

Based on the **CLEAR framework**

> Provides insights into the barriers and what is needed to organise effective participation.

Lowndes, Pratchett, & Stoker (2006)



C

CAN DO

have the resources and knowledge to participate



L

LIKE TO

have a sense of attachment that reinforces participation



E

ENABLED TO

are provided with the opportunity for participation



A

ASKED TO

are mobilised by official bodies or voluntary groups



R

RESPONDED TO

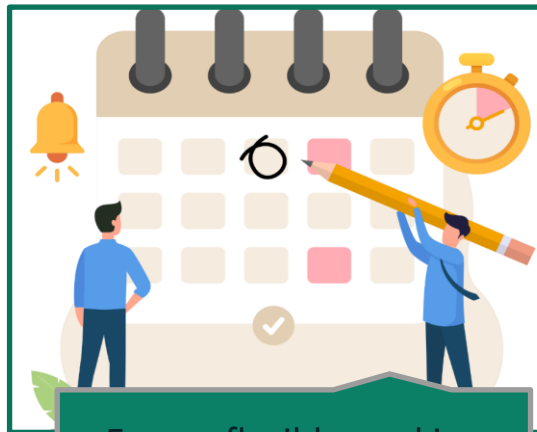
see evidence that their views have been considered

Can do:

'Students have the knowledge and resources to participate'



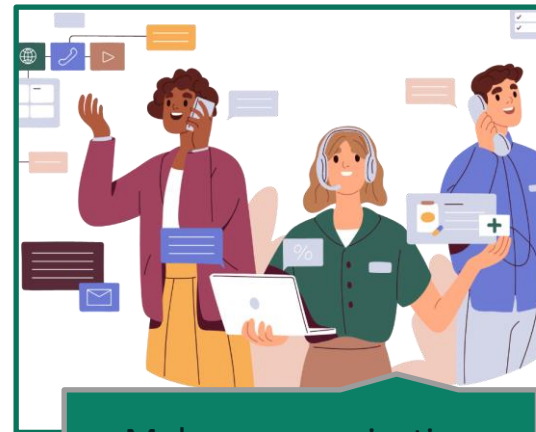
Strategy: create a flexible, accessible work environment where we take their living environment into consideration



Ensure flexible working hours



Taken other responsibilities into account



Make communication accessible



Provide training to build skills

Like to

'Students have a sense of attachment that reinforces participation'



Strategy:

Make students feel
connected to the
institution & the
mission of your
programme



Present
students as
inspiring
role models



Ensure
diversity
in your
own team



Create a
personal and
enthusiastic
approach

Erasmus

Enabled to

'Students are provided with the opportunity to participate'



Strategy:

Organise
diverse
educational,
professional,
and team
building
activities



Provide
opportunit
y to
showcase
their
talents



Provide
training to
build skills



Organise
networking
events



Organise
community
building
events



Involve
them in
the
recruitmen
t process



Asked to...

'Students are mobilized by official bodies or voluntary groups'



Participate in a variety
of (research) activities

Research

- Feedback via questionnaires: development & process-evaluations
- Repeated interviews

Ezra

Responded to

'Students see evidence that their views have been considered'



Research results

Are being shared with the student ambassadors
Used to improve our programmes and trainings



Continuous conversations

- We show in personal contact with student ambassadors that we take feedback very seriously

Ezra

Tips & Tricks

Behavioral tips

- If they don't come to you, go where they are
- Try having an open mind and flexible mindset
- Creating a warm and respectful environment will evoke – next to a strong sense of belonging – loyalty and a true connection

Communication tips

- Try to avoid communicating in formal lingo. Keep it informal but don't use too much Gen Z slang either 😊
- Initiate personal get-to-know you conversations
- Include the student ambassadors in the (thinking) process
- Be aware of micro-aggressions

The Erasmus logo, featuring the word "Erasmus" in a stylized, cursive script.

Conclusion:

“Nothing about us, without us.”



Conclusions



Community building is key



The main strategy is creating connection through recognition



Attract multicultural student ambassadors so you can build on their expertise and lived experiences



Student ambassadors are involved in every step of the process

Erasmus

Testimonials from our student ambassadors

“Finally, now it
feels like I study in
Rotterdam”

“Working with a
multicultural team
makes my study time
so much better”

“This is not a
side job, but a
mission”

“Being a role model
changed my
perspectives, maybe
also my *life*”

“Because of AOP, I got
to know *like-minded*
peers”

Ezra

Questions, comments, ideas?

Please get in touch!



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