University of Surrey
Multi-Faith Centre

Valuing faith, deepening understanding
A ground-breaking facility for a world-class university

“Our vision is to establish a centre in which students - both those of faith and those professing none - are valued for the riches they bring to the University community. Through the life and work of the Centre understanding will be deepened, differences explored and friendships formed across barriers of religion, history and culture.”

Professor Christopher Snowden, Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive

Project Patrons

Mufti Liaquat Ali Amod
Imam, Shah Jahan Mosque, Woking

Mrs Sarah Goad, JP
HM Lord Lieutenant of Surrey

His Eminence Archbishop Gregorios
Archbishop of Thyateira and Great Britain

The Revd the Lord Leslie Griffiths
Superintendent Minister, Wesley’s Chapel

Most Reverend Kevin McDonald
Archbishop of Southwark

Moulana Mohammad Shahid Raza, OBE
President, The World Islamic Mission, (European region)

Chief Rabbi, Sir Jonathan Sacks
Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth

Venerable Sangthong Dhammacaro
Dhammaduta monk, Wat Buddhapadipa, Wimbledon

Dr Indarjit Singh, OBE
Honorary Director, Network of Sikh Organisations UK

His Honour Mota Singh, QC
Chairman, International Sikh Education Trust

Sir Sigmund Sternberg, KCSG, JP
Co-Founder, The Three Faiths Forum

The Most Revd and Rt Hon Dr Rowan Williams
Archbishop of Canterbury

Venerable Yamamoto Bunkyou
Rinzai priest, Jissouji, Takamatsu, Japan
A place where people of all faiths will feel at home

“This is a timely and relevant project, which springs from a University with an international reach and forward-looking perspective. Learning to negotiate religious, cultural and ethnic diversity is one of the key challenges facing all of us at the beginning of the 21st century.”

Jonathan Frost, Anglican Chaplain

A place to be, a place for friendship

The times in which we live cry out for dialogue and greater understanding between the religions and cultures of the world. The proposal to build a Multi-Faith Centre at the University of Surrey is a forward-looking response to this global challenge.

Open to all, the Multi-Faith Centre will provide for the specific needs of faith communities on campus and, through programmes, projects and the informal interactions of its daily life, will create space for respectful dialogue and friendship.

The University of Surrey is a community drawn from over 140 nations. It has been aptly described as a ‘microcosm of the world’. Here young people drawn from different faiths, backgrounds, beliefs and cultures live side by side. In such a vibrant community we recognise huge potential for the conscious and active promotion of respect, understanding and dialogue amongst young people.

Realising the vision

£7 million. That’s how much it will cost and how much we need to raise. By investing in the University of Surrey Multi-Faith Centre you will help to prepare generations of young people for leadership and peaceful co-existence and enable our Chaplaincy team to develop its vital work.
The Multi-Faith Centre: a practical response to a global challenge

Today it is almost impossible to live one’s life without an awareness of the significance and challenge of religious and cultural diversity. We believe universities have a fundamental role to play in shaping the culture and wellbeing of society, and are well placed to contribute to young people’s experience and understanding of diversity.

Tomorrow’s global citizens are the students of today
There could not be a better time for a project which creates space to bring young people together to develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed for peaceful co-existence in a world of many faiths and cultures. Our Multi-Faith Centre will create such a space.

A new beginning
Universities in the UK struggle to meet the needs of faith communities and Surrey is no exception - with nearly 15,000 students and staff, its current provision for faith communities is overstretched. The University community has diversified rapidly over the last two decades. Facilities established in another era are now under severe pressure. A new beginning is required. The Multi-Faith Centre addresses this situation, and does so with a strong educational focus.
A place to call home
To feel at home people need to feel valued and affirmed in their own identity. This is as true for students as for anyone else, especially since many are far away from home and encountering new cultures for the first time. Having a place to call home can build the confidence required to explore new ideas, and to engage with different people and ways of looking at things. The Multi-Faith Centre will value faith as well as the beliefs and values of those professing none, and will create an environment in which understanding can be deepened between different communities.

Valuing difference
The Multi-Faith Centre will provide for the six major world faiths under one roof. There will be dedicated space for the Christian, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh communities, and shared space for Hindu and Buddhist practices. Those of other faiths and those with no religious allegiance will also find a welcome and room to breathe within the Centre.

A philosophy of respect
The philosophy underpinning the Centre is one of respect for difference, rather than mere tolerance of others. If we respect another person we are interested in them and we will want to discover more about how they see things, what they believe to be true and of most worth.

Learning to disagree
We need to learn how to disagree. Respect for another means neither the avoidance of difficult issues nor bland agreements that carry no conviction, but rather a readiness to share journeys of understanding – journeys in which we accept, hold and explore our differences rather than part company or build walls of separation between us. It is this journey we are discovering in our life together – the way of radical respect, and the engagement, enrichment and learning that can flow from it.

“It is vital that the young followers of diverse faiths are provided with an environment that fosters friendly dialogue and promotes understanding and peaceful co-existence.”
Surindar Singh Tulsi, Sikh Chaplain
A place for growth

For all of us, student or otherwise, the internet and increased mobility have had the effect of shrinking the world. Where once we might have been unaware of the existence of others, we now find we are side by side in one ‘world house’. At the University of Surrey the promise and challenge of religious and cultural diversity is brought home to us on a daily basis.

Building trust
People of faith live side-by-side with those of no formal creed or allegiance. Students from one faith community study alongside those whose faith is very different. Students are challenged through daily experience in the laboratory, library or teaching block to live with ‘others’ in all their difference.

And yet, far too frequently, ‘otherness’ is experienced as a threat. The work of the Multi-Faith Centre will show that difference can be a source of enrichment rather than division. It will build trust and help us all to grow.

“Trust is usually built on similarity; working to identify and understand how common values exist between people who feel different and think differently is challenging. Developing the personal resources to listen well, correct misunderstandings and discover trust is essential for society.”

Dr Abdul Mateen Sansom, Muslim Chaplain
A place for learning

A significant part of the work of the University Chaplaincy at Surrey is to promote understanding between students through dialogue. Offering a pioneering Inter-Faith Education Programme the Chaplaincy provides opportunities for students to meet, inform and enrich each other - fears are faced, prejudices are overcome.

In the last six years the University Chaplaincy has facilitated a Festival of Faiths, fortnightly dialogues between students of different faiths, beliefs and cultures, made journeys of understanding to places of religious and cultural significance, prison visits and two study-visits to Auschwitz. New facilities will enable us to develop this timely work amongst young people, and provide a model of good community relations for generations to come.

Engagement with the wider community is crucial to the project. Part of the Multi-Faith Centre’s remit will be to contribute towards the development of a regional, national and international profile for inter-faith education.

“There will be no peace among the nations without peace among the religions. There will be no peace among the religions without dialogue among the religions.”

Hans Küng
The Centre - our concept and plans
“Our challenge was to create a building that invites everyone, whatever their beliefs, to come in and discover more.”

Martin Heijne, BCH Architects
A welcoming place

The design is based on the concept of a flower, where the roots and stem are the communal areas and each of the petals is a beautiful space for worship and contemplation.

The faith communities contributed enthusiastically to the design process and the result is a building which will be flooded with natural light, its curved roof structures ‘floating’ above each prayer space and the fluidity of each area encouraging a feeling of movement. It is a welcoming place which combines spaces for contemplation and prayer with areas for relaxation and interaction.

The Centre will provide dedicated facilities for Christian, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh communities and shared space for the practices of Hindu and Buddhist communities. Students and staff of other faiths and those with no faith allegiance who need breathing space in a busy life will find it here.

“When we asked our focus groups what they wanted in the Jewish space, the answer was somewhere between a trendy synagogue and a Starbucks café! A home from home. Somewhere that’s comfortable. What we are hoping to achieve is not just a synagogue but also a Jewish Common Room where people can meet and eat, pray and learn.”

Alex Goldberg, Jewish Chaplain
First Floor

6 The Christian Space:
   The Chapel of Christ the Light
7 The Quiet Space: for meditation, Buddhist and Hindu practices
8 The Sikh Space: capacity to dedicate space for the Guru Granth Sahib
9 The Jewish Space: synagogue and community facilities
10 The Muslim Space: prayer hall and community facilities
“Sometimes working together side-by-side can achieve miracles. I believe the Multi-Faith Centre project must be considered a miracle-in-the-making. Here young Jews and Christians, Muslims and Sikhs, Hindus and Buddhists, along with other partners, have come together to work for peaceful co-existence: and not just for themselves but for the good of future generations. I commend the project most warmly.”

Chief Rabbi, Sir Jonathan Sacks
Realising the vision – with your help

How you can help make the Multi-Faith Centre a reality

We believe the Multi-Faith Centre will be of national and even international significance. Years of consultation and planning have gone into this journey. We are poised to make it a reality and we now need your support.

The cost of the Centre is £7 million and the University has committed to cover all future operating costs thus ensuring a sustainable future for the Centre.

We have already secured the support of leaders of all the major faith communities. In supporting this appeal, you’ll be turning the vision of providing a centre for dialogue and friendship across all faith communities at Surrey into a reality.

We would be delighted to show you our plans and discuss how you can join in helping us to achieve this compelling vision.

The time is right, the need has never been greater. Will you help us?

For more information about how you can help, please contact the Development Office on +44 (0) 1483 683143 or email development@surrey.ac.uk

Development Office
University of Surrey
Guildford
Surrey GU2 7XH
www.surrey.ac.uk/multifaithcentre

“A sound proposition

“I invite you to join us in this exciting opportunity to make a step change in the provision of inter-faith education at the University of Surrey and enable us to enhance further our well-deserved reputation as an ambitious, bold and forward-thinking institution by the creation of this new centre.”

Professor Bernard Weiss, Appeal Chairman

“The Centre will lead to growth and a greater sense of community, and indeed Catholic identity. It will also afford the opportunity to meet and share with others who are Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Sikhs and Hindus, as well as from other Christian denominations. This can only be good!”

John McCarthy, Catholic Chaplain
“I believe the Multi-Faith Centre and its activities will prove to be a positive influence in the lives of generations of students and good news for the peace of the world in which they will lead and serve. Please do support us.”

Elizabeth Simos, President, University of Surrey Students’ Union