Interfaith Event Planning

Faith at University
International Women's Day
Interfaith Shabbat Time Mentoring
Advertising Holocaust Memorial Day
Religious Festivals Formal Dinner
Funding Social Media Newspaper Article
Scriptural Reasoning Q&A Participants
Food bank collection
Speakers Venue
Social Action Project
Registration Blog
Interfaith Quiz
Chanukah-Christmas
Feedback Panel event
Freedom Sunday
Cost Useful Contacts
Speed Faithing
Catering Resources
Bible Study Photos
Faith and Feminism
Human Rights Day
Networking Layout
Freedom Seder
Date
Training
Interfaith Week
Follow Up

What do you need to consider

What type of event to hold

Which occasion

How can CCJ help

CCJ

Plan

For a successful interfaith event you need to plan in advance

Purpose

Before choosing the type of interfaith event you are going to hold, ask yourself what do you want to achieve? Is this event being held to build relationships, to learn more, or to work together on a social action project? Having a specific context will help make the event relevant for your university context.

Limitations

Is there anything restricting what you can organise? Perhaps you are limited by time, money, venue, or a busy calendar of events. Be clear on what is feasible when organising an event, so you can plan around any limits.

Attendees

Who are you hoping to attract to the event? Just students or the local community? Which faiths? People new to interfaith or experienced? Your event should be designed with the planned audience in mind to make sure they feel welcome and comfortable.

Network

Who in your existing contacts can help you with this event? Is there someone who can book a venue, who can advertise the event or help you set up the venue in advance? Your chaplaincy, societies, and students' union can be very helpful in organising your event, and don't forget to use your CCJ connections.

Choose the type of event

Over the last year our Student Leaders have organised a wide variety of events at their universities. There's no set template to follow, but we've included some of the types of events our students have held to give you an idea.

Keep your plan in mind when choosing the type of event you hold and be as creative as you like. The most important thing is to make sure it matches your plan for the event.

Social Action

Through faith groups working together on a social action project, strong relationships can be built. These initiatives provide a positive image of faith groups on campus as well as making a difference.

"It is great to have met some new friends, help those in need and gain insight into the different faith perspectives."

Liverpool students bake bread for homeless people in their city, whilst learning about the role of food in different reigious tradtions.

Good for: building lasting relationships between students of different faiths. Creating an ongoing initiative. Making a positive impact in your community.

Be aware: think carefully about who you will be supporting in this project. Everyone needs to agree with the cause and the method of support you are giving.

Speed Faithing

Gives students a short amount of time to speak one-on-one with someone of a different faith about each other's personal beliefs, and what life is like as someone of that faith.

"The conversations we shared were proof that, despite the cold Scottish wind, ...there is a special kind of warmth to be found in human connection and respectful dialogue with others."

A speed faithing event at the University of Edinburgh.

Good for: taking pressure off individuals to represent their entire faith. Allows students to get to know each other better on a personal level.

Be aware: choose your topics carefully to avoid the dialogue turning into debate. Make sure there are topics non-religious students are able to discusss.

Scriptural Reasoning

Scriptural Reasoning is the shared study of holy scriptures. Each group brings a passage from their text relating to a certain theme. Some people may have little knowledge of your religious text so it's good to give an introduction.

"It was delightful to see a real development of the level of engagement between faith societies."

LSE Interfaith Bible Study looking at each others' scriptures to mark Interfaith Week.

Good for: having an in-depth discussion on a particular topic, thus allowing common principles to be related between religions.

Be aware: of any sensitivities in the texts before you start. This event is difficult if you are inviting groups with no religious text.

Religious Festivals

Think about inviting students of other faiths to your religious festivals to celebrate together. If festivals from different faiths take place at the same time you could organise a joint celebration.

"For the first time ever, Cambridge Muslims were hosted at Fisher House to break the Ramadan fast together and enjoy the company and service of Catholics."

Cambridge students enjoying an interfaith Iftar.

Good for: learning more about another faith. Gives people a chance to talk to each other and learn from each other.

Be aware: your celebration needs to be made accessible to students of different faiths and not just take place as usual.

Speaker series

If you have a high profile speaker at your event, only having one speaker allows time for them to speak in depth on their specialist subject.

"It was encouraging to see such interest among the attendees in learning about other faiths and reflecting on their own."

Cambridge students listen to a speaker talk about his faith as part of a series of events

Good for: giving time for an expert to discuss a topic in detail. Setting up a series of events so that a mix of opinions are heard throughout the year.

Be aware: just having one speaker can lead to bias, so make sure that throughout the series you invite speakers from a variety of perspectives. Be clear that speakers are not representing a whole faith, but their personal beliefs.

Panel discussion

A panel discussion allows a mix of speakers to discuss a topic and each offer their own opinion on it. These could be students from different faiths, or experts in a particular field.

"Mental health is important to everyone, regardless of whether you're religious, agnostic or a devout atheist."

Bristol students hear several religious leaders talk about faith and mental health.

Good for: hearing from a range of perspectives and faiths. Addressing a topic where there are a wide variety of opinions.

Be aware: to maintain the discussion you will need an experienced Chair who encourages dialogue rather than debate.

Focus Group

Focus groups allow a mix of people to discuss a topic together. These can be led by a student or expert who poses questions for the group to discuss and reflect upon.

"We feel that this event certainly contributed to the strength of interfaith relations on campus, and also made the CCJ an established name on the interfaith scene."

St. Andrews students from both the old and new committees gather to talk about interfaith engagement on campus

Good for: hearing from a range of personal perspectives. Encourages everyone to contribute to the topic.

Be aware: to maintain the discussion you will need to layout ground rules and have a Chair who facilitates the discussion.

Social Event

Social event can mean a range of events from quizzes and meals to sports. These events allow students to get to know one another across religious lines in a relaxed environment.

"Our potluck allowed four faiths to bring people together for a night of food and fun for people of all faiths and none."

Sussex students gather for a potluck with food provided by the Coexist, Jewish, Christian, Muslim and Bahá'í societies.

Good for: bringing together students of different faiths and none in an environment where they can socialise and make friends.

Be aware: make your event as inclusive as possible so that everyone can feel comfortable. Check with each society/ participant what their needs are.

Organise the details

Once you know the type of event you are planning you can organise the details. If you're dividing the tasks between you, make sure you check in with each other regularly.

CCJ can help with any aspect of the planning process, so let us know if you have any questions.

Time and date

Know who your intended audience is before choosing when to hold your event and check with these groups before making a decision.

Choose a date far enough in advance to give you time to organise

Poster for Bristol Interfaith Week, clearly stating the dates of each event.

- Check a multifaith calendar to avoid holding your event during a religious festival.
- Find out if any other events are taking place at that time.
- Book the room for longer than your event time so you have time to set up and clear the room.
- Think about any speakers you are inviting and ensure the time works for them- you may want to offer them a choice of dates.
- Where possible give an end time so people can plan around

Venue

Check that your venue will be accessible to all the attendees

The type of venue you use will set the tone of your event. For instance, an event on campus will have a different atmosphere to one in a religious building. Choose somewhere that's easy to get to and where nobody will feel uncomfortable.

- Consider the layout of the room: whether to use a theatre style, cabaret, U-shape, or different layout as this will impact on the type of communication taking place.
- Consider what the venue allows and doesn't i.e. food.
- Be careful if you use a religious building. Some people may not feel comfortable so choose your room sensitively and check with each faith group who are attending first.

Cardiff University's 'Question Time' required a space with theatre style seating, AV equipment and a table for the presenters.

Speakers

Think about who would be best placed to speak at your event. Students, faith leaders, experts on different topics or a mix of speakers.

Good speakers are booked up quickly so plan in advance

Panel discussion on Faith & Feminism at the University of Sussex bringing together speakers from different faiths and beliefs

- Many universities need you to fill out an external speaker form a few weeks in advance.
- If you're getting more than one speaker think about how you want them to complement each other.
- Build relationships with speakers and keep in touch after the event.
- Ensure the speakers are appropriate and you know their background to avoid unexpected controversy.
- CCJ has a wide range of national contacts so let us know if you would like any suggestions or help getting in touch with people.

Food and drink

Many religions have special dietary requirements which don't allow some foods. They may also require food to be prepared in a certain way. If you're organising food at your event it must meet all the attendee's dietary requirements.

Don't assume- always ask for attendees' dietary requirements

- Some religious students don't drink alcohol, so it is best to avoid alcoholic drinks at interfaith events.
- Label all the food clearly with ingredients and if it was prepared in line with a religious tradition.
- Use disposable crockery and cutlery to ensure it is suitable for people of all religions.
- Consider using vegan food which doesn't mimic animal products as this covers a range of dietary requirements (but not all!).

Food served to celebrate the launch of the Durham University Interfaith Society met the attendees' dietary requirements

Equipment

Check in advance that you will have all the equipment you need. Make sure all the equipment you are using works and that you know how to properly use it.

Always check any equipment you will use before the event starts

A well planned room layout at a student event in Durham.

- If you're using your own equipment like a laptop with other equipment like a projector ensure they are compatible.
- Make sure that you have enough chairs to seat all attendees, or know where spare seats are.
- If you're taking photos or recordings ensure consent of speakers and attendees to do so.

Advertising

Make use of your networks to advertise to a wide range of people

To get a good attendance at your event you'll need to advertise it well. Include all the relevant information like directions, closest station/car park, provisions for different diets, and an end time so people can plan around your event.

- Make use of all your social media channels.
- Getting students to sign up in advance and/or pay can reduce the chance of people dropping out.
- Make advertisements eye-catching- especially posters.
- Start advertising early on so people keep the date free.
- Use different forms of advertising like posters and social media. to reach as many people as possible.

Eye-catching flyer for St. Andrews' 'Hate Speech and Religious Conflict' panel discussion

Follow Up

Your event is the best opportunity to advertise future interfaith opportunities. Let people know what else is being organised and get contact information from people who are interested.

Keep in touch with the participants after the event

Birmingham Student Leaders' second Speed Faithing event which had an increased turnout thanks to their first event.

- Make your event part of a series to build up attendance at future events.
- If you're hosting an event while in your final year include someone in a lower year in the organisation.
- Write up the event for a CCJ blog or newspaper article.

Collaborate

Team up with local groups to plan your event.

Teaming up with local organisations is a great way to tap into existing networks, boost your publicity, benefit from their existing contacts, and widen the impact of your event beyond the university

- Research local organisations which may be interested in collaborating on an event, such as local CCJ branches. .
- Ask the organisation if they have a mailing list which could be used to advertise the event.
- Maintain contact with local organisations for future events.

Oxford teamed up with the local branch of CCJ to host a panel discussion on faith and free speech.

Useful Links

www.interfaith-calendar.org
The interfaith calendar allows you to see what religious festivals are happening each month of the year.

www.interfaith.org.uk/resources
The Inter Faith Network's (IFN) resource section is full of useful publications and advice on event planning, and how to carry out dialogue on a range of issues.

isitkosher.uk
Is it Kosher allows you to search any item to check whether the it is Kosher or not. There's even an app you can download to scan food when shopping.

www.near-neighbours.org.uk/resources
Near Neighbours provides grants and support to organisations who promote cohesion and cooperation in diverse and multi-faith communities.

www.freedomsundaygobal.org
Freedom Sunday brings people together for a global day of worship and action against human trafficking to raise awareness about the issue globally.

www.hmd.org.uk/resources
The Holocaust Memorial Day Trust (HMDT) offers various teaching materials on the Holocaust and other genocides. There is information about holding your own memorial event.

https://www.ujs.org.uk/
The Union of Jewish Students are the voice of over 8,500 Jewish students, spanning 60 Jewish Societies on campuses across the UK and Ireland.

https://www.movement.org.uk/
The Student Christian Movement are a student led organisation with a focus on ecumenical worship, discussion and action.

Get in touch

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