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**South Thames Colleges Group**

**QUIET CONTEMPLATION ROOM POLICY**

**1. POLICY AIM**

South Thames Colleges Group is committed to creating an environment where students, customers, staff, governors and other stakeholders celebrate equality and diversity in all activities. It welcomes and supports the Equality Act 2010, which ensures protection from discrimination and harassment because of religion or belief, including non-belief. The Colleges Group is committed to creating a place where everyone, whatever their circumstances and/or background:

- Is fully respected
- Is listened to and encouraged to give their views
- Feels welcome
- Is treated in a friendly way
- Is treated in an equal way
- Has equality of opportunity
- Has full access to all activities wherever possible

South Thames Colleges Group is committed to treating people of all faiths fairly, enabling employees and students to have access to prayer and worship facilities, or quiet contemplation, where practicable.

The Quiet Contemplation Rooms are available as a space which can be used by people of all faith groups, beliefs and for those whom religion has no particular significance in their lives. The rooms may equally be used as a quiet space for people to sit and contemplate, to pray, to take a few moments to de-stress from a busy day, or to recover from a traumatic life event, such as bereavement. Users are required to respect others who may be using the room for different purposes at the same time.

This policy links to the following College policies: The Prevent Strategy, Equality and Diversity Policy, the Safeguarding Policy and Procedure and the Freedom of Speech and Visiting Speakers Policy

**2. USING THE QUIET CONTEMPLATION ROOM**

**2.1. Location and opening times**

Room locations vary depending on the college site and accessibility for those with a disability. For further details, please contact the relevant College Reception/Administration Office.

## **2.2. To use the room**

Use of the rooms cannot be pre-booked and will be on a 'first come, first served' basis, with a maximum of three users at any one time. Users must complete the room logbook with their name, College ID number, issue time and return time for the key at reception.

The rooms are available for use by any male or female member of staff or student, of any faith or beliefs and for those whom religion has no particular significance in their lives.

## **2.3. Who can use the rooms?**

The rooms offers a designated space for spiritual/religious activities (individual and very small group – 2/3 people), designated prayer, as well as a space for peace, quiet and reflection.

## **2.4. Vacating the rooms**

It is important that when users vacate the rooms that any items and furniture used be packed away, so other users find the room left clean and tidy ready for their use. Any items left in the rooms will be removed at the end of the day and placed in 'lost property' at the relevant College Front Desk.

## **2.5. Physical set up of the rooms**

The rooms have been set up to make it possible for people of all faith groups to use. They are small rooms without special additional equipment, fixtures and fittings. Users of the rooms will need to bring their own religious texts/prayer mats if they wish to use them.

# **3. GUIDELINES REGARDING THE USE OF THE ROOMS**

## **3.1. Use of the rooms**

Staff or students may wish to use the rooms for silent prayer, mediation, to de-stress from their busy lives, or as a place of calm after bereavement.

The rooms should be a safe space for all users. This means that everyone has a duty to respect other users and to ensure the environment remains welcoming to people of all faiths, beliefs, and for those whom religion has no particular significance in their lives. It is therefore of the utmost importance that all users of the quiet contemplation rooms behave reasonably and considerately towards others who use the rooms.

If physical activity plays a part in the individual act of worship or contemplation, as is the case for Muslim prayer and for those practicing meditative yoga, then individuals are permitted to use the room for such activity.

## **3.2. Noise**

The rooms may be used for quiet contemplation, designated prayer, reflection and meditation. Unless group prayer is taking place, individuals using the rooms must keep the noise to a level that does not disturb others. It should be noted, however, that the rooms will only accommodate a maximum of two to three people.

## **3.3. Display of objects**

During the course of a session, a group is permitted to display religious materials within the rooms. At the end of prayer, meditation or contemplation, all these items must be removed from the rooms. This is so all users feel equally free and comfortable to use the rooms.

The rooms will remain neutral and therefore it is not permitted to permanently display imagery, statues, or written materials in the rooms, or just outside the room. All users must be sensitive to others who may also wish to use the rooms after them.

Anyone using the rooms should make sure that sufficient time is calculated within the room booking to enable any specific material to be put away and for the room to be left clean and tidy for other users.

### **3.4. Notices, posters, leaflets**

Notices, posters, leaflets, or advertisements for forthcoming events must not be left in the Quiet Contemplation Rooms. Any such materials left in the rooms will be removed and destroyed at the end of the day.

### **3.5. Security and valuables in the room**

No charity box, monies or valuables are permitted to be kept within the rooms. Students are responsible for looking after their own personal belongings.

### **3.6. Fire regulations and evacuation procedures**

The College Groups' no smoking policy also applies to this facility. The lighting of candles and burning of incense in the rooms is also not permitted.

The Colleges Groups' emergency evacuation procedures also apply to the rooms. Upon activation of the alarm, users should proceed immediately to their usual place when a fire alarm sounds.

### **3.7. Food and drink**

No food and drink should be consumed unless this forms part of worship requirements. The rooms must be left clean and tidy and free of any food, drink or wrapping papers.

### **3.8. General**

The Quiet Contemplation Rooms should be respected for the purpose that they are intended and they are not to be treated as an additional meeting room or facilities that will provide additional storage space.

Where students request time out to observe religious or cultural festivals and customs, curriculum areas should be sympathetic to their needs and requirements.

### **3.9 Policy Breaches**

Any breaches of the policy guidelines in relation to misuse of the room and/or behavioural issues will be subject to the Student Disciplinary Code.

## **4. CONTACT FOR ANY ENQUIRIES**

Contact Reception/Administration or one of the Student Support Team, if you have any further questions about using the Quiet Contemplation Rooms or wish to report a problem or concern.