

WHERE TO FIND SILENT STUDY SPACE

Thank you for your comments about the study environment in The Sir Michael Cobham Library. The building was designed to provide a wide variety of learning spaces to accommodate the different types of learning that takes place in universities today.

In the five years since the building opened, we are proud to have been able to increase the number of group study spaces. We now have 6 rooms which can be freely used by multiple groups; small clusters of study tables and chairs on the ground floor; computers with multiple seats on the first floor; wireless networking throughout the building and two small group presentation practice rooms that are bookable for one hour at a time.

At the same time as needing to provide for the high volumes of group learning, we have also created silent zones on the upper floors of the Library tower. These are on floors 2, 3 and 4. We signpost these and our security attendants and student shelvers monitor the use and ask students not working in silence to move to one of the group study areas. Mobile phones are not allowed to be used on the open floors.

In December 2008 we received the top prize awarded in recognition of the best University Library design in the last five years. The citation praised our approach to delivering our different study zones.

The Sir Michael Cobham Library is a very popular place and with over one million visits every year it will always be a challenge to segregate the zones. This is why we have **SILENT zones on the upper floors**, not QUIET zones and why we allow group study in the designated rooms and throughout the first two floors. Our space is often full despite extensive use of the e-resources from off campus. Surveys in three of the Schools suggest 70% of use of our resources is from off campus.

However we recognise that not all students understand that we need to have different types of space and they either want silence in the group areas or to be able to discuss their work in the silent zones. All students find it hard to remember that moving to and fro from their chosen study space generates further disturbance if they are chatting with friends or using their mobile phones. We are therefore working closely with the Students Union to try and ensure all students respect the zones and do not disturb others by working in groups on the upper floors.

For the first time in 2007-08, the PAL scheme was explicit in including the ideas of the different zones as part of the PAL leader work. This also extended to not giving any tours to the upper floors which were disturbing those trying to work there. We will be reviewing how successful this was as an additional measure.

In addition we altered our rotas for Security attendants and from January 2008 we have better coverage at lunchtimes and we are already seeing less of a dip in the silence at the lunch period as a result.

In November 2007 each Shelver received a T- shirt with message about the Silent Zones on the back. These are worn when at work in the library. In January 2008 the Shelvers attended a group training session to share

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experiences and ideas about how they could be even more effective in supporting noise control in the silent zones.

One comment received recently was about the need for more computers in silent zones but this is something that would unfortunately have the opposite effect as computers attract noise. Instead we are working with ITS to have a booking system so those wanting a fixed computer on a silent floor (we have 10 on each silent floor) should be able to book those. All floors are wireless enabled so lap top users can work wherever they find the most conducive.

We urge all students to respect others when working in the library. We appreciate the support we receive from student peer pressure and we are always happy to be alerted to inappropriate behaviour so we can ask the offending students to move to other more suitable spaces.

Tips for finding silent study places on floors 2, 3 & 4

- Come into the building at the quietest times of the day and not in the middle of the day when people are moving to and fro in large numbers
- The quietest floors are floors 3 and 4 - traffic on the 2nd floor is very high which means it can more reasonably be described as quiet but not silent.
- Work around the edges of the upper floors
- Avoid sitting down next to the exit and entry points to the floors
- Ask the Security Attendants for help if someone is disturbing you

If you have further ideas about how we can improve the silent study areas please tell the Security Attendants who will pass your ideas on.