

Do I need a Special Marriage Licence?

Special Licences are a dispensation given by the Archbishop under powers he and his predecessors have exercised since 1533. They are not issued automatically.

If you have a genuine connection with a particular church or chapel but you are unable to satisfy the legal requirement to marry there, you may apply to the Faculty Office for the Archbishop of Canterbury's Special Marriage Licence.

<https://www.facultyoffice.org.uk/special-marriage-licences/couples/do-i-need-a-special-marriage-licence/>

You will need a Special Licence

if you are applying to marry in:

- a Cathedral (except in certain limited circumstances) or a Royal Peculiar;
- a Chapel of Ease/Daughter Church in a parish but which is not licensed for marriages;
- a School/College/University Chapel;
- most Chapels serving a specific institution or category of persons (eg those serving Hospitals, Military Bases, the Inns of Court etc);
- a privately owned estate Chapel which hosts Church of England/Church in Wales services;
- a Redundant (Closed) Church.

In all cases, you must be able to show a genuine and longstanding link with the building and/or institution concerned and have the permission and support of the person or body responsible for the Church or Chapel.

You will not need a Special Licence

if you are applying to marry in:

- A Parish Church or other Church or Chapel serving a parish or a Military Base which is licensed for marriages and in which you have the legal right to be married.

Instead you can be married there:

- after the calling of Banns of Marriage; or
- after the issue of a Common Licence; or
- (if either or both of you are a non-UK/Irish National and do not hold Settled or Pre-Settled Status under the EU Settlement Scheme) after the issue of a Superintendent Registrar's Marriage Schedule.

Updated 18 April 2024.