

# Policy on Religious Observance for Students

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## 1.0 Introduction and Purpose

1.1 The University will make every effort to avoid timetabling assessments or other compulsory activities on religious days or festivals for those students whose commitment to the observance of their faith would otherwise cause them to miss the assessment or other activity. However, we can consider the needs of students only if their requirement for religious observance is mandatory, as agreed with the relevant faith chaplains. It is not possible to take account of casual preferences or of social or domestic reasons.

1.2 This document should be read in conjunction with the [\*Additional Guidance for Teaching and Learning Colleagues to Support Students Wishing to Observe Faith Festivals\*](#).

## 2.0 Scope and Definitions

2.1 This policy covers only aspects of religious observance that are known of in advance. Other aspects that are unforeseeable or unpreventable (such as the death of a close

relative when specified forms of mourning are required) must be handled under the arrangements for considering [mitigating circumstances](#). Where the **effects** of strict religious observance (e.g. fainting during an examination, because of fasting) have a detrimental effect on a student's performance at an examination students should be referred to the [Policy on Mitigating Circumstances and Coursework Extensions](#). Postgraduate Research students must refer to the [Changes of Circumstances for Postgraduate Research Students Policy \(September 2018\)](#) for further guidance.

- 2.2 It is not possible to change the set examination period in order to accommodate the full variety of religious observance practices. The University has fixed examination period dates for taught units which are published in advance and tie in with other significant events in the academic calendar. Some Schools organise and set their own examinations and assessment periods, in addition to the University examination period.

### 3.0 General Principles

- 3.0.1 Applications for amendments to the taught examination timetable will only be considered for religious observance that usually happens over a restricted time period, such as Eid ul Fitr, Shavuot, Vaisakhi and Shivaratri. The University is unable to consider applications where religious observance extends over a significant period of time (e.g. Ramadan), or where the normal expectation is that daily activities (including examinations) will continue as usual. It is also unable to consider applications for amendments to the examination timetable for students making holy visits.

- 3.0.2 Schools must inform students at the start of their programme whether there are any specific learning/assessment attendance requirements which take place outside of normal core weekday hours of 9am to 6pm (as described in the Policy on Timetabling Teaching Activities), such as over weekends. It is good practice to avoid scheduling teaching sessions at times when students are likely to have mandatory religious activities.

### 3.1 Taught Examinations or assessments organised centrally by the University

- 3.1.1 If students have mandatory religious requirements (confirmed by the relevant faith chaplains, as outlined in 1.1) that may affect their attendance at taught examinations arranged centrally, they must complete the Examination and Religious Observance form [online](#). (Note that the major Christian festivals take place during vacations and so are avoided automatically by examination periods.) Students must then return the form to the Examinations Team (examtimetable@manchester.ac.uk) by dates that are published annually for each examination period (and which are listed on the form). If

students fail to submit a completed form to the Examinations Team by the published date, the University cannot accept responsibility if students are timetabled for an examination when their religious requirements overlap with the date of an examination.

- 3.1.2 Consideration of applications may include discussing with the student's School whether it could make an alternative arrangement for the examination if the student gives adequate notice. However, if no reasonable alternative can be found, adjustments will not be possible. On a first attempt assessment, if that means that students have to miss the examination, they will be offered the opportunity to take it when the examination is next held, and this would be classed as a resit/referral. This may involve an interruption of a student's programme and an extension to their period of study.

## **3.2 Assessments organised by the School**

- 3.2.1 Similar principles apply if religious observance is likely to affect a student's attendance at assessments organised by their School (e.g. presentations or practical tests). Students must discuss the issue with their School well in advance of the assessment date, and the School will use reasonable efforts to reschedule the assessment to accommodate the student's needs (e.g. by changing the scheduled slot in a programme of assessed presentations). However, it is not guaranteed that Schools will be able to permit or accommodate rescheduling/adjustments.
- 3.2.2 Deadlines for handing in assessed work will not normally be extended to allow for religious observance, and students must therefore schedule their work accordingly.
- 3.2.3 Postgraduate Research students must refer to the [Examination of Doctoral Degrees Policy](#) if they wish to make any adjustment to their oral examination due to religious observance. Candidates may only delay their oral examination in exceptional circumstances and must apply to the appropriate Doctoral Academy for permission.

## **3.3 Teaching and learning activities**

- 3.3.1 If students have mandatory religious requirements (confirmed by the relevant faith chaplains, as outlined in paragraph 1.1) that may affect their attendance at normal teaching and learning activities or placement they must discuss the issue with their School.
- 3.3.2 The School will consider all cases from students whose mandatory religious observance would otherwise cause them to miss scheduled teaching or learning

activities in circumstances where religious observance takes place over a restricted period and will make reasonable adjustments/alternative arrangements. However, adjustments can only be made provided they maintain the standard of the student's degree (e.g. students will not simply be excused from parts of the programme affected by religious observance or from satisfying overall attendance requirements where relevant).

3.3.3 If no reasonable alternative can be found, adjustments to scheduled teaching or learning activities will not be possible.

## 4.0 Monitoring Compliance

4.0.1 Compliance against this document is expected and should be monitored periodically by the University's Examinations Team.

4.0.2 For assessment organised by the School, compliance against this document is expected and should be monitored periodically by Heads of Schools (or their delegates).

## 5.0 Supporting documents and sources of support

5.0.1 The University of Manchester is committed to equality and diversity, The University's Equality and Diversity Policy can be found [here](#).

5.0.2 The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Calendar details dates of religious observance and is created by the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team: [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion | StaffNet | The University of Manchester](#)

Version amendment history box and Document control box

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