

Policy on religious observance for students

Principles

1. The University of Manchester is committed to equality and diversity. The University's Equality and Diversity Policy can be found at: <http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=8361>.
2. 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 are able to consider the needs of students only if their requirement for particular 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.
3. 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 exams and assessment periods, in addition to the University examination period. It is not possible to change the set examination period in order to accommodate the full variety of religious observance practices.
4. This policy* covers only aspects of religious observance that occur at times known in advance. Other aspects that are unforeseeable or unpreventable (such as the death of a close relative when specified forms of mourning are required) should be handled under the arrangements for considering [mitigating circumstances](#). The Policy on Mitigating Circumstances can also be used in cases where the *effects* of strict religious observance (e.g. fainting during an examination, as a result of fasting) have a detrimental effect on a student's performance at an examination. Postgraduate Research students should consult the [Changes of Circumstances for Postgraduate Research Students Policy \(September 2018\)](#) for further guidance.
5. The University's policy is that it will consider applications for amendments to the taught examination timetable with regards to religious observance that usually occurs over a restricted period of time, such as Eid ul Fitr, Shavuot, Vaisakhi and Shivaratri. It is not able 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 in relation to students making holy visits.
6. Schools should 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.

Taught Examinations or assessments organised centrally by the University

7. If students have mandatory religious requirements (confirmed by the relevant faith chaplains, as outlined in paragraph 2) that may affect their attendance at taught examinations arranged centrally, they must complete the Examination and Religious Observance form obtainable from the Student Services Centre in person or [online](#). (Note that the major Christian festivals occur during vacations and hence are avoided automatically by examination periods.) Students should then return the form to the Student Services Centre by dates that are published annually

* As part of the latest review of the Policy (spring 2019), consultation took place with the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Team, St Peter's Chaplaincy, the central Examinations Office and Research and Business Engagement Support Services.

for each examination period (and which are listed on the form). If students fail to submit a completed form to the Student Services Centre by the published date, the University cannot accept responsibility if students are timetabled for an examination at a time when their religious requirements overlap with the date of an exam.

8. The University will give consideration to applications from students whose mandatory religious observance would otherwise cause them to miss an examination, in cases where religious observance occurs over a restricted period. This 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. 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.

Assessments organised by the School

9. 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 should 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 rescheduling/adjustments.

10. Deadlines for handing in assessed work will not normally be extended to allow for religious observance, and students must therefore schedule their work accordingly.

11. Postgraduate Research students must consult 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 School or Graduate Office for permission.

Teaching and learning activities

12. If students have mandatory religious requirements (confirmed by the relevant faith chaplains, as outlined in paragraph 2) that may affect their attendance at normal teaching and learning activities, they should discuss the issue with their School.

13. The School will give consideration to cases from students whose mandatory religious observance would otherwise cause them to miss scheduled teaching or learning activities in circumstances where religious observance occurs over a restricted period and will try to make reasonable adjustments/alternative arrangements, if at all possible. 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 stipulated).

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

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Policy on Religious Observance for Students: Version amendment history		
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1.1	June 2019	Review by TLG Policy & Guidance Subgroup, 2018/19.

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Related Policies:	Equality and Diversity Policy: http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=8361 Policy on Mitigating Circumstances: http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=4271 Changes of Circumstances for Postgraduate Research Students Policy: http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=8162 Examination of Doctoral Degrees Policy: http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=7445
Related Procedures and Guidance:	See supporting documents linked to from the TLSD website: https://staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/tlso/policy-guidance/assessment/practice-of-assessment/religious-observance/
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