

# Ramadan Guidance for Employees and Students 2024

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# What is Ramadan?

Ramadan is the ninth month of the lunar Islamic Calendar, when Muslims believe the Quran (Islamic holy book) was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad. It is considered a time to purify the soul and refocus attention on God and on religious observations. Ramadan is one of the five pillars of Islam and is a holy month for Muslims. During Ramadan, Muslims fast during the daylight hours, abstaining from eating and drinking.

Muslims will see in the start of the month with greetings of '*Ramadan Mubarak*' or '*Ramadan Kareem*' meaning 'blessed' or 'Happy Ramadan.'

# **When will Ramadan take place?**

**Ramadan will commence on 10/11 March 2024 and end on 9/10 April 2024, depending on moon sightings.**

**The days over which Ramadan takes place change on a yearly basis, going back each year by approximately ten days. This means that Muslims may fast for a duration of between 10-18 hours this year, depending on where across the world they observe Ramadan.**

# Do all Muslims fast?

There are exemptions from fasting for young children, the elderly, and people with long term illnesses or on medication, or where fasting may be against health advice. Some people postpone their fasting to a later time, including those who may be pregnant or nursing, suffering from a short-term illness, travelling, or during the period of menstruation.

# What happens during fasting?

Over the course of the month, Muslims fast from dawn, rising pre-dawn for the Suhoor meal, until sunset, when the fast is open usually with a kajoor (date) and water and then the Iftar meal. Fasting has been shown to have demonstrable health benefits as well as instilling an appreciation of what people have and a greater empathy for people in need.

# **As part of their religious observations, Muslims may increase activities such as:**

- **Spending more time on reflection and prayers (including the additional night prayer, Tarawih). This is with the aim of increasing Taqwa or a closeness to God.**
- **Volunteering, giving to charity and acts of goodwill.**
- **Sharing their Iftar food and experiences with family, friends, neighbours, colleagues, and people who will be observing Ramadan on their own.**

# Health Considerations

**Managers and colleagues should consider the potential effects fasting can have on employees and students due to not consuming food and drink during the daylight hours. In addition, there will be changes to sleep patterns as employees and students may wake up before sunrise, and sleep later due to opening and closing fasts and praying.**

# **Supporting students and employees during Ramadan:**

- **Not all Muslim employees and students will necessarily request any special arrangements. Speak to your students and employees if they are observing Ramadan to see if they feel fasting may impact their work or studies and what support they would find helpful.**
- **Where possible, avoid setting early morning or lunch meetings or late evening (social) events which may impede on the opening of the fast, the Iftar meal and evening prayer times.**
- **Whilst Muslim employees and students may not object to food and drink being consumed in their presence, you may wish to avoid this.**

# How to support Muslim employees during Ramadan:

- Allow employees to use the time ordinarily taken for lunch, to instead be used for prayer times where necessary.
- If employees are hybrid working or on campus, encourage them to take breaks due to potentially lower energy or concentration levels.
- During Ramadan, managers and supervisors may receive more requests from employees to work their hours more flexibly across the month e.g. start and finish times or hybrid working if that is in place. These requests differ from a formal flexible working request, please see our flexible working policy.

# How to support Muslim employees during Ramadan:

- If it is possible and practical to alter working patterns, it may help Muslim employees to continue to be productive whilst observing their religious obligations. For further guidance please contact your People and Organisational Development (P&OD) Partner or the EDI Team.
- Fridays are deemed the most important day of worship. Muslims congregate in mosques and Jummah prayers are usually followed by a sermon or talk.
- Prayers may take longer on Fridays, in which case managers and supervisors may wish to discuss at a local level, depending on business need, to allow employees to pray and make up the time.

# **How to support Muslim employees during Ramadan:**

- **The last ten days of Ramadan hold special significance for Muslims. It is believed the Quran was revealed to the Prophet Mohammad on the 27th night of Ramadan, known as Laylat-al-Qadr. Muslims may increase the time spent praying through the day and night and undertake additional acts of charity. Where possible and if the business needs allow, supervisors and managers should consider requests for annual leave to be taken over this time.**

# How to support Muslim employees during Ramadan:

- We recognise that not all requests for hybrid working or to work contracted hours flexibly over the month may be possible to accommodate, due to business need or staff shortages. If this is the case, please do consider some of the additional steps that could be taken during the workday to support Muslim employees. If you have any questions, please contact your P&OD Partner or EDI Partner.

# **Can I fast as a non-Muslim to show support?**

**Colleagues may wish to show support by fasting alongside Muslim colleagues; this may not be for the whole month and may be to improve their own physical, mental, and spiritual wellbeing.**

**Non-Muslims can fast and indeed fasting is also practised by Christians for example during Lent, as well as in other faiths such as Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Jainism.**

# **Can I fast as a non-Muslim to show support?**

**For Muslims and people of faith, fasting is more than just forgoing food and water, and is strongly intertwined with their faith. Fasting can help with spiritual rejuvenation, self-control, and spiritual purification. In addition to avoiding food and water, during the fast, Muslims abstain from the act of intimacy, smoking, and aim to reduce unhealthy habits.**

# **It is important to note:**

- **Fasting and Ramadan is a religious obligation for Muslims, one of the five pillars of Islam. It is an opportunity to be reflective and grow in closeness to their faith and God and the teachings of the Quran. Some mosques offer tours during this time, which colleagues may wish to attend to learn more.**

# **Colleagues wishing to fast in support should:**

- **Be culturally aware. Speak to Muslim colleagues about their wish to be supportive, how to find fasting start and end times and to discuss why they would like to show support. This may be because they may wish for example to use it to reflect on their life and spirituality and show appreciation for what they have or to raise money for charity and carry out acts of goodwill.**
- **Show support by attending talks or events around Ramadan to learn about the faith, including, for example, open invites to Iftar meals to understand the communality around fasting.**

# Colleagues wishing to fast in support should:

- Ask questions if they wish to know more but avoid questions or statements such as *‘Do you lose weight’, ‘I’d like to try that to help me to lose weight’* or *‘This is hard, I can’t believe you have to do this or how can you go without water or smoking etc?’* Muslims who observe fasting have fasted since puberty and these are of little concern to them, because the focus is on a greater connection with their faith and religious observance.
- Follow the guidance on fasting and exemptions (see previous ‘Do all Muslims fast?’)

# Colleagues wishing to fast in support should:

- Get up before dawn to eat a meal; you may wish to have food which include slow-releasing carbs and water. have plenty of water and fruits with a high-water content after your main Iftar meal.
- Pace yourself, especially if you are fasting for the first time or have done so infrequently. Try to have mini breaks during the day even if it is time for reflection.

# **What happens at the end of Ramadan?**

**At the end of the 30 days of fasting, Muslims gather to mark Eid al-Fitr, with greetings of 'Eid Mubarak'. This is to commemorate the end of Ramadan and takes place over three days during the 10th month of the Islamic calendar. Muslims begin festivities with a prayer called Eid Namaz and then meet with family and friends to exchange gifts, food and well wishes.**

# Glossary Of Key Terms:

**Eid Al-Fitr** – The celebrations after Ramadan

**Eid ul Adha** – Celebration to mark the end of the Hajj pilgrimage

**Fidyah** – A donation of food or money for a missed or broken fast, to help those in need.

**Hajj** – Annual holy pilgrimage for Muslims to Mecca. It is mandatory for Muslims and one of the Five Pillars of Islam

**Iftar** – The meal and prayer taken to break the fast each day.

**Jummah Mubarak** – Greeting to wish someone a happy or blessed Jummah prayer day on Fridays.

**Laylat-al-Qadr** – Night of Power, when the Quran was revealed to the Prophet on the 27th night of Ramadan

**Quran** – The holy book of the Muslim faith

# Useful resources:

The Multi-Faith Chaplains

The University of Manchester Islamic Society ISoc

Student and Staff support

Staff networks: Muslim Staff Network or the BAME Staff Network.

[https://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/equality-diversity-](https://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/equality-diversity-inclusion/equality-groups/religion-or-belief/support/)

[inclusion/equality-groups/religion-or-belief/support/](https://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/equality-diversity-inclusion/equality-groups/religion-or-belief/support/)

<https://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/equality-and-diversity/>

Prayer facilities on campus