

Additional Guidance for Teaching and Learning Colleagues to Support Students Wishing to Observe Faith Festivals

Introduction

The University's academic calendar, in common with most universities, is set to reflect the major Christian holiday periods (Christmas and Easter), around which are also several national bank holidays. However, there are on occasion major festivals of other faiths which fall during teaching time which students may wish to observe. This guidance has been endorsed by the Teaching and Learning Strategy Group and is intended to assist school colleagues when considering requests from students for accommodations in their schedule of teaching and learning to be made during such periods.

Supporting students wishing to observe Faith Festivals

The University already has a [policy on religious observance for students](#), which operates separately from our mitigating circumstances arrangements. Mitigating circumstances are not an appropriate route in cases covered by the religious observance policy, because religious days and festivals would be reasonably foreseeable. The policy on religious observance states that (emphasis added):

- (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.
- (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.

Colleagues should be mindful of the policy above when addressing requests from students relating to the rescheduling of activities across the four impacted dates. **Considerations** should include:

- Reminding students of the podcasting service for lectures;
- Allowing students to temporarily move to an alternative laboratory or other small group session should their scheduled class fall on one of these dates, but where a clash could be avoided if they attended on a different occasion for the same activity;
- Asking project supervisors to be flexible with the scheduling of individual project meetings over this four-day period;
- For group project work that involves other students, seeking their voluntary agreement to reschedule meetings or presentations to a different date;
- Avoiding requesting that students apply for mitigating circumstances. As outlined above, this period is covered by the existing policy on religious observance.