

Passover Guidance for Employees and Students 2025

What is Passover?

Passover (also called Pesach) is an eight day Jewish festival which is celebrated in early spring and commemorates the emancipation of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. Pesach is observed by avoiding leaven, and highlighted by the Seder meals that include four cups of wine, eating matzah and bitter herbs, and retelling the story of the Exodus.

In Hebrew it is known as Pesach (which means “to pass over”), because God passed over the Jewish homes when killing the Egyptian firstborn on the very first Passover eve.

When will Passover take place?

In 2025, the dates for Passover are from the 12th to the 20th April.

For practicing Jewish people, no work is permitted from April 13th 10 April 14th and April 19th to April 20th. Work is permitted only between April 15th and 18th, with certain restrictions.

Passover begins on the 15th of the Hebrew month of Nissan. The Jewish year is based on the lunar cycle, therefore the festivals vary from year to year on the solar calendar.

How is Passover celebrated?

Passover is celebrated in two parts. The first two days and the last two days are holidays. Holiday candles are lit at night, *kiddush* and other holiday meals are enjoyed on both nights and days. On these days, Jewish people don't go to work, drive, write, or switch on or off electric devices.

On the first two nights of Passover, a service called the Seder is held over a meal with family and friends at home. During the meal, the story of the Exodus is told.

The middle four days are called Chol Hamoed, semi-festive 'intermediate days', when most forms of work are permitted.

During Passover...

- Jewish people do not eat leavened grain (chametz) which is food or drink containing even a trace of wheat, barley, rye, oats, spelt or their derivatives, and which wasn't guarded from leavening or fermentation. All chametz is removed from the house the night before Passover.
- Instead, they eat maztah (flat unleavened bread) to commemorate the unleavened bread that the Israelites ate when they left Egypt.
- The Seder, a 15 step family orientened tradition and feast, is observed on the first two nights of Passover. This involves eating matzah, eating bitter herbs, drinking four cups of wine or grape juice and reciting the Haggadah (a liturgy that describes the story of the Exodus from Egypt).

Supporting students observing Passover:

- Learn more about Passover - a glossary of terms and useful links will be provided at the end of this Guidance.
- Consider adjustments such as reminding students of the podcasting service for lectures to allow them to watch/listen another time.
- Allow more flexibility where possible for scheduling and bear in mind that Jewish students may not be able to attend meetings, lectures, etc. over the duration of Passover.
- Have a look at the University's Policy on Religious Observance for students and the Additional Guidance for Teaching and Learning Colleagues to Support Students Wishing to Observe the Jewish Passover Festival.

Supporting employees observing Passover:

- **Get educated about Passover** - a glossary of terms and useful links will be provided at the end of this Guidance.
- **Be mindful and plan intentionally to avoid meetings being booked over Passover.**
- **If you are providing catering during this time, consult Jewish colleagues about dietary restrictions and provide Passover specific food.**
- **Don't make assumptions. Not all Jewish colleagues will take time off during this time for personal reasons, however they may still observe Passover in other ways.**

Multifaith Support

- At the University of Manchester, we have a wonderful Chaplaincy team who are here to support staff and students with their spiritual needs.
- Please contact your Multi-Faith Chaplain with any questions around support available over Passover. You can also contact Steph Danson (stephanie.danson@manchester.ac.uk) in the EDI Team who will be able to signpost and help out if needed.

Glossary Of Key Passover Terms:

Chag Pesach sameach - Hebrew Passover Greeting meaning 'Happy Passover'

Chametz - Leavened food, prohibited on Passover

Chol HaMoed - the intermediate days of the Passover festival

Haggadah - the text recited at the Seder

Matzah - Unleavened Bread

Minchah - afternoon prayer service

Mitzvah - Meaning 'Commandment', e.g. it is a mitzvah to partake in matzah on the two Seder nights.

Nissan - the Hebrew month in which Passover falls

Seder - the gathering and meal which takes place on the first two nights of Passover

Shabbat - Sabbath - the day of rest on the 7th day of the week

Shabbat Hagadol - the Shabbat before Passover

Useful links:

- The Multi-Faith Chaplains
- The University of Manchester Jewish Society JSoc
- Chabad.org - What is Passover?
- Student and Staff 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/>