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The University of Manchester

Ramadan Guidance for Colleagues and Students 2026

What is Ramadan?

Ramadan takes place in the ninth month of the Lunar or Hijri Islamic Calendar. It is one of the five Pillars of Islam and known as Sawm or the act of fasting.

Ramadan is also when Muslims mark the revelation of the Quran (Islamic holy book) to the Prophet Muhammad.

It is a holy month for Muslims when they abstain primarily from eating and drinking during the daylight hours. It is considered a time to purify the soul, refocus attention on God, and practice self-sacrifice. Muslims will see in the start of the month with greetings of '*Ramadan Mubarak*' or '*Ramadan Kareem*' meaning blessed or generous Ramadan.

When does Ramadan take place?

In 2026, Ramadan will commence on the evening of 17th February and finish on 18th March 2026, depending on the sighting of the new crescent moon. This marks the start of a new month in the Islamic lunar calendar. The sighting may be different for Muslims depending on where they are in the world and which country they follow in relation to the crescent moon sighting.

The days over which Ramadan takes place change on a yearly basis, going back each year by approximately ten or eleven days, meaning Muslims may fast for a duration of between 12-17 hours each day, depending on where in the world they are observing Ramadan.

Do all Muslims fast?

All Muslims are required to fast; however, there are exemptions 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 opened usually with a kajoor (date) and water, and then the Iftar meal. Fasting has been shown to have demonstrable health benefits, as well as an appreciation of what people have and a greater empathy for people in need.

Muslims abstain from eating and drinking during the day and increase activities such as:

- Spending more time on prayers and reflection such as Tarawih. This is with the aim of increasing Taqwa (God-consciousness) 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 observing Ramadan alone.

Health Considerations:

Managers and colleagues should be mindful of the potential effects fasting can have on colleagues and students not consuming food and drink during the daylight hours. In addition, there will be changes or disruption to regular sleep patterns as employees and students may wake up before sunrise and sleep later in line with opening and closing fasts and to pray.

Not all Muslim colleagues and students will necessarily request any special arrangements. Speak to your students and colleagues if they are observing Ramadan, to see if they feel fasting may impact on their work or studies and what support they would find helpful.

Other Considerations:

- **When determining deadlines for assessments and coursework, please be aware that Eid may fall on 20th or 21st March approximately, and colleagues and students may hold celebrations over one to two days.**
- **Where possible, avoid setting early morning meetings or late evening (social) events which may impede on Iftar and prayer times.**
- **Whilst Muslim colleagues and students may not object to food and drink being consumed in their presence, you may wish to avoid this.**
- **If you are planning an event or notice any potential clashes and would like some guidance, please contact the EDI Team and they will also liaise with colleagues in the Muslim Staff Network and/or the Muslim Chaplain to provide advice.**

How to support Muslim Colleagues during Ramadan:

- Allow colleagues to use the time ordinarily taken for lunch, for breaks or prayer times instead. Encourage colleagues to take breaks due to potentially lower energy or concentration levels.
- During Ramadan managers and supervisors may receive more requests from colleagues to work their hours more flexibly across the month e.g. slight changes to start and finish times or hybrid working if that is in place/possible. These requests differ from a formal flexible working request, please see our [flexible working policy](#).
- Consider the possibility of temporarily altering working patterns if feasible as it may help Muslim colleagues continue to be productive whilst observing their religious obligations. For further guidance please contact your People Partner ([People Directorate](#)).

- **Friday is the most important day of the week for Muslims for Jummah or midday prayers, which may take slightly longer as Muslims will congregate in mosques and prayers are usually followed by a sermon.**
- **The last ten days of Ramadan hold special significance for Muslims. It is believed the Quran was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad on the 27th night of Ramadan, known as Laylat-al- Qadr or Laylatul 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.**

- **As part of the university's commitment to Social Responsibility and Civic Engagement, within the new volunteering policy, all colleagues can request up to three days paid leave (pro-rata, per holiday year (Oct-Sept) to give back to the community. This might be another consideration instead of using up annual leave towards charitable acts.**
- **We recognise that not all requests for hybrid working or flexibly working contracted hours 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 colleagues. If you have any questions, please contact your People Partner or EDI Partner.**

Can a non-Muslim fast to show support?

For Muslims and people of faith, fasting is more than just forgoing food and water and strongly intertwined with their faith. Fasting can help with spiritual rejuvenation, self-control, and spiritual purification. In addition, Muslims avoid food and water during the daylight hours, the act of intimacy, smoking, drinking alcohol and any unhealthy habits.

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.

Advice for colleagues wishing to show support by fasting:

- **Be culturally aware. Speak to Muslim colleagues about their wish to be supportive, where to find the start and end times of fasts 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 open talks or events around Ramadan to learn about the faith, including for example open invites to Iftar meals to understand the communality around fasting.**

- **Ask questions, if necessary, but avoid questions or statements such as ‘Do you lose weight?’ ‘This is hard’ 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.**
- **To keep a fast, get up before dawn to eat a meal: you may wish to have food which might include slow releasing carbs. 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 twenty-nine to thirty 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 Al-Adha – Celebration to mark the end of the Hajj pilgrimage

Fidyah - Donation of food/money for a missed/broken fast, for those in need.

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

Hijri – The lunar Islamic calendar

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

Jumma Mubarak – Happy Friday

Laylat-al-Qadr or Laylatul 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

Sawm – the act of fasting. The fourth pillar in Islam

Suhoor – A meal taken before fasting begins

Tarawih – Special prayers held each night of Ramadan at mosques.

Taqwah – closeness to God

Useful Resources:

- The Multi-Faith Chaplains
- The University of Manchester Islamic Society ISoc
- Student and Staff Wellbeing support
- Staff networks: Muslim Staff Network or the BAME Staff Network.
- <https://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/people-and-od/benefits/staff-support/faiths/>
- <https://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/equality-and-diversity/>
- Multifaith Prayer and Contemplation Spaces on campus