



POLICY FOR RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE IN TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT

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POLICY FOR RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE IN TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT

Royal Holloway is committed to equality, diversity, and inclusion. The University is a secular institution committed to the pursuit of learning. It does not ally itself with any particular faith. The Term structure adopted by the University follows the traditional delivery pattern of education at all levels in the UK. While it may fit with some religious observances, is not dictated by it. It does, however, commit itself to an active support for the study and celebration of religious faiths within its community, recognising that such celebration is a source of individual strength, communal resource, and intellectual and artistic development.

Students have a responsibility to fulfil the requirements of their course of study in order to achieve the relevant award. The University recognises that the scheduling of assessments may potentially coincide with religious festivals or other mandatory religious observance. This policy aims to minimise, where it is reasonable and practicable to do so, any impact that participation in mandatory religious observance may have on a student's studies and ability to succeed at the University.

Principles

1. The University has fixed examination period dates for taught modules which are published in advance and tie in with other significant events in the academic calendar. Assessment Dates are published in the Assessment Guidance for Students sent by email to all student in October each year and published on the [Completing Your Assessments webpages](#). Some Departmentally organised in class assessment and examinations may also be set in addition to the main University examination periods. It is not possible to accommodate the full variety of religious observance practices.
2. 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 Extenuating Circumstances. The Policy on Extenuating 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.
3. The University will make 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 can only consider the needs of students if their requirement for religious observance is mandatory, as agreed with the RHUL multifaith chaplaincy, who will take advice from external faith leaders where necessary. It is not possible to take account of casual preferences or of social or domestic reasons.
4. The University's policy is that it will consider requests for amendments to the taught examination timetable with regards to religious observance that usually occurs over a restricted period of time, such as Eid al Fitr, Shavuot, Vaisakhi, and Shivaratri. Amendments to a student's taught examination timetable can only be made where it is reasonable and practicable to do so. 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 travelling for religious purposes.
5. Students should be made aware of University Assessment Periods, Submission Dates and Departmental Assessment Dates at the start of their programme and whether there are any specific learning/assessment attendance requirements which take place outside of normal teaching hours such as evenings, weekends or during vacation periods. (see point 1 above) 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

6. The University delivers three centrally organised assessment periods each academic year:
 - Spring Term Assessment Period (SP-AP) January 1 week
 - Summer Term Assessment Period (SU-AP) April/May 5 weeks
 - Summer Vacation Assessment Period (SV-AP) August/September 4/5 weeks (including coursework resit submissions)
7. If students have religious obligations (confirmed by the multifaith chaplaincy, as outlined in paragraph 2) that may affect their attendance (in person or online) during any of the centrally organised exam periods, they must notify Student Administration by email within one week of the publication of the assessment timetable, providing details of the religious observance.

8. The University will consider requests from students whose religious obligations would otherwise cause them to miss an examination or departmental assessment in cases where religious observance occurs over a restricted period. Notice required is:
 - **Centrally Organised Assessment Periods (SP-AP, SU-AP and SV-AP)**
Notice must be made at the beginning of each academic year.
 - **For In Departments Assessments**
Notice must be given within one week of the publication of the assessment date,
9. For Centrally organised exams the mitigation available (where practicable) is limited to arranging for a student to be "isolated" in controlled conditions to allow for the taking of the exams earlier or later than other students in the cohort without compromising the assessment. Such opportunities will be explored on a case-by-case basis directly with students and the multifaith chaplaincy.
10. Where no reasonable alternative can be found or isolation accommodated, adjustments will not be possible. If that means that students must miss the examination, they will be offered the opportunity to take it when the examination is next held. Postgraduate Students will need to apply to defer the assessment and Undergraduate Students may be offered a First Sit.

Assessments organised by the Department

11. Similar principles apply if religious observance is likely to affect a student's attendance for assessments organised by their School/Department (e.g. presentations or practical tests). Students should discuss the issue with their School/Department, as soon as the dates are published, and the School, in consultation with the Assessments team in Student Administration, will use reasonable efforts to adjust or 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. No further mitigation can be offered in these circumstances.
12. Submission deadlines for assessed work will not be extended to allow for religious observance, and students must therefore schedule their work accordingly.
13. In cases where there is a joint honours student, both Schools should be consulted.
14. Postgraduate Research students must speak to their supervisor 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.

Teaching and learning activities.

15. If students have religious obligations (confirmed by the multifaith chaplaincy, as outlined in paragraph 1) that may affect their attendance at normal teaching and learning activities, they should discuss the issue with their School at the beginning of the academic year.
16. 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, Schools will try to make reasonable adjustments/alternative arrangements, if it is reasonable and practicable to do so. However, adjustments must 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).
17. Absence from teaching agreed in advance for applicable religious observance must be notified in the usual way and will be recorded as notified or authorised absence.
18. If no reasonable alternative can be found, adjustments to scheduled teaching or learning activities will not be possible.

Document Control Information

Policy Owner (usually Director- Level)	Director of Student Administration
Operational Owner (where different to policy owner)	Student Admin Senior Manager (Assessments and Results)
Approving Body	AQASC
Approved on	October 2023
To be reviewed before	October 2025

Version History

V1.0	Approved Issue
V2.0	Main Religious Festival Dates – updated up to 2026 Link to Ramadan on Campus updated

Supporting guidance documents/websites

[RHUL Multifaith Chaplaincy](#)

[RHUL Ramadan on Campus –](#)

[For information on the University's Equality and Diversity Strategy](#)

[Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Hub – Student Intranet](#)

[Observing Ramadan during exams: information paper - The Association of School and University Leaders \(ASCL\) has worked with Islamic scholars, imams, chaplains and leaders to produce an information paper for schools and Universities about the observance of Ramadan during exams \(external webpage\)](#)

APPENDIX 1 (2024, 2025 & 2026 Main Religious Festival Dates)

YEAR	Assessment Periods	Ramadan	Shavuot	Eid al Fitr	Vaisakhi	Shivaratri	Eastern Orthodox Christmas	Other
2024	SP-AP 8 – 12 January SU-AP 29 April – 31 May SV-AP 19 August – 6 September	11 March – 8 April	11-13 June	9-10 April	13 April	8 March	7 January	See EDI Calendar 2023/24
2025	SP-AP 13 – 17 January SU-AP 5 May - 6 June SV-AP 4 August – 5 September	28 February – 30 March	1 – 3 June	30 – 31 March	14 April	26 February	7 January	See EDI Calendar 2023/24 See EDI Calendar 2024/25
2026	SP-AP TBC SU-AP TBC SV-AP TBC	17 February – 18 March	21 – 23 May	20-21 March	14 April	15 February	7 January	See EDI Calendar 2024/25