



Religious observance and examination arrangements

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The University of Brighton respects the rights and religious views of its students. It is aware that certain religious festivals and holy days may coincide with the main examination periods in the academic timetable and as such will endeavour to treat requests¹ regarding religious observance with understanding and consistency.
- 1.2 This guidance covers only aspects of religious observance that occur at times known in advance. The University will not accept religious observance as a valid request for Additional Consideration². Deadlines for handing in assessed coursework will not normally be extended to allow for religious observance, and students should schedule their work accordingly. Students are encouraged to discuss any assessment conflicts with their module leader.

2. Scheduling of examinations

- 2.1 The University's two main assessment periods (two weeks in January/February and two weeks in May/June) for each academic year are indicated on the University Calendar, agreed annually for five years in advance by Academic Board, and published on Staffcentral. Within these main assessment periods, the Exams Office are responsible for scheduling examinations and for the examination timetable.
- 2.2 Schools should inform students, through course handbooks and in induction activities, that it is the student's personal responsibility to inform their Course Leader about their religious beliefs where there may be potential for conflict with the sitting/taking of an examination³. Some programmes include PSRB requirements which may require students to take examinations on days associated with religious observance.
- 2.3 Once informed, the School and/or Exams Office (depending on the nature of the examination) will make every reasonable effort to accommodate students who are unable to take examinations on a particular day during the published examination periods for reasons of religious observance and will try to make reasonable adjustments wherever it can, ensuring at all times the proper conduct of the examination.

¹ Religion or belief is a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. The legal protection of religion and belief includes any religion, religious belief or philosophical belief including lack of religion or belief. Further information can be found on [Religion and belief | Advance HE \(advance-he.ac.uk\)](http://advance-he.ac.uk)

² Religious fasting is not considered to be a circumstance which would be accepted as a request for Additional Consideration unless fasting affects the student's health which prevents them from attending an examination or they consider it has led to an unrepresentative performance in the examination. The student will need to provide appropriate supporting documentation to support a request for Additional Consideration.

³ includes a lab/practical examination as well as a written examination where taken as summative assessment and summative assessments which have a time-specific nature e.g., presentations and judgements made on placements

3. What students should do

3.1 Students wishing to observe/attend religious festivals and holy days which may clash with a scheduled examination may make a formal written request to their Course Leader (or equivalent).

3.2 The student should complete a Religious observance and examination arrangements form⁴, available via MyStudies, advice and guidance is available from School and SU Offices, and then return it to their Course Leader (or equivalent).⁵

Students should give as much notice as possible. The deadline for submission of a completed request form is 15 November for January/February examinations and 1 March for the summer examinations.

3.3 The University's Faith and Spirituality Team (based in the Student Wellbeing team) and Students' Union can advise students on how best to manage their religious commitments during examination periods. Students can also contact their Student Support and Guidance Tutor (SSGT) for advice on any matter that may affect their studies or assessment.

4. Alternative arrangements where a formal request is approved

4.1 Where a formal request is authorised by their Course Leader (or equivalent) and the student is permitted to not sit the examination at the scheduled time, the School and/or Exams Office (depending on the nature of the examination) will make every reasonable effort to ensure an alternative arrangement for the student is possible. This may include taking the same examination at an earlier/later start time, ensuring proper security of the examination paper, or where this is not possible, taking the examination at the next sit opportunity. In this case, the School will notify the examination board that a sit at the next opportunity has already been agreed and the timing of this assessment.

The School's decision is final and there is no right of appeal if the School is not able to make such an alternative arrangement for a student.

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6	Quality & Standards Manager (Academic Quality and Standards), Student Experience and Equalities Manager and Examinations Services Manager	January 2023
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4	Quality & Standards Manager (Academic Quality and Standards) and Student Experience and Equalities Manager	February 2021
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2	Quality & Standards Manager (Academic Standards and Assessment) and Student Experience and Equalities Manager	February 2019

⁴Religious observance and examination arrangements form <https://www.brighton.ac.uk/brighton-students/your-learning/religious-observance/index.aspx>

⁵ Refer Accommodating students' religious observance during examinations – guidance for staff, available from <https://unibrightonac.sharepoint.com/sites/RegAQS/SitePages/Assessment.aspx> SharePoint page

Main religious festivals and faith days

In the 2021 Census, Christianity was the largest religious group in England and Wales with 27.5 million people identifying with the religion. Muslims made up the second largest religious group with 3.9 million people. This was followed by Hinduism (1.0 million), Sikhism (524,000), Buddhism (273,000) and Judaism (271,000).

1 Christianity

There are a wide variety of Christian Churches and organisations all of which have their own specific rituals and observations.

Festivals:

Name of festival	Approximate timing of festival
Ash Wednesday	Feb/March (date set by lunar calendar) This is a day of fasting/abstinence for many Christians
Maundy Thursday	March/April (date set by lunar calendar)
Good Friday	March/April (date set by lunar calendar)
Easter Sunday	March/April (date set by lunar calendar)
All Saints Day	1 November
Christmas Eve	24 December
Christmas Day	25 December

It should be noted that many Orthodox Christian churches observe different dates for key holy days to those dates more commonly celebrated in the UK. In the early nineteenth century, several Orthodox Churches began to abandon the Julian calendar or Old Calendar, and adopt a form of the Gregorian calendar or New Calendar. The Julian calendar is, at the present time, thirteen days behind the Gregorian Calendar. Today, many Orthodox Churches (with the exception of Jerusalem, Russia, Serbia, and Mount Athos) use the New, Gregorian Calendar for fixed feasts and holy days but the Julian calendar for Easter and movable feasts. In this way all the Orthodox celebrate Easter (usually known as Pascha in the Orthodox Church) together.

Many practising Christians will wish to attend their Church on Sundays throughout the year. Some practising Christians treat Sunday as a day of rest and may not wish to work or study on this day.

In Catholic Church law, there are a number of 'holy days of obligation' when Catholics may wish to attend a church service. In addition to Christmas and Easter, the Holy Days of Obligation are 15th August (Feast of the Assumption), 29th June (Saints Peter and Paul), and 1st November (All Saints).

2 Islam

Observant Muslims are required to pray five times a day. Each prayer time takes about 15 minutes and can take place anywhere clean and quiet. Prayer times are:

At dawn (Fajr)

At mid-day (Zuhr) in Winter sometime between 1200 – 1300hrs and in Summer between 1300 – 1600hrs

Late Afternoon (Asr) in Winter 1430 – 1530hrs

After Sunset (Maghrib)

Late Evening (Isha)

Friday mid-day prayers are particularly important to Muslims and may take a little longer than other prayer times. Friday prayers must be said in congregation and may require Muslims to travel to the nearest mosque or prayer gathering.

Festivals:

The dates of festivals are reliant on a sighting of the new moon and will therefore vary from year to year. Whilst approximate dates will be known well in advance, it is not always possible to give a definitive date until much nearer to the time. In addition to the main festivals listed below, some sects of Islam recognise other festivals or functions. For example, Ahmadi Muslims celebrate a range of religious functions such as the Annual Convention (Jalsa Salana), the Life of the Holy Prophet Day and the Promised Messiah Day.

Name of festival	Approximate timing of festival
Ramadan	Ninth month of the Muslim lunar calendar. Fasting is required between dawn and sunset. The festival lasts for 30 days.
Eid Al-Fitr	Three-day festival to mark the end of Ramadan
Eid al-Adha	Three-day festival that takes place two months and 10 days after Eid Al-Fitr

3 Hinduism

Festivals:

Hinduism is a diverse religion and not all Hindus will celebrate the same festivals.

Name of festival	Approximate timing of festival
Makar Sakranti	14 January
Maha Shiva Ratri	February
Holi	March
Ramnavami	April
Rakshabandham	August
Janmashtami	August
Ganesh Chaturthi	August/September
Navaratri	September/October
Dushera (aka Vijayadashmi)	September/October
Karava Chauth	October
Diwali	Late October/Early November
New Year	Late October/Early November

There are a number of occasions through the year when some Hindus fast.

4 Sikhism

Festivals:

Name of festival	Approximate timing of festival
Birthday of Guru Gobind Singh	5 January
Vaisakhi	14 April
Martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev	16 June
Sri Guru Granth Sahib Day	1 September
Diwali (Diwali)	October/November (date set by lunar calendar)
Martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur	24 November
Birthday of Guru Nanak	November

5 Buddhism

Festivals:

There are a number of different traditions in Buddhism arising from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Different traditions will celebrate different festivals. Some Buddhist traditions do not celebrate any festivals. Festivals follow the lunar calendar and will therefore not take place on the same day each year.

Name of festival	Approximate timing of festival
Saindran Memorial Day	January
Parinirvana	February
Magha Puja Day	February/March
Honen Memorial Day	March
Buddha Day (Vesak or Visakah Puja)	May
The Ploughing Festival	May
Buddhist New Year	Varies according to tradition
Asalha Puja Day (Dhamma Day)	July
Ulambana (Ancestor Day)	July
Abhidhamma Day	October
Kathina Day	October
The Elephant Festival	November
Loy Krathorg	December
Bodhi Day	December
Uposatha	Weekly on the lunar quarter day
Avalokitesvara's Birthday	March

6 Judaism

Observant Jews are required to refrain from work on the Sabbath and Festivals, except where life is at risk. This includes travelling (except on foot), writing, carrying, switching on and off electricity, using a telephone and transactions of a commercial nature (that is buying and selling). The Sabbath and all other Festivals begin one hour before dusk and so practising Jews need to be home by then. They may also need additional time for food preparation and other activities that cannot be undertaken once the Sabbath or Festival starts. Sabbath begins one hour before dusk on Friday.

Festivals:

Name of festival	Approximate timing of festival
Passover (Pesach)	March/April - 2 sets of 2 days
Pentecost (Shavuot)	May/June - 2 days
New Year (Rosh Hashanah)	Sept/Oct 2 days
Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur)	Sept/Oct - 1 day fasting
Tabernacles (Sukkot)	Sept/Oct - 2 sets of 2 days
Hanukah (Chanukah)	Nov/Dec – 8 days