

Absence for Religious Observance Protocol

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1. Introduction

There may be times during the academic year when the observance of a student's religion or belief means they are unable to attend the University at specific dates/times. This may be to participate in religious activities or because the holy day does not permit regular activities, including work and study. This may conflict with the dates and times of teaching and learning activities and/or examinations and/or other forms of assessment.

The purpose of this protocol is to provide guidance to students and staff on providing alternative arrangements, when a student is absent for religious observance.

2. Accommodating Religious Calendars

In common with other UK institutions, the University calendar is structured around the Christian calendar with breaks over Christmas and Easter. Other religious calendars are taken into consideration when timetables are agreed; however, it is not always possible to avoid teaching and assessment during all religious events.

3. Assessment and Religious Observance

Where a student is unable to attend a formal/summative examination or assessment due to the observance of their religion or belief, the University will endeavour, wherever practicable and within any academic requirements, to make alternative arrangements for students to complete the assessment or sit the examination. Students must apply for special arrangements to be made in these circumstances via the procedure set out below.

For mock exams and class tests, there is no need to complete this form. Instead, students should contact their Programme Leader or Subject Tutor as soon as possible to discuss alternative arrangements.

3.1. Written coursework

Programme teams must ensure that they publicise coursework and timed assessment deadlines well in advance. Deadlines are set with additional time built in, to prevent students needing to request extra time on an individual basis. This built-in additional time aims to provide students with the flexibility of submitting ahead of the absolute deadline, where that date clashes with an event such as a day of religious observance.

3.2. Individual appointments for students in an assessment window

Some assessments are individually timetabled for students over an assessment window of one or two weeks, for example interviewing and advocacy oral assessments on the Legal Practice Course. If an assessment window includes an important religious day students must inform the Assessment Office of the need to avoid that date at the earliest possible opportunity and no later than two months before the start of the assessment window by completing the Religious Observance Form¹.

The University will endeavour to accommodate such requests where possible. If the request cannot be accommodated, students will be deferred to the next assessment window.

3.3. Examinations

The University makes every effort to avoid timetabling assessments on major religious festivals but, owing to the logistical difficulties of scheduling a large number of examinations involving several thousand students across multiple campuses to take place in a limited number of days, it is not always possible to avoid those times/dates.

The dates of formal examination periods are published a year in advance, and the detailed timetable is published at the start of the academic year in which the examination period falls. It is the students' responsibility to check dates as soon as they are published, and also, to check mock examination dates which are published on the year planner distributed at the start of the academic year.

Students should inform the University no later than two calendar months before the start of the relevant examination period if there are formal examination dates which could affect their ability to observe an event or festival, or other important calendar date associated with their religion or belief. For formal examinations, students should complete the Religious Observance Form. A receipt will be issued by the Assessments Office to confirm the form has been received. For class tests and mock examinations, they should contact their PSL, Academic Coach or Subject Tutor as soon as possible.

While the University will try to assist, rearranging examination dates or times, particularly for the formal examination periods, it is not usually possible due to the tight constraints surrounding examination scheduling. Normally, students will therefore be required to take the examination

¹ Link to Religious Observation Form on Elite - [Religious Observance Form - Assessment Office Overview | Rise 360 \(articulate.com\)](#)

when it is next held which may involve an extension to the period of study due to, for example, non-progression.

4. Mitigating Circumstances and Concession Applications for Absence from Examinations or Individual Assessment Appointments due to Religious Observance

Where a student completes the Religious Observance Form by the relevant deadline and the University is unable to reschedule the assessment(s) specified, the student does not need to submit a 'Concessions' or 'Mitigating Circumstances' application to explain their absence from the assessments specified in the form. Further information on Concessions and Mitigating Circumstances can be located in the student handbook.

If a student is absent from additional assessments not specified on their Religious Observance Form, they must submit a Concession / Mitigating Circumstances application to explain their absence. If that absence is due to religious observance and a Religious Observance Form for the period but not the specific assessment, has been submitted, no further evidence will be required. If no Religious Observance Form was completed by the deadline, then evidence in support of their mitigating circumstance or concession will be required.

Irrespective of the assessments specified on the Religious Observance Form, if a student attends an assessment but then has to leave part way through due to illness, if the student wishes to be regarded as absent from that assessment, they must submit a Concession / Mitigating Circumstances application supported by evidence of illness.

5. Late Submission of Religious Observance Form

For the avoidance of doubt, if a Religious Observance Form is submitted later than 2 months prior to the start of the relevant assessment period, no adjustment can be made to the exam timetable and any absence from assessment will need to be explained in a 'Concession'/'Mitigating Circumstances' application supported by evidence.

6. Religious Observance and Attendance at Teaching and Learning Activities

The University recognises that there may be religious observance requirements which affect a student's ability to study or participate on particular dates or days.

Students who are unable to participate for reasons of religious observance must inform their subject tutor and personal tutor at least seven calendar days prior to the absence.

Visa-sponsored students can miss classes for the purpose of religious observance; however, this will be included in the maximum number of absence days permitted overall and the Student Information Compliance and Advice (SICA) team can further advise. The team can be contacted at visa-attendance@law.ac.uk.

The University will give sympathetic consideration to the student's circumstances and will try to make reasonable adjustments. However, adjustments can only be made provided they maintain the standard of the student's degree or award and the programme requirements must nevertheless be satisfied with students being responsible for making good work missed. Students should also understand that adjustments may not always be possible where for example attendance is required at weekends on programmes that are designed for students who work on weekdays, or attendance (at any time) is required for programmes otherwise delivered online.

7. Prayer During teaching

Students are expected to arrange to attend prayers during non-teaching times wherever this is possible. Where this is not possible the student must inform the tutor at the beginning of a teaching session of the need to leave at a particular time. It is the student's responsibility to catch up on missed learning.

8. During examinations

Students are not permitted to leave and then return to an examination venue for religious observance, such as prayers.