

Religious Observances Policy

- 1 Introduction**
- 1.1 The College welcomes students of all religious backgrounds and those with no religious belief, and we aim to provide a learning environment where students feel free and able to fully express their religious beliefs.
- 1.2 It is a core expectation of study at or above Level 6 of the Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications that students manage their own learning (QAA, 2014). As such, we expect that students take reasonable steps to manage the requirements of their religious observances alongside the requirements of their studies.
- 1.3 However, we know that sometimes a student's ability to manifest their religious observance or beliefs may be adversely impacted by their studies to an extent that it cannot be reasonably mitigated by the student.
- 1.4 This policy outlines the College's approach to anticipating religious observances within our student cohorts, and mitigating impact where students are affected.
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- 2 Major Religious Holiday or Festival**
- 2.1 The College defines a 'major religious holiday or festival' as an event in which there are likely to be restrictions or requirements on the activity of an individual student due to their religious belief.
- 2.2 The College uses a religious festivals calendar, produced by The Open University, to determine festivals which are likely to have an impact on study (Open University, 2018).
- 2.3 The religious festivals calendar is not inclusive of all religions but highlights instances where there are likely to be restrictions or requirements for substantive groups of students. Students are encouraged to speak to their tutor about any individual religious observances not accommodated in this policy.
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- 3 Module and Programme Calendar**
- 3.1 Where reasonably possible in line with resource and operational need, the College will apply the following principles to the scheduling of modules and programmes from July 2024:
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- 3.1.1 Welcome weeks, course start dates, and orientation events shall not coincide with major religious holidays or festivals.
 - 3.1.2 Examinations shall not coincide with major religious holidays or festivals.
 - 3.1.3 Assessment deadlines shall not coincide with major religious holidays or festivals.
 - 3.2 The College does not open on English bank holidays. This means that many Christian festivals are accommodated by default in our scheduling processes as these are typically bank holidays.
 - 3.3 The College's module and programme start and end dates are set far in advance to allow for staff and learning resources to be put in place. This means that for religious festivals which do not have a static date (e.g. Eid) it may not be possible to fully anticipate this in the schedule.
 - 3.4 The College's delivery model includes 1-1 supervision and group sessions. We encourage students to let us know when a scheduled session clashes with a religious observance, and we will make reasonable efforts to accommodate this. However, we may need to run sessions at the originally scheduled time where there is an operational or resource need.
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4 Unforeseen impacts on study

- 4.1 The College expects students to manage their learning and religious observances, therefore we would not expect a planned religious observance in itself to be a reason to submit an Exceptional Circumstances claim. However, we do recognise that a planned religious observance may have an unforeseen impact on a student's ability to complete an assessment, e.g. fainting during an exam in a period of religious fasting. In these cases, students should apply for consideration under the Exceptional Circumstances Policy.
 - 4.2 We also recognise that a student's ability to complete assessment may be affected by the unforeseen need for religious observance, such as where a particular religious observance is required when the death of a close relative occurs and when specified forms of mourning are required (e.g. shiva). In these cases, students should
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apply for consideration under the Exceptional
Circumstances Policy.

5 References

AdvanceHE, 2018. *Religion and belief: supporting inclusion of staff and students in higher education and colleges*. [Online]

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Interfaith Network, 2023. *Religious Festivals*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.interfaith.org.uk/resources/religious-festivals>

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