

Supporting students and staff during Ramadan

When is Ramadan?

The dates of the Islamic holy month of Ramadan vary each year, as its beginning and end are dependent on the moon sighting. The length of Ramadan is also contingent to the moon cycle, which usually lasts between 29 and 30 days.

This year, Ramadan is expected to begin on the 6th of May and end on the 4th of June. Ramadan is followed by the festival Eid al-Fitr, which will take place around the 5th of June 2019.

What is Ramadan?

Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. Muslims believe that it was during this month that the Holy Qur'an was revealed to the Islamic prophet Muhammad. This month is time for religious reflection and entails fasting, one of the Five Pillars of Islam, increased acts of devotion and charity. The end of Ramadan brings the festival of Eid al-Fitr, a three days celebration marked by the Eid prayer, feasting and the exchanging of gifts.

During Ramadan, Muslims are encouraged to increase their good deeds, from acts of charity and community engagement to increasing good values such as generosity, solidarity, kindness, patience and forgiveness. Most Muslims also offer prayers multiple times a day. Fasting entails refraining from eating or drinking (including water) between the hours of daylight. Most Muslims will wake up before dawn for a meal before the start of their fast and will break their fast with dates and water before a meal after sunset.

Children, the elderly, people who are sick or with long-term problems (e.g. diabetes), people travelling long distances, women who are pregnant or breastfeeding or women during their monthly cycle are exempted from fasting. In some cases, missed fast days are made up at a later date, usually before the following Ramadan, or compensated in other ways.

I manage and/or work with Muslim staff/students who are fasting. What do I need to know?

During the past few years, Ramadan has coincided with the summer period, which means people may fast for up to 18 hours a day (with slight variation each year). Fasting during the summer, in combination with an altered sleep pattern which allows for night-time prayers and meals, could leave people feeling more tired than usual, particularly mid-afternoon or towards the end of the day.

Muslim staff/students may also practice their faith more often than during the rest of the year. This will usually be for a few minutes each time.

It is important to remember that practice of the observance of Ramadan may vary between individuals due to health, travel and personal circumstances. Some people may wish to make slight adjustments to their working day, for example starting earlier than usual in the morning or having a shorter lunch break to allow an earlier finish.

Managers and supervisors are asked to accommodate these requests where possible and within reason and generally speaking be flexible and sensitive in supporting Muslim staff/students. For example, it is considerate to avoid scheduling social activities, working lunches or late meetings (where possible) during Ramadan.

What happens when Ramadan ends?

Ramadan is followed by the festival of Eid al-Fitr, for which some Muslim staff or students will wish to take leave. As with the beginning of Ramadan, the exact date of Eid is dependent on the sighting of the moon. For this reason, it may not be possible to be very specific about the day the staff member/student will be requesting leave. Managers and supervisors are requested to take this into account and be flexible.

I will be observing Ramadan. Is there anything I need to know regarding my working/studying arrangements?

If you are a member of staff, you are advised to talk to your line manager regarding any leave or adjustments you may need at your earliest convenience. This will facilitate flexibility and will ensure you can reach a mutual agreement. When requesting days off for religious observance, please give your manager as much notice as possible, even if only an estimation of the dates can be provided prior to the sighting of the new moon.

If you are a student and you would like guidance and advice regarding studying/taking exams during Ramadan, you can consult our [Ramadan guidance](#).

Where can I get further advice and support?

If you would like to discuss your thoughts and approach to Ramadan and fasting you can contact Al-Muzaffar Bath Mosque and speak with the Imam.

Students can also speak to Student Services. The Wellbeing Advisers are on duty every day and hold daily [drop-in sessions](#) for all students. You can also contact them by phone or email if you need support outside of these times.

Students can connect with the Muslim community through the [Islamic Society](#) at the Students' Union. The society runs two- hour slot for Friday prayers, Iftar celebrations and events throughout the year.

The University's Chaplaincy and the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team can also provide information regarding resources available to students and people to speak to.

Muslim students, staff members and visitors can also access on campus prayer facilities. You can speak to Security in Library to provide you with more information.

Other resources

You can consult the NHS [Ramadan Health Guide](#), which provides information and advice on maximising health gain during the fast.

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