



University of Hertfordshire

Equality Office

Ramadhan Guidance for Staff, Students and Managers

Please send any comments to: equality@herts.ac.uk

We would like to thank HR, Muslim Chaplaincy, Chaplain Fiona Souter, Islamic Society, and all members of the Equality Office for helping develop this guidance.

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1. Foreword and aims of the guidance

The University of Hertfordshire is dedicated to ensuring the most inclusive and supportive experience for its staff and students. We welcome and encourage applicants of all backgrounds to apply to either study, work or both. Our vision is to not only champion diversity but also to *transform lives by finding and empowering potential, giving people the opportunity to succeed with us whatever their background.*

The aim of this guidance document is to assist managers and tutors in delivering the right support to staff and students who observe the month of Ramadhan. Furthermore, it provides a background on Ramadhan and the tips on staying healthy throughout the fasting period.

We welcome feedback to assist us towards understanding the needs of our community and improving our delivery. If you have any comments or recommendations, please email the Equality Office.



2. Overview

Religion and belief is one of the main strands of diversity, and festivals like Ramadhan, Easter, Yom Kippur, Vaisakhi and Diwali, and the other religious days and periods give us an opportunity not just to support those who observe them, but also to learn and understand more about the people we work and study alongside.

Fasting, in one form or another, has always been an important and often necessary part of religious life, discipline and experience in every faith.

Although this guidance note focuses on Ramadhan, many of the key issues highlighted in this guidance could also apply to other major religions including Christianity and the sacrifices of Lent, Judaism and fasting during Yom Kippur and Tish'ah B'av.

Fasting in the month of Ramadhan is one of the five pillars of Islam. Muslims also believe that fasting teaches empathy and sympathy, and it takes away selfishness and self-centeredness in the pursuit of a greater closeness to God. Most Muslims observe the month by fasting and taking part in extra prayers, reciting the Quran and charity. Fasting is prescribed for all Muslims with exemptions for those who are sick, diabetic, elderly, pregnant, travelling or require regular medication.

As Ramadhan is observed based on the lunar calendar, it shifts by approximately 12 days every year and can last between 29-30 days. During Ramadhan, Muslims fast from dawn until sunset, refraining from eating and drinking (including water) for all the hours of daylight.

Each day, fasting begins with a pre-dawn meal (Suhoor) and prayers. The month is a special time for Muslims as the Qur'an, their Holy book, was revealed during this month. Muslims often engage in additional worship during this time, with local Mosques holding congregational night prayers. The celebration of Eid-ul-Fitr marks the end of the month of Ramadhan. On Eid day, Muslims offer a congregational prayer in the morning and spend the rest of the day with family and friends, where they share a prepared feast and exchange gifts.

3. Managers & Tutors

Supporting Staff

As the month is a holy time for all Muslims, it will have an impact on all staff who are observing Ramadhan as they will be fasting and getting considerably less sleep due to additional prayers and the pre-dawn meal. When Ramadhan falls during the warmer months, days are longer and nights are shorter, which means that staff are fasting for extended periods in warmer weather.

Muslim staff are likely to have been fasting for years so you can expect them to be able to manage the daily routine and their work professionally. With a little consideration, managers can ensure they are supporting fasting staff and in turn help them to maintain their normal level of productivity.

Some staff will be happy to carry on as usual and may just take leave occasionally to help them break up the months and get rest days. Others may find they work better if they can start the day later and finish later.

Observing Ramadhan may be noticeable (for example not eating at lunchtime) and so it is often sensible for employees to inform their managers of the fact that they are fasting. Fasting may affect people in different ways (for example some people may understandably become a little irritable or slightly tired at times) and some understanding from managers and colleagues can be helpful.

The effects of fasting may be felt most strongly in the afternoon so it can help to use the morning for meetings and intellectually challenging work and perform routine tasks later. Also, when Ramadhan falls in the summer months it can be particularly challenging as the days are longer. The areas below are for consideration by managers and may be more appropriate for some staff than others.

Risk Assessment

Although high risk staff are unlikely to be fasting, ensure you identify any that are and carry out risk assessments as appropriate. High risk staff could include:

- anyone with health conditions aggravated by hot weather.
- pregnant women.
- those who are suffering serious or long-term ill-health such as diabetes.
- those who are carrying out physical work either indoors or outdoors.

If appropriate, carry out a risk assessment for these staff and identify mitigation measures if necessary, including actions to be taken in an emergency.

Annual leave

Managers need to be prepared for people to request anywhere between one- and- three days holiday at the end of Ramadhan to celebrate Eid. In many cases, a considerable portion of annual leave may be used by employees wishing to observe the Ramadan rules. Where the leave timings can be accommodated, it is also important to ensure an employee has adequate leave days available for these needs.

Severe hot weather

Be alert to particularly hot days and look out for weather warnings. In extreme hot weather, ensure there is access to cool areas at each workplace and that all staff know where these are. Open windows but not beyond their limits (some have stops to ensure this). Open both the bottom and top of the windows – cooler air will then come in at the bottom and hotter air will escape at the top.

General considerations

- Although breaks should be kept, a shorter lunch may make it easier for an employee to manage their workload if they wish to take time off to carry out additional prayer or worship.
- Colleagues may want to avoid offering food and drink to those who fast if sharing food with other colleagues or eating during meetings.
- It can be helpful to avoid events etc. that ALL staff must attend during Ramadhan as people may be fasting.
- Awareness and understanding of Ramadhan and other religious festivals can be aided by posting information on staff notice boards or newsletters etc.
- Ramadhan may offer an opportunity for closer team relations and teamwork - for example by avoiding cakes / biscuits during a team meeting.

Supporting Students

Muslim students may choose to practice their faith more in Ramadhan than other months throughout the year. The observance of Ramadhan may vary between individuals due to health and personal circumstances; this is also extended to travel. Some students may wish to make slight adjustments to their normal day to day routine, for example resting during the day and studying later in the evening.

Practical guidelines for students **on placement** during Ramadhan:

1. Once aware of the dates for Ramadhan, inform academic advisor/clinical mentor that you will be fasting.
2. Be cautious and disciplined with your eating and sleeping habits during Ramadhan. You have a duty to ensure that you can fulfil your role safely.
3. Drink plenty of fluid between breaking the fast and evening meal and the pre-dawn meal to keep your body hydrated. (It is important to maintain your own wellbeing during any period of fasting. For those undertaking NHS placements - The safety and wellbeing of your patients is vital whilst in your care.)
4. Try to arrange a suitable space for yourself and other Muslims to break their fast.
5. Invite your peers/colleagues to break the fast with you.
6. Discuss with your placement manager/clinical mentor about the availability of a quiet and private space for you to pray.

Students should bear in mind that the person that supervises your placement will have several different priorities and it may not be viable to deliver your requests. For this reason, you need to give your supervisor a feasible amount of notice for requests to be met.

Students who are ill or pregnant should seek advice before fasting from either an Imaam or Chaplain. The Imaams/Chaplains at the University may be consulted to help make decisions about individual cases.

For students who are **not on placement**:

Students are encouraged to inform course tutors of their intention to observe Ramadhan. This will also allow a discussion around the impact Ramadhan will have on exams or timetabling issues. Tutors are requested to accommodate the needs of students within reason.

4. Additional Support and links

The safety and welfare of our community is the foundation of our approach here at UH. Although fasting is a prescribed act in the Islamic faith, it is imperative that those who observe fasting are taking care of themselves.

We have provided links below to share tips on how to stay healthy during the Ramadhan period.

[A Healthy Ramadhan](#)

[Diabetes and Ramadhan](#)

[Healthy Eating in Ramadhan](#)

[Dietary recommendations for the month of Ramadhan](#)

[The Fasting and the Fit](#)


For more specialist advice, guidance and information, Staff and Students may contact:


- Student Union
- Student Wellbeing Team
- Islamic Society
- The Chaplaincy
- Associated Muslim Chaplain
- Equality Office

Prayer Facilities:

Staff, Students and Visitors can also access on-campus prayer facilities on both campuses which are based in The Key on College Lane campus and the Multi-Faith Space on De Havilland. Friday prayers are offered in both locations listed above, please see [Islamic Societies Facebook page](#) for updated prayer times.

Useful External Contacts include

 Muslim Council of Britain
The Muslim Council of Britain E-mail: admin@mcb.org.uk Tel: 0845 26 26 786

 St. Albans Islamic Centre
Email: stalbansic@hotmail.com Tel: 07934 490113



IMAAN LGBTQI Muslim Support
Email: imaanlgbtq@gmail.com



Connecting Voices for Change

Muslim Women's Network UK

Email: contact@mwnuk.co.uk Tel: 0121 236 9000



Herts Interfaith Forum

Email: equalities@hertfordshire.gov.uk

Tel: 01438 844100 ext: 54100



Muslim Youth Helpline

Email: info@myh.org.uk Tel: 0808 808 2008