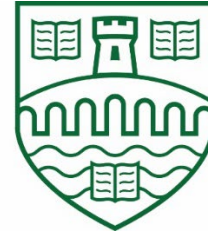


**UNIVERSITY of
STIRLING**



FAITH OBSERVANCE (TEACHING AND LEARNING) POLICY

VERSION CONTROL STATEMENT

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Purpose

1. The University of Stirling is committed to equality, diversity and inclusion. The University recognises that students may practice a range of religions and therefore this policy sets out steps to accommodate mandatory faith observance in relation to teaching and assessment, where possible.

Scope

2. This policy applies to all the University's taught programmes, at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

Definitions

3. **Compulsory Class or Activity.** A class or an activity may be designated as compulsory where attendance at the class/participation in the activity is a precondition for meeting the learning outcomes and successfully completing and receiving credit for the module. This is an example of a Compulsory Module Requirements.
4. **Faiths.** There is no official list of recognised faiths in the UK however the main faiths practiced in the UK are Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, Islam and Sikhism. The University will routinely consider flexibilities for these faiths but flexibility for other faiths may be considered by the University on application by relevant students.
5. **Faith observance.** Taking part in prayer and other activities as part of recognised faith days. Religious observance also occurs when taking part in annual faith festivals such as Eid or Holi. This will include fasting during Ramadan.
6. **Mandatory faith observance.** Taking part in prayer and other activities as part of recognised religious days/festivals which is seen as mandatory in respect of observance and timing within the relevant religion. These may conflict with attendance/assessment in limited cases.
7. **Recognised faith days/festivals.** Recognised faith days and festivals for the faiths addressed in this policy. Faith days may be a 24-hour period or shorter periods such as Friday lunchtime prayers in Islam or Friday evening Shabbat in Judaism. The appendix sets out some broad details of the relevant faith festivals to help guide staff and planning though it is recognised that flexibility is required. For the avoidance of doubt, non-faith festivals such as Thanksgiving or Lunar New Year are not covered by this policy.

Principles

8. This policy provides principles and guidelines to support students and staff in balancing the needs of study and assessment with faith observance.

9. In most cases, mandatory faith observance will not conflict with study, assessment or attendance requirements as the practice in most faiths does not disrupt the ability to work or engage in study during normal weekdays (Mon-Fri 9-5pm).
10. The University will attempt to avoid recognised faith festivals during periods when mandatory faith observance takes place, when scheduling examinations, assessments and compulsory classes or activities, however, this is not always possible. The standard teaching timetable will continue during faith festivals when they occur during semester time.
11. Students should plan their studies and time carefully to accommodate their academic, faith and other commitments wherever possible.
12. The University will publish key dates as early as possible and students should proactively advise staff well in advance when they anticipate difficulties so, where possible, solutions can be developed.

Examination timetabling

13. The University has fixed examination period dates for taught modules which are published around a month in advance and are an integral part of the [academic calendar](#), details can be found on the [website](#). Examination periods occur during very constrained periods in the academic calendar and there are occasions when the examination period includes weekends. It may not be possible to change the examination period to accommodate all recognised faith days or festivals, but effort will be made to avoid periods of mandatory faith observance during recognised faith days/festivals which would conflict with undertaking examinations.
14. If a clash between a faith festival and an examination during the examination period is likely to occur, students may notify the dates at issue and relative festival details using the [Faith Observance form](#) before the examination timetable is finalised. This opportunity will be publicised by the Timetabling team in advance, through the student bulletin. If the clash cannot be resolved within the timetable, students can contact their faith leader to request a special dispensation to sit their exam. Where a resolution cannot be found, students will be offered the option to [defer the examination](#) to the resit diet. Students should note however that this would result in them having only one opportunity to pass the examination as no further resit options are available.
15. It is not possible to take account of casual preferences or of individual social reasons in timetabling assessments.

Class timetabling, compulsory classes/activities and class tests

16. In general, classes are timetabled in the window between 9-6pm Monday to Friday and 9-1pm on a Wednesday. Module information on Canvas will be available to students at the start of each module setting out the dates and times of any Compulsory Classes or Activities or assessments which will take place during

semester, including those which (unusually) take place outside of normal core weekday hours. Students are expected to make themselves available during this period.

17. Depending on the anticipated demographics of students undertaking a module, it is good practice for module coordinators to request timetabling to avoid scheduling compulsory classes/ activities or class tests during periods when students are likely to be taking part in mandatory faith observance, such as Friday prayer between 12noon and 2pm. This request should be made as part of the standard timetabling process. However, timetable planning takes place far in advance and has several constraints and therefore it this may not be possible to anticipate or arrange.
18. Students should notify the module coordinator of any clashes between compulsory classes/activities or class tests and mandatory faith observance as soon as possible when dates are published on Canvas. In those cases, the module coordinator will attempt to make alternative arrangements for the affected students. For example, they may be able to change the timing of an assessed presentation or class test to avoid Friday prayers. However, that may not be possible, and the affected students should be made aware in writing of the significant impact on their studies of not attending so they can make an informed decision. For example, failure to complete a compulsory class/activity will result in automatic failure of the module, with no resit opportunity, and the module may need to be retaken at the next opportunity.
19. Faith observance will impact on individual students in a range of individual ways, and they are encouraged to speak to their faculty to discuss reasonable adjustments to support them to achieve their potential, while taking responsibility to manage their own time and commitments. Faculties may be able to make adjustments which support the student such as moving activities to earlier in the day during Ramadan to take account of exceptional hunger or tiredness due to fasting.

Assessment

20. As students are expected to manage their time effectively, deadlines for handing in assessed work will not normally be extended to allow for faith observance, and students must therefore schedule their work accordingly.
21. As the impact of faith observance on a student's ability to study and sit assessments is usually within their control, and does not cause serious illness or unexpected disruption to their personal life, the impact of faith observance will not usually be considered an [extenuating circumstance](#) within the University process.

Appendix 1: Broad Guide to Recognised Faith days and festivals for the purposes of this policy*

Faiths	Observance	Main annual festival
Buddhist	Prayers can take place daily at home or in a temple but do not usually disrupt working hours	Vesak (May)
Christian	Sunday morning usually	Christmas Day (25 Dec) and Easter (date varies)
Hindu	Prayers can take place daily at home or in a temple but do not usually disrupt working hours	Diwali (November)
Judaism	Prayers can take place three times a day but do not usually disrupt working hours. Friday evening is set aside for worship	Pesach (March/April) and Hannukah (December)
Islam	Friday prayer (takes place between 12-2pm)	Eid al-Fitr falls at the end of Ramadan*
Sikh	Prayers may take place anywhere and formal prayer does not usually take place during working hours Mon-Fri.	Guru Nanak (November)

*Note: dates for several festivals vary depending, for example, on the lunar calendar, so dates are not consistent from year to year. This is a guide to patterns of worship in different faiths which may impact on attendance and engagement with study, it is not comprehensive of all faith observance. There can be variations and flexibility is required.