

## **Religious Observance Guidance (last approved at UTLC in January 2014)**

### **Time Away From Study for Religious Observances**

The University is a community that recognises the faiths of students enrolled on its courses and that there will be times when students want to take time away from their studies to accommodate this. The University undertakes to recognise the following religious observances for leave of absence where this falls outside the Christian calendar:

#### **Holy days**

The two main Muslim Holy days:

Eid ul-Fitr - feast period just after the month long fast of Ramadan, it is not held on the same date each year. Students will be granted two days leave of absence.

Eid ul-Adha – approximately 70 days after Eid ul-Fitr. This festival also marks the end of the Pilgrimage or Hajj to Mecca. Students will be granted leave of absence for 1 day

The two main Jewish Holy days:

Yom Kippur – day of atonement. Students will be granted leave of absence for 1 day.

Pesach – Passover is a major festival. Students will be granted leave of absence for 2 days.

#### **Prayer Times**

Muslim students are required to observe prayer times (Salat times); the five daily prayers. In the winter months when days are shorter it will be more difficult for students to say their prayers. If lectures last for longer than one and a half hours tutors should ensure that a break of at least fifteen minutes is taken. In the summer months (British Summer Time) students should have no difficulty in meeting their obligations.

Friday prayer (Congregation) is compulsory for Muslim students and therefore Schools should attempt to timetable around the University Congregation time of 13.30 – 13.45 for those students who wish to pray during this time (although in the British winter months this time may fall at around 12:30). It is accepted that this may not always be possible and therefore tutors should allow students to absent themselves from classes for a period of 20 minutes to allow them to participate in Friday prayer.

Allowances should be made for Jewish students wishing to observe the Sabbath from one hour before dusk on Fridays until nightfall on Saturdays, this requires students to refrain from writing, carrying and using equipment on the Sabbath.

### **Responsibilities of Students**

Students who are absent due to religious observance should ensure that their non-attendance is recorded accurately and promptly on the Attendance Monitoring System.

Students should ensure that any assignments handed out or lecture notes are acquired from their module tutors. Any assignment due in on these days must be handed in by the deadline date. Students are aware of hand-in dates and must manage their time appropriately. Requests for extenuating circumstances will not be accepted where assignments are handed in late due to religious observation.

Students wishing to absent themselves should also consider the effects of their absence on their peers and minimise disruption to classes.

Students who abuse the system will be reported to their course leader and may find themselves subject to a disciplinary hearing.

### **School Responsibilities**

Module tutors should take into account the dates of Holy days when setting assignment hand-out and hand-in dates and dates involving in-class tests.

Module tutors should ensure that any student who is absent due to religious observance is given the same information as those students attending lectures; this may include: copies of lecture notes, assignment tasks, tutorial dates, dates of in-class tests and examinations.

Module tutors will make allowances for students wishing to observe Friday prayers between 12.30 and 12.45 or between 13.30 and 13.45 (depending on the season) or those wishing to observe the Sabbath.

Module tutors will report to course leaders any students who they believe are abusing the system.

### **Centre Responsibilities**

Holy days identified above and other festivals will be incorporated into the Academic Administration Timetable. Note: students can only apply for religious observance absence on HOLY DAYS.

The current timetabling of examinations allows for religious observance and Friday prayer. The examinations team will continue to take these into account when scheduling examinations.

The timetabling of awards ceremonies allows for Holy days.

Student Services will work with the Faith group to ensure that all Faiths are represented.

## **Special Days to be Added to the Academic Administration Timetable**

Rosh Hashanah – Jewish – the Jewish New Year and recalling God’s creation of the world.

Nanaratri – Hinduism – 9 day festival celebrating the triumph of good over evil.

Eid ul-Fitr – Islam – The feast period just after the month long fast of Ramadan.

Yom Kippur – Jewish – Day of Atonement, a time to repent for actions of the past year. 5 things forbidden on this day including eating and drinking and washing for personal grooming.

Sukkot – Judaism – the feast of Tabernacles and commemorates God’s care of the Israelites during their wanderings in the wilderness.

Diwali – Hinduism/Sikhism – the festival of Lights, commemorates the return of Lord Rama from His exile in the forest. For many this is a new year celebration.

Eid ul-Adha – Islam – Two to three months after Ramadan. To celebrate the faithfulness and obedience of Abraham.

Holi – Hinduism – Spring festival to celebrate creation and renewal, linked with Lord Krishna.

Pesach – Judaism – Major festival observed with a symbolic meal the Seder service. Marks the exodus of the Jews from Egypt.

Pesach as above.

Vaisakhi – Sikhism – celebrates the founding of the Khalsa Order and Sikh nation.

Shavu’ot – Judaism – Spring harvest festival and commemorates the giving of the law to Moses on Mount Sinai.

Vesak – Buddhism – most significant Buddhist celebration and happens every May on the night of the full moon, when Buddhists all over the world celebrate the enlightenment of the Buddha over 2,500 years ago.

Ramadan – Islam – One month of daily fasting and repentance.