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**Guidance on the observance of Ramadan 2020**

Our students and staff from the Muslim faith will be observing the month of Ramadan (a period of fasting) this year over the period **23 April – 23May 2020**. The exact dates (which could vary one day either side) depend on the moon sightings based on the lunar calendar. This guidance aims to raise staff awareness of this important event for our students, staff and visitors and its impact on workplace and student education activities. This guide includes information on the significance of Ramadan, what it involves, arrangements in place on our campus, contact details of relevant staff and further sources of information. The Equality Policy Unit has also provided recommendations for [responding to student or staff requests for flexibility on grounds of religion or belief](https://equality.leeds.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/64/2018/09/Flexibility-on-grounds-of-religion-or-belief-updtd2docx.pdf) and guidance about [Prayer and Contemplation](https://equality.leeds.ac.uk/support-and-resources/religion-and-belief/prayer-and-contemplation/), as well as a [religious festival & events calendar](http://www.equality.leeds.ac.uk/festival-events-calendar).

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What is Ramadan?

* The dates of Ramadan in 2020 are from 23 April to 23May.
* Muslims abstain from consuming any food or drinks from dawn to sunset on each individual day, over this period. The times of the fast for each day are approximately 3am (when the fast commences) to approximately 8.30-9.30pm (when the fast ends/is opened). Times vary slightly each day and more specific information on the daily timings for Leeds can be found at [SalahTimes](http://www.salahtimes.com/uk/leeds/ramadan).
* In practice, this means that Muslims fast each day over this month for approximately 18 hours per day.
* During this time, many Muslims try to follow a normal work/study routine as far as possible, but generally have responsibilities for devotion to extra prayers and readings to their otherwise daily religious commitments.
* Students and staff will take personal responsibility for managing their commitment to Ramadan. Some staff members will try to arrange annual leave to accommodate these extra activities. Students can request alternative exam arrangements by completing a [notification of religious commitments form](https://xforms.leeds.ac.uk/forms/form/1571/en/notification_of_religious_commitments_201920) by Friday 21 February 2020.

The purpose and significance of the observance of Ramadan

* To attain nearness and closeness to their God through devotion and commitment to fasting and prayers.
* To commemorate the holy text called the Quran, by devoting more time to reading and reciting it.
* To appreciate the experience of those who are less fortunate than themselves.
* To give particular emphasis to charity and generosity - this is especially encouraged during this month.
* Ramadan is also a time for significant community and family spirit and providing support. Many individuals and families will pray and eat together and support each other in many ways throughout this period. At the end of Ramadan, all Muslims observe the festival of Eid ul Fitr (approx. 23/24 May) a day of celebration with families and communities.

How does the University support Muslim staff and students?

The University has many Muslim students and staff. We are very keen to provide a safe and inclusive environment, and facilities and arrangements to ensure that they are able to observe Ramadan alongside their studying, working and living on campus. The arrangements we have in place include the following:

* Students can request alternative exam arrangements and [the Exams team will make every effort to meet these preferences](https://students.leeds.ac.uk/info/10111/examinations_and_assessment/1274/religious_observance_and_exams). To make a request specifying your preference for exam times that fall during Ramadan and Eid, please complete and submit the [notification of religious commitments form](https://xforms.leeds.ac.uk/forms/form/1571/en/notification_of_religious_commitments_201920) by **Friday 21 February 2020**.
* There are two main Islamic prayer areas currently available: the Green Room, located beside the Edge Sports Centre and Cemetery Lodge, which is adjacent to the Faculty of Engineering buildings. The rooms are open 24 hours a day over Ramadan. Access to the Green Room and Cemetery Lodge is controlled by key codes and these can be requested from equality@leeds.ac.uk.
* You can find the prayer times for Jummuah (Friday congregational prayers) on campus [here](http://leedsisoc.com/green-room/prayer-times/).
* The University’s [Chaplaincy Team](http://unichaplaincy.org.uk/accessing-support-university-leeds/) offers support to staff and students.
* The University’s Muslim Student Adviser, Farhat Yaqoob, offers information, advice, guidance and support. She can be contacted on 0771 370 7857 or f.yaqoob@leeds.ac.uk
* Facilities and services are available nearby at the [Grand Mosque in Leeds](http://www.leedsgrandmosque.com/).
* Advice, support and guidance is also available to managers, staff and students from the Equality Policy Unit on 0113 343 6973 or at equality@leeds.ac.uk

Guidance for managers and staff

* Muslim staff and students will manage their own observance of Ramadan.
* Observance may vary between individuals due to health, travel and other personal circumstances.
* Members of staff may request leave over this period, for example, to work half-days and/or shorter working weeks to enable them to observe Ramadan. Other Muslim staff may request more flexible working arrangements. Leave requests are also likely to be made to enable staff to celebrate Eid with their families at the end of Ramadan. These requests should be managed in line with all existing University HR policies.
* Students may request time off at Eid as well. This should be managed through conversations with students themselves and any impact on assessments should be considered.
* Managers may wish to consider their meeting times over this period which enables the contribution of most staff.
* Managers are advised to demonstrate empathy, sensitivity and understanding to balance supporting our staff to manage their Ramadan commitments, alongside ensuring we meet all our business needs.

Further information, advice and support

Students, staff and visitors are welcome to contact any of the following student/staff members for any further information or enquiries:

Farhat Yaqoob, Muslim Student Adviser

f.yaqoob@leeds.ac.uk, 0771 370 7857

[Leeds University Student Islamic Society](http://www.leedsuniversityunion.org.uk/groups/isoc/)

Sharif Patel, Muslim Staff Network

s.a.patel@leeds.ac.uk, 0113 343 0757

Universities’ Chaplaincy in Leeds

chaplaincy@leeds.ac.uk, 0113 343 5071

Sabiha Patel, Head of Equality and Inclusion

s.patel1@leeds.ac.uk / equality@leeds.ac.uk, 0113 343 3964

Sabiha Patel and Laura York

Equality Policy Unit

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