

Religious Observance Requests Relating to Assessment

Effective from September 2025

Notification Process

1. Application process opened at start of academic year with a specified deadline for each main exam period set in relation to when the exam timetabling process commences (e.g. late October for Semester 1, early/mid-February for Semester 2, early July for August period).
2. Application process communicated to students (e.g. via an email sent centrally at start of each semester regarding exam support, Student Handbooks, web pages etc.)

Scope

3. Centrally timetabled examinations (in-person or take-home) held within the three main University examination periods. (This means that MBBS and Dentistry are already automatically excluded).
4. For ad-hoc exams as well as any other forms of assessment, students will be directed to contact their School directly to ascertain if any arrangements can be made (see below for further guidance).
5. Due to the need for requests to be received prior to the start of the exam scheduling process, no applications received after the specified deadline will be considered, regardless of the reason.

Scheduling Consideration

6. Upon receipt of any applications, the Exams Team will check the details of the religious observance (e.g. dates/times, requirements etc.). Where necessary, consultation with the University Chaplains may be required.
7. For all valid requests received, a restriction/constraint will be applied to the relevant modules within the exam scheduling software so that those modules cannot be scheduled on the dates/times of the religious observance.
8. The Exams Team will reserve the right to subsequently override or remove any constraints applied due to religious observance where there is evidence that they are significantly restricting or impacting the exam timetable (e.g. if a module cannot be scheduled at all, or if the scheduling constraint is causing significant clustering or clashes).

Where requests cannot be met

9. Where a religious observance request is unable to be met, the Exams Office will first contact the relevant Module Leader/School to check the feasibility of an alternative exam timing (within the period) for the individual student. As this could potentially affect the integrity of the exam (if the same exam paper were to be used) or require a new or amended exam paper to be created, it is expected that this option will not be feasible in most cases.

10. If an alternative timing within the period is not feasible, the student will be notified as early as possible and made aware of the support/advice available via the University Chaplains. Students would typically be notified at least 6-8 weeks prior to the start of the exam period and will be advised to consider the submission of a PEC application.
11. Students advised to submit a PEC application to request either:
 - a. Deferral to August period
 - b. Consideration of an extraordinary/alternative assessment during teaching time

Guidance for Schools

12. When considering the feasibility of an alternative exam timing within the same exam period (i.e. where the Exams Office are unable to meet the religious observance request), as well as when responding to requests in relation to ad-hoc exams or other types of assessment:
 - o Full consideration should be given to the possibility of the exam(s)/assessment being scheduled at a later point within the same exam period (or as soon after the original assessment as possible) so that the student is not potentially disadvantaged by having to defer the exam/assessment to the August period (especially considering the potential impact for final year students).

Where there are significant concerns that the exam/assessment integrity could be impacted by a later or alternative timing, consideration should be given to providing an amended or new version of the exam/assessment, or setting an alternative assessment, so as to avoid the need to defer the assessment to the August period.
13. When considering PEC applications requesting an extraordinary/alternative assessment during teaching time, full consideration should be given to all requests. Where possible, every effort should be made to accommodate requests for final year students.
14. As a minimum, students should always be permitted to defer an exam/assessment to the August Period when their ability to undertake the scheduled exam/assessment is compromised due to a religious observance (provided the PEC Committee are satisfied with the evidence and rationale submitted).

Policy implemented:	September 2025
Intended for use by:	All academic colleagues but in particular, module leaders and DPDs. School Education teams.
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