

Religious Observance Assessments and Examinations Policy and Guidance

Scope: Taught programmes leading to an award of City, University of London.

Senate Regulations

[Senate Regulation 19 Assessment](#)

Summary

The purpose of this policy is to set out arrangements for how examinations and assessments will be organised and made accessible to students on taught undergraduate and postgraduate programmes where a request for consideration of alternative arrangements for religious requirement observance is made.

This Policy will apply to partnership provision unless specific alternative arrangements have been agreed between City and the partner institution and included in the Memorandum of Agreement for the partnership and student handbooks.

Date approved/re-approved:

Approved by Senate October 2021

Date for review: To be reviewed at the end of 2021/22 Academic Year, with allowance for minor updates of roles and responsibilities by Senate, as required by changes in law or in operational practices.

Effective from: November 2021

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Introduction

1. City, University of London is enriched by embracing a diverse population of students and staff of different faiths and of no faith. It acknowledges the desire and right of students to observe their own religion. The University aims to facilitate this while remaining committed to academic standards and the delivery of high-quality teaching, learning and research.
2. The purpose of this policy is to set out arrangements for how examinations and assessments will be organised and made accessible to students on taught undergraduate and postgraduate programmes where a request for consideration of alternative arrangements for religious requirement observance is made.
3. This policy provides for religion and belief as defined in [section 10 of the Equality Act 2010](#).
4. Legislation relating to matters of equality in the [Human Rights Act](#) and the [Equality Act 2010](#) prohibits discrimination and victimization against a person on grounds of religion, belief and non-belief. It requires public authorities, such as City, University of London, to give due regard to eliminating prohibited conduct, advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations when exercising their functions
5. City has fixed examination period dates for taught units which are published in advance and tie in with the academic calendar. For most programmes the main examination periods run in January, May and August. Examinations for some programmes and school led assessments may fall outside of these main periods.
6. Where practically possible City will endeavour to avoid scheduling examinations and assessments where it is anticipated students are required to be absent to observe their religion.
7. This policy covers those aspects of religious observance that students can inform the University of in advance of their assessments and examinations. These may include, but are not limited to:
 - a. Religious observance such as festivals, events and other religious days within a defined period
 - b. Other practices or observance required at a specific date(s) or time(s)
8. Unforeseeable or unpreventable events (such as where particular religious observance is required when the death of a close relative occurs and when

specified forms of mourning are required) should be handled under the arrangements for considering Extenuating Circumstances. The [Extenuating Circumstances Policy](#) can also be used in cases where a student's welfare is impacted as a result of activities undertaken due to religious observance (e.g. fainting during an examination as a result of fasting) and have a detrimental effect on a student's performance during an examination.

9. Religious observance that is not required at a specific date(s) or time(s) should be managed around your studies.
10. Religious Observance over a longer period of time, such as a pilgrimage, should be handled under the [Interruption of Studies Policy](#).
11. This policy applies to examinations and all other forms of assessments as set out for your programme.
12. Please note that the Religious Observance Assessments & Examinations Policy may not apply to specific programmes or modules which have alternative Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) requirements. The PSRB may provide its own policy. Students on those programmes should check with their Course Officer.
13. In this policy, "you" or "your" refers to the student; "we", "us" and "ours" refers to City, University of London.

General Principles

14. The following principles underpin our approach to Religious Observance in relation to assessments and examinations:
 - a. A focus on providing support and enabling speedy resolution.
 - b. Recognition that our students are preparing for business and the professions (including careers in many sectors) and supporting them to progress and succeed.
 - c. Clarity in language and process.
 - d. Upholding fairness, consistency and natural justice in the treatment of the student body as a whole, as well as for particular individuals including by:
 - i. considering application requests for alternative arrangements without reference to, or sight of, individual marks;
 - ii. ensuring decisions regarding alternative arrangement requests for examinations and assessments are taken by those without conflicts of interest;
 - iii. ensuring that students are neither disadvantaged nor advantaged when compared to their peers as a result of the alternative arrangements.

- e. Upholding impartiality in decisions and the integrity of academic judgement when making decisions about requests for alternative arrangements for examinations or assessment.
- f. Maintaining awareness of the opportunity to apply for alternative arrangements for examinations and assessments through collaboration with student support services, the Students' Union and the Chaplaincy.
- g. Ensuring that visible and accessible central student support services and information are highlighted and made available to students at relevant key points in the academic year.
- h. Ensuring appropriate levels of confidentiality and protection of sensitive and personal data including seeking relevant permission are maintained, as appropriate, to enable effective and necessary information sharing.
- i. Effective record keeping of applications by staff.
- j. A culture of enhancement for City as we learn from requests for alternative arrangements based on religious observance and improve the student experience including through appropriate training for decision makers under this policy at the University.

Regulatory and Statutory Considerations including Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- 15. We are committed to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion in all our functions and processes and comply with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and the Human Rights Act 1998. This includes promoting equality and diversity for all, irrespective of any protected characteristics, study pattern, family circumstance, socio-economic background and religious belief.
- 16. In the coordination and make up of our decision-making Panels we are striving to fulfil our commitments to racial equality, disability equality, gender balance and religious belief, and actively consider representation of other protected groups.
- 17. We are committed to maintaining academic standards and integrity. All decisions related to alternative arrangements for assessments and examinations will take account of the need to ensure parity of treatment of all students and to avoid any action which might compromise academic standards and integrity.

Submission of applications

- 18. If Religious Observance is likely to affect your attendance at an examination or assessment you must apply for alternative arrangements at the earliest possible opportunity and no later than three weeks before the start of the exam period (for examinations organised centrally by the Exams Office) or assessment deadline (for those assessments organised by the School.)

19. To request alternative arrangements under this policy you should submit the [Religious Observance Application Form](#) alongside supporting evidence at least three weeks before the start of the examination period or the affected assessment deadline. An example of evidence may be supporting letter from the faith leader of the community with which you practice advising the significance of the event and your participation. The application form is available [here](#).
20. Once an application is submitted, you are advising the University you are unable to sit the examination or assessment at the originally scheduled time and will therefore take up the alternative arrangements where it is possible for the University to offer them.

Alternative Arrangement Considerations

21. The University will consider all applications on a case-by-case basis.
22. Your request for alternative arrangements will be considered and approved alongside the following considerations:
 - a. The duration of the religious observance;
 - b. If and when there will be a further opportunity to sit the examination or assessment in the module;
 - c. Whether the next available opportunity to sit the examination or assessment will impact the time it would take to progress and/or complete the programme;
 - d. The academic integrity and academic standards of the examination or assessment, including the need to preserve assessment security.
 - e. Any other relevant factor which may impact on the request.

Making alternative arrangements following a religious observance request

23. Where your application is approved, the University will make every effort to reschedule the examination or assessment to accommodate your needs. However, it may not always be appropriate or possible to grant a request for alternative arrangements.
24. Approved requests for alternative arrangements will be arranged within the same examination or assessment period, where possible.
25. Where it is possible to make alternative arrangements within the same examination or assessment period, a separate assessment will be sat. This will be moderated to ensure it is in line with the other assessment arrangements.

26. It may not always be possible for us to rearrange the assessment during the same examination or assessment period. In this instance you may be offered an opportunity to take the assessment at a future date, which will normally be at the next available opportunity for the affected examination or assessment.
27. Should you be offered an alternative date for your examination or assessment at the next available opportunity, this may mean that you will not be able to progress to the next academic year or graduate as planned. This will depend on when the assessment or examination will next take place which may be in the August assessment period, or during a future term, whichever is first. Where this is the case, your School will let you know so you can make an informed decision about when to take the affected assessments and/or examinations. For more information, please contact the [Course Office](#) for your programme.
28. If you sit and fail an examination that was offered to you as a result of a successful application for alternative arrangements, you will need to wait until the next available opportunity to resit the examination or assessment. This depends on when the assessment or examination will next take place. This may be in the August assessment period, or during a future term, whichever is first. In such cases, it may mean that you will not be able to progress to the next academic year or graduate as planned.
29. Should you wish to request for a resit examination or assessment to be rescheduled, you will need to be aware that if it is not possible to rearrange it within the same period, you will not be able to take your resit until the next available opportunity. This may increase the time it takes for you to progress or graduate.
30. We will work with and offer support to students nearing their maximum period of registration who make a request for alternative examination or assessments. In this instance, any support provided will be considered by taking a case-by-case approach in line with our Assessment Regulations.

Postgraduate Researchers

31. If you are a postgraduate Research student, you must consult the Viva Voce or Oral Examination Policy before requesting any adjustments to your viva due to Religious Observance. As oral examination dates are mutually agreed with the student, you should make every effort to ensure that you inform your Supervisor of your Religious Observance commitments before a viva date is set.

Roles and Responsibilities

City, University of London

32. We will consider and process requests for alternative arrangements fairly, promptly and in line with our duty to uphold our statutory and regulatory requirements including academic standards. We aim to process your form within seven calendar days of receipt but no later than by the publication of assessment dates.
33. Requests will be considered by the Examinations Office for examinations organised centrally by the University or by the Module Leader in discussion with the Programme Director for assessments organised locally by the School.
34. We will make every attempt to accommodate your request for alternative arrangements based on Religious Observance. We will consider and process all requests for alternative arrangements on a case-by-case basis ensuring that any approval is not detrimental to your learning.
35. We will ensure that the Religious Observance Application Form and procedures for alternative arrangements are clearly signposted on our website. These can be found [here](#).
36. We set strict deadlines for the submission of requests for consideration of alternative arrangements relating to Religious Observance as set out in this policy.
37. Where an examination or assessment is at the same time as when you need to undertake your Religious Observance we will support you as best as practically possible to undertake these assessments while also observing your faith.
38. The decision on whether to grant approval for alternative arrangements as a result of Religious Observance will be based on your individual circumstances and the potential impact of the alternative arrangements on your learning experience and the learning outcome of your programme.
39. While we will attempt to accommodate your request for alternative arrangements based on Religious Observance wherever possible, the nature of a particular course, placement or type of assessment may mean we are unable to find a suitable alternative.
40. We will ensure that our staff members have access to training and resources to provide you with advice and support when requesting alternative arrangements.
41. We will provide you with guidance and information on the possible impact of delaying an examination or assessment to the next available opportunity as

explained in this policy. For more information about the possible impact of delaying an examination or assessment, please contact the [Course Office](#) for your programme.

42. Our Chaplaincy Team will provide support and guidance to students who may wish to request alternative arrangements for examinations or assessments due to Religious Observance. The Team will also provide specialist advice and guidance to any staff members responsible for the approval of requests. Please note that it is not the role of the Chaplaincy Team to provide you with evidence in support of your request for alternative arrangements unless you practice with them. For more information about our Chaplaincy Team, please visit [the Student Hub](#). You can also contact the Team [here](#).
43. Members of staff responsible for setting assessments and examinations will need to set new assessment questions or examination paper for any alternative examination or assessment arrangements. This is to ensure that our academic standards are not compromised and to minimise academic misconduct.

Students

44. You are expected to read this policy and any accompanying guidance prior to making a request for alternative arrangements.
45. You should seek advice and guidance from your [Course Office](#), [the Students' Union](#) or [the Chaplaincy](#) prior to making a request for alternative arrangements for examinations and assessments. This will ensure that you can receive the right level of support.
46. The University will publicise examination and assessment dates well in advance of their deadlines. If a deadline for coursework falls on an important religious day, you are expected to have prepared to submit it before that day wherever possible. You should ensure that you plan your work so that you meet coursework deadlines.
47. Should you feel like you need to do so, you may use the Religious Observance Application form to request a postponement of the submission date for a piece of coursework/assessment. If your religious observance request is successful, the outcome of your request may be an extension. Where this is the case, your religious observance request will be processed in line with your [School's Extension's policy](#). Where appropriate, you may also be offered a postponement of the submission date when you submit your religious observance request.
48. You have a responsibility to tell us about any alternative arrangements you may require as a result of Religious Observance and provide documentary evidence, where required. We strongly recommend that you notify us if you require

alternative arrangements to support you to observe your religious requirements as soon as you become aware of any diary conflicts and at least three weeks before the start of the exam period or assessment. This is so we can support you.

49. We will not be able to consider late requests due to the time it takes to process and rearrange assessments.
50. You are expected to submit evidence alongside your Religious Observance Application Form. An example of evidence may be a supporting letter from the faith leader of the community with which you practice advising the significance of the event and your participation.
51. You may, in exceptional cases, be able to submit your Religious Observance Application Form without documentary evidence. In such cases, you will be required to provide a reasonable explanation, as part of your submission, as to the reason(s) why you are unable to provide the relevant evidence to support your alternative arrangements request. You should only use this option, in the rare instance, where it is impossible for you to provide supporting evidence.
52. You should ensure that you familiarise yourself with your assessment deadlines and examination timetable as soon as these are published and check whether your ability to attend will be impacted by your religious observance.
53. You should ensure that you understand the implications of delaying an examination or assessment to the next available opportunity as explained in this policy.

Students' Union

54. [The Students' Union](#) can support you with your application process for alternative arrangements on the grounds of Religious Observance.
55. [The Students' Union](#) works collaboratively with the University in our culture of enhancement and provide expert advice on Religious Observance regarding examinations and assessments improving student experience.
56. [The Students' Union](#) can also support you with submitting complaints if you are not satisfied with the outcome or the process for your Religious Observance Application form.

Complaints Process

57. Should you wish to submit a complaint about decisions regarding requests for alternative arrangements for examinations or assessments you should follow

the procedures set out in [Regulation 26: Student Complaints](#) as soon as possible. If matters are left for too long it may be impossible for us to investigate properly and find a suitable remedy.

Religious Observance Assessments and Examinations Policy Guidance for Students

This guidance has been developed to supplement the Religious Observance Assessments and Examinations Policy. You are advised to read the full Policy before making an application to ensure you fully understand the process and how it fits with your studies.

Student guidance on submitting alternative arrangements requests

58. When submitting a request for alternative arrangements on religious observance, you are normally expected to submit some form of evidence alongside your request wherever possible. The evidence can be in the form of a letter from the faith leader of the religious community you are practicing with. Other forms of evidence are also acceptable as long as they clearly state both the religious commitment and your requirement to observe it. The date(s) of your religious commitment should be clearly stated on the form of evidence.
59. The University will accept as faith leaders people of all genders who are recognised by their faith community, both formally and informally, as playing authoritative and influential leadership roles within their faith institutions to guide, inspire or lead others.
60. Where you are practicing with the University's Chaplaincy, one of the team will be able to attest this through the evidence they will provide for you. You will need to be known to the Chaplaincy team ahead of your application for them to be able to provide any accompanying evidence.
61. Where you have made every effort to obtain evidence, but it has not been possible for you to do so, you may submit an application without it. Where you apply without evidence, you are advised as per the policy, to provide a reasonable explanation as to the reason(s) why you are unable to provide the relevant evidence to support your alternative arrangements request. It may be helpful to provide online resources that show the significance of a religious event to support your application.

Examination Arrangements

62. In as far as possible, the University will aim not to schedule examinations on major religious festival in order to anticipate your needs. It is considered good practice for examinations and assessments not to be scheduled at a time when students may have other commitments, for example in the evening or at the weekend. Staff are advised to follow this practice to minimise the need for students to request alternative arrangements.
63. Where you have successfully requested alternative arrangements on religious observance grounds, the following outcomes will apply:

- a. You will be offered the opportunity to take the examination or assessment on a different date during the same examination period.
OR
 - b. You will be offered the opportunity to take the examination or assessment at the next available opportunity, for example during the next period that the affected examination or assessment runs.
64. When applying for alternative arrangements, you need to be aware that there is no guarantee that it will be possible for the University or the School to offer you the opportunity to take the examination or assessment during the same examination period. You may have to wait a significant period of time, which may affect your ability to progress to the next stage.
65. You are advised to request alternative arrangements as soon as possible. It is good practice to submit a request as soon as you become aware of any conflict between your examination or assessment and any religious commitments you may have and not wait until the three weeks deadline.
66. During an examination, some students may need to take time out for prayer. We will do our best to facilitate this, but it is not guaranteed. You will need to get in touch with the Examination Office ahead of your scheduled examination so invigilators can be made aware of your prayer needs. If examination invigilators have the capacity, you may leave the room for prayer. Please be advised that you will not get the time back. Praying schedules are published to students so please do consult these ahead of your examinations.
67. When organising examinations, staff are advised to make arrangements where female examiners will be guaranteed to make certain checks for religious sensitivity (for example when invigilators may need to check for earphones).

Other University processes

68. There may be some instances in which other processes at City, University of London are more appropriate to support you depending on your circumstances.

Extenuating Circumstances

69. You are advised to consult the [Extenuating Circumstances Policy](#) for unforeseeable or unpreventable events such as where particular religious observance is required when the death of a close relative occurs and when specified forms or mourning are required.
70. You are also advised to apply for extenuating circumstances in cases where your welfare is impacted as a result of activities undertaken due to religious observance that have a detrimental effect on your performance during an examination. An example of this may be fainting during an examination as a result of fasting.

71. In these instances, you will receive more appropriate support if you use the extenuating circumstances process (instead of requesting alternative arrangements).

Interruption of Studies

72. There may be times when observing your religion will require that you take a longer period out of your studies. For example, if you wish to undertake a pilgrimage or a similar event, you will need to consult the [Interruption of Studies Policy](#) and apply for an interruption of studies instead of using the process outlined in this document.

Extensions

73. When requesting alternative arrangements on the grounds of religious observance for a piece of coursework, you may be offered an extension as a potential successful outcome. Where this is the case, your religious observance request will be processed in line with your School's Extension policy.

74. You are advised to consult and familiarise with the extension process in your School to know what to expect. School Extension Processes can be found here:

- [School of Arts & Social Sciences \(SASS\)](#)
- [School of Mathematics, Computer Science & Engineering \(SMCSE\)](#)
- [School of Health Sciences \(SHS\)](#)
- [City Law School \(UG\)](#)
- [City Law School \(PG\)](#)
- **For the BAYES Business School please contact your course office team.**

Policy Details Table

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If you have queries about this document or if you require this document in an alternative format, please contact:	quad@city.ac.uk

Religious Observance Assessments & Examinations Policy – Data Protection Statement

Your trust is very important to us. This means City is committed to protecting the privacy and security of your personal information.

It is important that you read this notice so that you are aware of how and why we are using such information. This privacy notice describes how we collect and use personal information about you during and after your relationship with us, in accordance with data protection law.

You can find additional information [here](#).

City will collect and process the personal information that you have provided to us about yourself and your Religious Observance request for alternative arrangements. This personal information includes your name, contact address, and telephone number.

City will also collect and process certain special categories of more sensitive personal information if it pertains to your Religious Observance claim. Either within your written statement, or as part of the corresponding evidence you have provided (where relevant). This information might include any of the following where appropriate: •

- race or ethnicity
- religious or philosophical beliefs
- health and medical
- sexual orientation

Where you need to provide such information, please carefully consider if it is pertinent to your Religious Observance request. You should only share information relating to the request you are making.

City is the 'data controller' of this information. This means that City decides what your personal information is used for, and the ways in which it is processed.

The personal information and special categories of information that you provide, will be processed securely for the purposes of processing your request for alternative arrangements.

The legal basis on which City processes your personal information is on the basis of public task. City is an educational and research establishment and in particular its educational and research activity is conducted in a public interest (including your interest and the interest of others). Where we process special category data, the lawful basis we rely on is 'substantial public interest'.

City will retain the information you provide under this Religious Observance process for 6 years from the date last actioned for submitted requests. We will also retain information for 3 months for any claims which were started on Qualtrics but not submitted. We will not share the information you provide with any third parties.

If you have any questions about how City handles your personal information, or you wish to find out about your rights, please visit [City's Privacy Notice](#). You will also be able to find out more about how City processes your information and how you can contact City's Data Protection Officer via email at dpo@city.ac.uk. Where there is inconsistency between those documents and this notice, this notice shall prevail.

If you raise a concern with City about the way it has handled your personal information, you are entitled to lodge a concern with a supervisory authority. In the UK, the supervisory authority is the [Information Commissioner's Office \(ICO\)](#).