



Ramadan and Eid Guidelines 2024 for Students

Our staff and students from the Muslim faith will be observing the month of Ramadan (a period of fasting).

Fasting is an integral part of religious life, discipline, and an experience of every faith. Ramadan is one of the five pillars of Islam. For Muslims, Ramadan is a very spiritual month; it is a month of special blessings, love and care for others. During this month, Muslims around the globe will be fasting and showing extra kindness to those who are less fortunate. As well as becoming more God-conscious, which results in suppressing the desires for food, drink and sexual activity, staying hungry will build empathy for those less fortunate who go days without food. This empathy will motivate the fasting person to take extra steps in looking after loved ones by supporting them in times of need.

Ramadan 2024 will commence on **Monday 11 March 2024** and will continue for 29/30 days until **Tuesday 9 April 2024** (subject to lunar observation).

The festival of **Eid al-Fitr 2024** will be celebrated on **Wednesday 10 April 2024** (subject to lunar observation).

In the Muslim calendar, a day begins on the sunset of the previous day, so observing Muslims will begin observing Ramadan on the sunset of Sunday 10 March 2024. After the completion of Ramadan, the day of Eid will be celebrated.

This document aims to raise awareness of this important month for the benefit of our Muslim students who will be observing.

Key points

- Muslims abstain from taking any food or drink from dawn to sunset on each individual day over the month of Ramadan. The times of the fast for each day will vary between 5.00am (when the fast commences) to 8.00pm (when the fast ends). These change daily throughout the month. In practice, this means that Muslims can fast for more than 15 hours a day this year.
- During this time, Muslims try to follow a normal work/study routine as far as possible but have responsibilities for devotion to extra prayers and readings to their otherwise daily religious commitments.
- Special prayers during the night known as *Taraweeh Salah* is emphasised throughout Ramadan.

Purpose and significance of Ramadan

- To attain nearness and closeness to Almighty God through devotion and commitment to fasting and prayers.
- To experience and appreciate those who are less fortunate than them.



- To give emphasis to charity and generosity - this is especially encouraged during this month.
- To harbour, discipline and harness one's free-will; thereby controlling blameworthy traits such as violence, anger, backbiting etc. and avoiding all sins in general.
- Ramadan is also a time for significant community and family interaction. Many individuals and families will pray and eat together and support each other in many ways, throughout the month.
- After the completion of Ramadan, Muslims celebrate Eid al-Fitr (Holiday of Breaking the Fast) with their families and communities.
- Because Ramadan is a month of refraining from eating and drinking during the daylight hours, Eid is about celebrating the hard work. During Eid, Muslims are prohibited from fasting and therefore must eat, drink and enjoy the day with families and friends.
- The day of Eid begins with the morning Eid prayer which is read anytime between sunrise and noon. Many students request time away from the university to attend this important prayer and/or to visit families during this sacred Muslim celebration.

Ramadan and Eid arrangements at Sunderland University

The University is keen to provide a safe and inclusive environment, facilities, and arrangements to enable Muslim students and staff to observe this practice alongside your studying, working and living on campus arrangements. The arrangements we have in place this year are:

- City Campus prayer centre will be open for prayer and reflection from 7:30am to 1.00am Monday to Friday and 12pm to 1am during the weekends via access card. These times are for Ramadan 2024 only. The Interfaith Centre at St Peter's Campus will be open Monday to Friday 7.30am to 5.30pm.
- Students and staff are requested to activate their campus card by contacting Estate and Facilities Helpdesk on estatesandfacilities.helpdesk@sunderland.ac.uk with details of their card.
- All 5 daily prayers can be prayed at City Campus prayer centre at prescribed times whilst 3 of the 5 prayers can be prayed at St Peters Interfaith Centre.
- There will be Jumu'ah Salah (Friday prayers) on both city each week. Timing of Friday prayers will be 12.30pm and 1.30pm during Ramadan and attendees are encouraged to arrive at least 15 minutes early. If there is no availability on campus, then students and staff are encouraged to attend local Mosques nearby. Prayer times for all the Mosques are available from the Imam by emailing yusuf.meah@sunderland.ac.uk
- Ramadan prayer timetable for University of Sunderland Prayer Centre is available on <https://www.sunislam.org.uk/assets/salah/sunderland.pdf> . Please use March and April timetables for Ramadan 2024.
- Iftar (breaking of fast) arrangements are made every day for all those who may be lonely, away from home or wish to break fast with others.



- Late night prayers will take place at the prayer centre each night starting at 9.00pm with provisions for both brothers and sisters.
- Full Quran will be recited from memory in prayers by the Imam and his deputies over the period of 29 days adhering to prophetic traditions.
- Prolonged prayer provisions will be available on the early hours of the last 10 days of Ramadan.
- Staff and students are encouraged to visit the nearby Mosques for *Taraaweeh* prayer where there is no space on city campus or if campus is too far on a night.
- Staff and students who cannot attend a local Mosque due to a valid accepted religious reason, can perform Taraweeh prayer individually in their own homes/rooms.
- A person is permitted to perform the Taraweeh prayer sitting down if there is a valid reason.
- Eid prayers will take place on campus and will be announced towards the end of Ramadan. Usual times for Eid morning prayer is 9.00am.
- Eid prayer will take place on the morning of Eid day in all the Mosques of Sunderland.

Fasting and services on Campus

- Spiritual and pastoral support during the month of Fasting will be available by contacting the University Imam on 07888645945 or email yusuf.meah@sunderland.ac.uk
- Collective/communal *Suhur* (pre-dawn meal) will be available upon request.
- Collective/communal *Iftar* (breaking of the fast) will be available at City campus prayer centre each day.
- There are buddying opportunities with local Muslim families to spend days of Ramadan including the festivities of Eid.
- Students are welcome to participate in communal events across all Sunderland Mosques which will have dedicated support for Sunderland University students.
- Pre packed Iftar food packs are available from various halal restaurants and takeaways at a discounted rate. Use reference "*University Masjid*"
- If Fasting impacts student's attendance in lectures/seminars, they should speak to the programme leader at the earliest opportunity.
- If a fasting person struggles to continue their fast due to illness or weakness, it is permissible to break the fast and make up for it later.
- Individuals with underlying health conditions can postpone their Fasts to a later date. A strong likelihood of falling extremely ill also permits postponing the Fasts.
- A person who does not fast, or discontinues their fast due to a valid excuse, is required to make up for the fast(s) at a later date. If unsure then consult with the Imam



Breaking fast (Iftar) during lectures

Academic colleagues are aware that Muslim students are fasting and may need come out of lectures for 15-20 minutes to break the fast and pray at sunset during Ramadan. If you have any concerns, please contact your Module leader or Personal Tutor.

Examination in Ramadan - Fasting Tips

- Examination is not a valid excuse for not fasting.
- Ensure you are well rested the day before the examination.
- Prepare the night before and plan times in the day when you can rest.
- Check the examination timetable carefully to avoid rushing around in the morning.
- Have *suhur* (a pre-dawn meal) that is wholesome and filling in order to sustain energy for many hours. It is important to include slowly digested foods.
- If the examination is in the morning, take a long rest in the afternoon If required.
- If the examination is in the afternoon, take a short rest during the morning hours.
- If you feel tired and sluggish, refresh yourself with *wudhu* (ritual ablution).
- Eat healthy when you break your fast (*Iftar*) at the end of the day.
- Drink lots of water between sunset and sunrise. It is good to sip small amounts whilst praying, doing revision, reading and other activities. This will keep you strong and hydrated for the following long fasting hours and will help prevent dehydration and headaches.
- Limit the physical activities. Take the opportunity to rest when you can and try to avoid the dehydrating effects of sitting in hot sunshine or unnecessary exertion.
- If your health is put at serious risk due to the fast, through possible dehydration or injury, you can break your fast. You can make up the broken fast later when your health is better.

Ramadan guidelines for students on placements

Students from various Schools may be on placements during the month of Ramadan. Students who have little to no experience may find placements to be particularly challenging and yet, many Muslim students will regard fasting during this time to be an obligation, not a choice. This means that they feel obliged to comply with various codes of practice regarding safety procedures, whilst adhering to the prescribed religious observances.

It is understood that if you are fasting and working long hours, it may have an impact on health and safety regulations including patient care. The University wants to ensure that we can be supportive of our students who fast, but simultaneously protect the safety and welfare of patients in their care.

Therefore, the following are proposed guidelines for Muslim students who are observing the fasts during their placements:



1. Determine the dates of Ramadan and let your academic advisor/clinical mentor know that you will be fasting.
2. Try to be disciplined about your eating and sleeping habits during Ramadan. You have a duty to ensure that you are alert and able to fulfil your role safely and therefore it is essential that your routine is efficient and can provide you with the maximum benefit. Students expecting to carry out manually demanding tasks should bear in mind that a well-planned, nutritious diet and rest schedule can aid in preventing exhaustion or weakness that can be expected during fasting periods, which otherwise may hinder or have adverse effects on productivity. Furthermore, an effective routine will assist in adjusting to fasting, thus making the overall fast easier.
3. Drink plenty of fluid between *iftaar* (breaking the fast and evening meal) and *suhur* (pre-dawn meal) to keep your body hydrated throughout the day. Severe dehydration can lead to passing out and potential harm to oneself or even others. The safety and wellbeing of your patients is paramount whilst in your care.
4. Try to arrange a suitable space for you and other Muslims to break their fast on placement, with the knowledge and approval of your colleagues and supervisors. Make sure supervisors and colleagues are aware of what times you may have to excuse yourself to break your fast and if possible, invite your peers/colleagues to break the fast with you, as sharing one's meal will increase blessings and encourage mutual compassion and kindness.
5. Discuss with your placement manager/clinical mentor about the availability of a quiet and private space for you to pray. Most places such as hospitals, will have a multi-faith centre you can utilise. It may be helpful for you to notify your supervisor of what times they can expect you to excuse yourself briefly for prayers in case this may affect timetabling or work duties.
6. Consider blocking out short slots in your diary where you may need to be away from your desk/practice to pray. If a meeting/session clashes partially with a prayer time, you should consider letting the meeting organiser know that you will be a few minutes late or need to leave a few minutes early. Where possible, if rest-breaks can be accommodated by your supervisor this will also assist in maintaining a healthy routine.
7. Manage your workload efficiently. There will be moments where you will be required to complete more physical (sometimes 'heavy') care to meet your learning objectives. If this does affect your health, consult your placement supervisor/clinical mentor. This can also be added to your student declaration/health need in your practice assessment documentation. In the event of adverse circumstances and unbearable hardship, you may need to break your fast. Please consult the University Imam or any qualified Islamic scholar in this regard.



8. Enquire through your academic advisor/programme director/placement unit for health care students if it will be possible for you to take a few days off at the end of Ramadan for Eid Al-Fitr. In some schools, it may be possible for you to negotiate and make these days up when others are away for Christmas, New Year's, bank holidays, etc. In other schools, where the clinical/learning experience cannot be replicated at another time, it may not be possible to take time off.
9. Please bear in mind that the person who supervises your placement will have several different and often competing priorities and it may not be possible to grant your requests. For this reason, you should give your supervisor as much prior notice as possible for any reasonable adjustments to your placement during Ramadan.
10. Students who are ill should seek medical and religious advice before fasting. The Imam (Muslim chaplain) at the University can be consulted to help make decisions based on individual cases.
11. Be mindful that your placement organisation may have their own guidelines/policies for Ramadan. Endeavour to work towards them as long as they do not contradict with your religious beliefs.

FAQs on health issues whilst fasting

Blood Tests: Drawing blood from the body does not invalidate the fast.

Covid-19 Tests: Taking a Covid-19 test does not invalidate the fast.

Flu/Covid-19 Jab: It is permissible to receive a Flu or Covid-19 jab whilst fasting.

Injections: It is permissible to take an injection while fasting. However, there is a difference of opinion on nutritional injections. In the case of dentistry, oral injections will nullify the fast if any fluid or blood is swallowed.

Pregnancy: For Muslim women who fast during their pregnancy in the month of Ramadan, if fasting does not have any adverse medical effects on her and the unborn child, then it is permissible for her to fast, but she should be aware of the safest way of doing so. However, if fasting does have adverse medical effects on either mother or child, then it is discouraged for her to fast highlighting points from a medical perspective. Generally, religious leaders say pregnant women should avoid fasting in the long summer days as it may put the health of their unborn child at risk.

Covid-19 symptoms: If a fasting person struggles to continue their fast due to contracting Covid-19 symptoms, it is permissible to break the fast and make up for it later. Individuals with confirmed/suspected Covid-19 with moderate-severe symptoms or severe underlying health conditions can postpone their fasts to a later date. A strong likelihood of falling extremely ill also permits postponing the fasts. In the above cases, if a



person thinks they may be able to fast or they are unsure, then they are encouraged to fast. During the day, if they struggle, they can break the fast and make up for it later.

Fidyah: A person who does not fast, or discontinues their fast due to a valid excuse, is required to make up for the fast(s) at a later date. If their condition is such that they are unable to fast perpetually, then they will be required to give Fidyah (charitable form of compensation for each fast missed). The price of Fidyah is the same as Sadaqah Al-Fitr. Fidyah does not discharge the obligation if a person is able to fast at a later date (e.g., in winter months when the days are shorter).

Exemptions: The following are exempt from fasting in the month of Ramadan:

- Travelers (*over 48 miles*)
- Minor children
- People with unmanageable diabetes
- People who are ill (physically or mentally)
- People with incurable diseases
- People with unmanageable chronic diseases
- Women who are menstruating or with lochia discharge
- Women who are pregnant or lactating and have credible concerns about their own or their child's health.
- People who provide care to Covid-19 patients and are at real risk of dehydration due to wearing PPE for long hours.

Please note that some of the people listed above will be required to make up for their fasts on other days when they regain their full health. Should you have any queries regarding your medical status, please consult your medical GP in conjunction with the University Imam who will be happy to assist.

Further information about Ramadan

- 1) Ramadan Resources
<https://mcb.org.uk/resources/ramadan/>
- 2) British Islamic Medical Association
<https://britishima.org/ramadan/>
- 3) Ramadan Diet
<https://mcb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Ramadan-Dietician-talk-23rd-May.pdf>
- 4) An Introduction to the Month of Ramadan
https://youtu.be/irZk6zy_31g
- 5) For information on what nullifies the fast and what does not, please visit:
<https://islamicportal.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/What-nullifies-the-fast-and-what-does-not.pdf>



Guidance prepared in consultation with Muslim colleagues and students at the University of Sunderland and in conjunction with the UK Higher Education Muslim Chaplains.

Colleagues are welcome to contact the Imam should they require further information on Ramadan.

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