

Religion and Belief Observances in Relation to Teaching and Assessment Policy

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1.0	Existing policy transferred onto a new template and re-written.	Adam Hall, Assistant Registrar for Programme Management & Laura Aguirre De Carcer Assistant Registrar for Examinations and Assessment	LTAC June 2025	July 2025	July 2027

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1. Introduction and Purpose

1.1 The RVC is dedicated to being an organisation in which equality, diversity and inclusion underpin all that we do. In pursuing our mission to educate, undertake research and provide clinical care, we remain committed to creating an inclusive, diverse and welcoming community, where our students and staff work together to ensure professionalism, mutual respect and collegiality are at the core of all activities. Together, this is something we aspire to and continue to work towards.

1.2. The RVC's Equality and Diversity Policy can be found [here](#), along with a range of information the RVC follows.

1.3. The purpose of this policy is to outline the arrangements for how teaching and learning activities, as well as examinations and assessments, will be organised. It also details how these activities will be made accessible to students who request to be absent for religious observance.

2. Scope

2.1. For the purposes of this policy, 'religion' means any religion and includes reference to a lack of religion. 'Belief' means any religious or philosophical belief, and includes reference to a lack of belief, as defined by the Equality Act 2010.

2.2. The RVC notes a distinction between an obligatory religious observance that is required by a faith community in order to be a faithful member, and a desirable observance that allows staff and students to be faithful members of their faith community but is not required.

2.3. This policy covers those aspects of religious observance that are obligatory, and students can inform the RVC of in advance of their teaching and learning activities, assessments and examinations. These may include, but are not limited to:

- a. Obligatory religious observance such as festivals, events and other religious days within a defined period.
- b. Other obligatory practices or observance required at a specific date(s) or time(s).

2.4. It may not be possible to consider requests where religious observance extends over more than 2 consecutive days or where a particular religious observance is required due to unforeseeable or unpreventable events (e.g. the death of a close relative where specified forms of mourning are required). In these instances, it may be appropriate for existing procedures to be followed as outlined in the General Regulations for Study and Award or relevant Code of Practice.

3. Guiding Principles

3.1. As a general principle, all reasonable adjustments to accommodate students' obligatory religious observances will be made to the timing of programme requirements. However, these adjustments will not detract from:

- The security of the achievement or assessment of academic standards.
- The exercise of professional responsibility.
- The care of any animal(s).

- The safety of the student.

3.2. Permission will not be given for a student to be exempted from any part of the programme or regulatory body requirements.

3.3. Creating the teaching and assessment timetables for each programme are complex tasks with many constraints. Whilst timetables are attempted to be created in a mindful way, it is acknowledged that certain students with obligations to their religion and/or belief may still be disadvantaged. Therefore, during preparation of the academic timetables, the Timetabling Manager and Assistant Registrar for Examinations and Assessment will refer to the [RVC Interfaith Calendar](#). The calendar is created by the EDI team and Chaplain, and identifies the dates of major religious observances and festivals for the forthcoming academic year that should be avoided, or where it may be necessary to provide alternate arrangements for those students who wish to observe them.

3.4. The RVC will, as reasonably possible, make every effort to avoid timetabling examinations and assessments, and essential teaching that coincides with the dates of religious festivals highlighted in red within the RVC Interfaith Calendar. Students should be aware there may be occasions when this is not always possible if it can be justified as a proportionate means to achieving a legitimate aim, e.g. an exam cannot be moved because of room and staff availability.

4. Procedures

4.1 Teaching and Learning Activity

4.1.1. To identify dates where RVC study commitments might conflict with a date/s on which a student would like to undertake an obligatory religious observance, it is the student's responsibility to check their term dates, academic timetable, IMR schedule or rota as soon as they become available. The term dates for each programme are published in advance of the academic year on the [RVC Intranet](#). The programme timetables are published in advance of each term and available via the [Timetable Viewer](#) and RVC App.

4.1.2. If a student has an obligatory religious requirement that may affect their attendance or ability to engage with teaching and learning activities, in the first instance, they should discuss this with their Tutor, Year Leader or Supervisor.

4.1.3. A student who would like to request approval to be absent from timetabled teaching and learning activities to observe an obligatory religious festival or undertake other obligatory religious practice should submit a Variation Absence Form to their Tutor/Year Leader/Supervisor at the earliest possible opportunity.

4.1.4. The RVC will consider cases from students whose obligatory religious observance would otherwise cause them to miss scheduled teaching or learning activities in circumstances where religious observance occurs.

4.1.5. It may be necessary to arrange a Student Performance Development (SPD) meeting to consider complex requests.

4.1.6. The RVC will try to make reasonable adjustments/alternative arrangements, if possible. Such arrangements will be agreed locally between the student and the most appropriate Curriculum Manager, i.e. Module/Strand/Rotation/Year Leader, Supervisor etc. to minimise disruption and avoid the student or other students being disadvantaged. These may include, but are not limited to:

- Making available electronic recordings on the virtual learning environment (VLE) to be viewed by the student in their own time.
- Making available alternative learning materials to be viewed by the student in their own time.
- Permission to allow a student to join an alternate session that is already timetabled.
- Permission to allow a student to join/leave at an earlier/later time.
- Amendment to a rota, placement booking or IMR schedule.
- Organising a designated space for worship in close proximity to washing and changing facilities for off-campus teaching and learning activities.
- Adjustment to dress code and protective clothing, providing it still meets professional requirements and does not compromise animal health and welfare and/or public health.

4.1.7. The student is responsible for completing any missed work, including workplace learning, in a timely manner.

4.1.8. If no reasonable alternative can be found, adjustments to scheduled teaching and learning activities may not be possible.

4.1.9. If a student fails to attend a teaching and learning activity without prior approval, this will be treated like any other unauthorised absence.

4.1.10. Students who are not satisfied with the proposed alternative arrangements should seek advice from the Advice Centre.

4.1.11. The RVC recognises that two of the major faith groups have regular religious observances on Friday afternoons. However, due to timetabling constraints, it is not possible to create regular free periods, which may make it difficult for students to meet both their academic and religious requirements. Students who wish to complete regular religious observances should discuss this with their Year Leader at the earliest opportunity for consideration.

4.1.12. Students wishing to join/leave a timetabled teaching and learning activity late/early for a religious observance should notify the facilitator, ideally in advance of the session or at the beginning and leave the venue with minimal disruption.

4.1.13. In addition to reading this policy, students requesting to be absent to observe an obligatory religious festival or undertake other obligatory religious practice whilst on a placement, rotation, completing work in a clinical setting or attending a partner organisation should also refer to the following documents as appropriate for pertinent points:

- EMS Attendance and Absence Policy
- IMR Attendance and Absence Policy
- Programme Handbook
- Code of Practice
- Relevant policies and practices of the host organisation

4.2 Examination and Assessment

4.2.1. Students are responsible for checking their Examination and Assessment timetable as soon as these become available to identify dates where their RVC study commitments might conflict with a date on which they would like to undertake an obligatory religious observance.

Students should manage their workload to ensure they meet an assessment deadline, including submitting the assessment prior to the published deadline if this date clashes with an obligatory religious observance.

4.2.2. The RVC will, as reasonably possible, avoid scheduling examinations on a day when a major religious observance or festival falls, however, if a student has an examination which is scheduled on one day and this falls on a day where there is an obligatory religious observance, a student should submit a request to the Examinations and Assessment Team exams@rvc.ac.uk and may also contact the Advice Centre to obtain further advice and support.

4.2.3. If a student has a practical examination scheduled on a day where there is an obligatory religious observance, the student should contact the Examinations and Assessment Team exams@rvc.ac.uk explaining the situation and request for a different scheduled slot. The Examinations and Assessment Team will try to reschedule the examination where reasonably possible. If a practical examination only takes place on one day, this may not be possible. The student may also contact the Advice Centre to obtain further advice and support.