

# Religious Festivals and the Academic Timetable

SGUL is aware that the academic calendar is built around the Christian calendar.

Students from other religions who wish to observe compulsory religious festivals may apply to observe religious festivals or another religious practice under the University's Religious Observance and Academic Timetabling Policy, which can be found here: <http://www.sgul.ac.uk/about-us/governance/equality-and-diversity/religion-and-belief>

In setting the academic timetable, the University researches dates of forthcoming major religious festivals and consults with the faith group leaders and the presidents of student religious societies.

However, while SGUL may try to avoid any major academic timetabling clash, students should be aware that it will not always be possible for SGUL to be aware of the date of every religion's festivals, or for the academic timetable to avoid all potential date clashes.

## Christian Festivals

Many Christians will have the opportunity to observe compulsory Christian festivals without this affecting their attendance. University timetable and exams are not usually held on Good Friday or Christmas Day for example.

However, some Christian denominations may require other observances.

## Seventh-Day Adventists

### Sabbath

Seventh-day Adventists observe the Sabbath on a Saturday. In order to keep the Sabbath holy, Adventists abstain from secular work and other non-essential business on Saturday. Adventists need to stop work by sunset but are permitted to travel home. The Sabbath begins at sunset on Friday and ends at sunset on Saturday. During the winter, sunset may occur early in the afternoon.

## Hindu Festivals

Hinduism is very flexible and Hindus may choose to celebrate their religion in different ways depending on their cultural background. Therefore it is not possible to give a list of festivals which all Hindus will wish to observe. However while some Hindus may go to the temple, observation of these festivals will not necessarily affect study attendance. SGUL relies on Hindu students to inform them of which dates –if any- they wish to observe.

## Diwali

Diwali, the Hindu festival of lights, is the most popular of all the festivals from South Asia, and is also the occasion for celebrations by Jains and Sikhs as well as Hindus.

## Holi

The spring festival associated with Krishna when people throw coloured powder and water at each other. Holi also celebrates creation and renewal.

## Rama Navami

Rama Navami celebrates the birth of Lord Rama, an incarnation of Vishnu and the hero of the Ramayana, the Sanskrit epic of 24,000 stanzas.

## Vaisakhi

Common to all Hindus, at the time of Vaisakhi, people will go to the temple to pay their respects and seek blessings, and gifts and sweets will be exchanged between friends and family members.

# Islamic Festivals

There are many Islamic festivals but the festivals which are compulsory for Muslims to observe are the 2 festivals of Eid. All dates below are shown using the Gregorian (Western) calendar.

## **Precise dates**

Please note - the precise festival date may vary and is determined by the sighting of the crescent moon. In most countries Muslims rely on news of an official sighting, rather than looking at the sky themselves.

## **Eid-UI-Fitr**

People mark the end of Ramadan with an additional morning congregational prayer in the mosque. People of all ages celebrate the rest of the day visiting friends and relatives, and also make charitable donations.

## **Eid-UI-Adha**

Marks the sacrifice made by Prophet Abraham; people celebrate this festival with an Eid prayer in the morning of the first day and share meat with their relatives and the poor.

<b>2013</b>	
<u>Eid-UI-Fitr</u>	Thursday 8 August (approximate)
<u>Eid-UI-Adha</u>	Tuesday 15 October (approximate)

<b>2014</b>	
<u>Eid-UI-Fitr</u>	Tuesday 29 July (approximate)
<u>Eid-UI-Adha</u>	Sunday 5 October (approximate)
<b>2015</b>	
<u>Eid-UI-Fitr</u>	Saturday 18 July (approximate)
<u>Eid-UI-Adha</u>	Thursday 24 October (approximate)
<b>2016</b>	
<u>Eid-UI-Fitr</u>	Thursday 7 July (approximate)
<u>Eid-UI-Adha</u>	Tuesday 13 September (approximate)

## Judaic Festivals

There are many Jewish festivals, but the following Festivals have work-related restrictions that religious Jews observe. All dates are shown using the Gregorian (Western) calendar. All festivals begin at sunset the previous day.

### Sabbath

The Sabbath begins at sunset on Friday and ends at sunset on Saturday. During the winter, sunset may occur early in the afternoon. During the summer, sunset may be very late (e.g. 10pm). As the Sabbath includes a family meal, individual communities are permitted to decide to start the Sabbath earlier (e.g. closer to 7pm).

### No work / work on festivals

Work is not permitted on the Sabbath (Friday sunset to Saturday nightfall) nor for some – but not all- festivals.

### Definition of work

Under Jewish law, work includes travel as well as writing with a pen or using a computer. Jewish students may need to travel to get home before sunset when the Sabbath / certain festivals begin.

Most Jewish people will observe the following two Festivals:

### Rosh Hashanah (Jewish New Year) (2 day festival)

Celebrate the creation of the world, families gather for festive meals, attend synagogue and listen to the blowing of the shofar (rams horn), which marks the start of ten days repentances ending on Yom Kippur.

### Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement) (1 day festival)

The holiest day of the Jewish calendar, marked by a 25 hour fast and solemn prayer to repent for previous year's sins.

More observant Jews observe the following festivals:

**Shavuot (The Feast of Weeks) (2 day festival)**

Celebrates the giving of the Torah (First 5 books of Moses), the first harvest, and the ripening of the first fruits, it is customary to stay up throughout the first night of Shavuot to study the Torah.

**Sukkot (Tabernacles)**

**(9 day festival but only first 2 days and last 2 days bear the work-related restrictions)**

Commemorates the autumn harvest and the wandering of the Jews in the wilderness after their Exodus from Egypt. During these eight days it is traditional to eat and sleep in sukkas (makeshift shelters).

**Pesach (Passover)**

**(8 day festival but only first 2 days and last 2 days bear the work-related restrictions)**

Commemorates the liberation of the Children of Israel from Egypt, when they were led out of slavery by Moses. They left so quickly their bread did not have time to rise, so it is traditional to eat matzah (unleavened bread) for eight days.

**Purim (The Festival of Lots) (1 day festival)**

Celebrates the time when the Jewish people living in Persia were saved by the courage of Queen Esther from extermination by the tyrant Haman who cast lots to decide on which day to execute the Jews.

Please note it is permissible to work on the feast of Purim. However many Jews may return home for synagogue festival prayers before sunset on the eve of Purim and for a pre-sunset festive meal on the festival day itself.

<b>2013</b>	
Purim	Sunday 24 February
Passover	Tuesday 26 & Wednesday 27 March
	Monday 1 April & Tuesday 2 April
Shavuot	Wednesday 15 & Thursday 16 May
Rosh Hashanah	Wednesday 4 & Thursday 5 September
Yom Kippur	Saturday 14 September
Sukkot	Wednesday 18 & Thursday 19 September
	Tuesday 24 & Wednesday 25 September

<b>2014</b>	
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Purim	Sunday 16 March
Passover	Tuesday 15 & Wednesday 16 April
Shavuot	Monday 21 & Tuesday 22 April
	Tuesday 3 & Wednesday 4 June
Rosh Hashanah	Thursday 25 September
Yom Kippur	Saturday 4 October
Sukkot	Wednesday 8 & Thursday 9 October

<b>2015</b>	
Purim	Thursday 5 March
Passover	Saturday 4 & Sunday 5 April
	Friday 10 & Saturday 11 April
Shavuot	Sunday 24 & Monday 25 May
Rosh Hashanah	Monday 14 & Tuesday 15 September
Yom Kippur	Wednesday 23 September
Sukkot	Monday 28 & Tuesday 29 September

<b>2016</b>	
Purim	Thursday 24 March
Passover	Saturday 23 & Sunday 24 April
	Friday 29 & Saturday 30 April
Shavuot	Tuesday 25 October
Rosh Hashanah	Monday 3 & Tuesday 4 October
Yom Kippur	Wednesday 12 October
Sukkot	Sunday 12 & Monday 13 June 2016

## Sikh Festivals

There are many Sikh festivals however observation of Sikh festivals will not usually affect attendance.

### Vaisakhi

The Sikh celebration of Vaisakhi is one of the most important dates in the Sikh calendar. It is the Sikh New Year festival and is celebrated on April 13 or 14. It also commemorates 1699, the year Sikhism was born as a collective faith. It is commemorated by an uninterrupted reading of the Sikh Holy Scriptures. This lasts around 72 hours, usually on the nearest weekend to the 14th April, from Friday morning until Sunday morning.