

General Board

University policy on faith-provision for University examinations

This policy relates to candidates for all examinations except those assessed by thesis and oral only.

The University of Cambridge is committed to equality and diversity. The University's Equal Opportunities Policy is in the University's Statutes and Ordinances and available here: <http://www.equality.admin.cam.ac.uk/equality-and-diversity-cambridge/equal-opportunities-policy>.

The University aims to accommodate religious observance within the examination calendar so far as is practicable. It is mindful that religious festivals fall throughout the year, sometimes not on fixed dates and that for some faiths there is a different approach to the observance of festivals.

The University has fixed examination period dates, which are publicised in advance and aligned with other events in the academic calendar. The Student Registry prepares the examination timetable for most examinations, and gathers information from those faculties and departments who prepare their own. The timetable draws on the enrolment information submitted by students and verified by Colleges. Whilst most of this information is captured by the Division of Michaelmas term, enrolments and updates occur throughout the year. Work commences on preparing the examination timetable in October and concludes in April. The examination timetable must be completed by the end of the second week in June to ensure sufficient time for marking and grading in readiness for General Admission at the end of June. As such, it is not possible to change the examination period in order to accommodate the full diversity of religious practices.

Where the scheduled examination period coincides with a student's religious observance he or she is able to apply to the Student Registry for reasonable alternative examination arrangements to be made. The onus is on the student to make such an application as early as possible in the academic year, with support from their College. Reasonable alternative examination arrangements may involve amendment of the examination timetable or provision for examinations to be taken at a different time in a different location, subject to strict rules about the student being kept incommunicado.

(i) Amendments to the draft examination timetable

The Student Registry will consider applications for changes to the draft examination timetable to be made by virtue of a religious observance that usually occurs over a restricted period (e.g. Eid ul Fitr, Shavuot, Shivaratri, Vaisakhi). It will not consider applications for amendments to the examination timetable where observance extends over a significant period of time (e.g. Ramadan), where it is normally expected that daily activities (including examinations) will continue as normal; nor will it consider applications for amendment to the examination timetable to enable the student to make holy visits. A student, seeking an amendment to his/her timetable, has a right of appeal where they are dissatisfied with the decision. The final decision rests with the Board of Examinations.

(ii) Alternative examination arrangements

Although the University will make every reasonable effort to amend the examination timetable in the circumstances identified above, the logistics of scheduling a very large numbers of examinations involving many thousands of students within a limited examination period might mean clashes with religious observances might be unavoidable. In such circumstances, reasonable alternative examination arrangements might be made, following discussion between the Student Registry and the student's College.

Procedure for amendment to the draft examination timetable

Students submit a completed self-declaration form to the Student Registry, by given deadlines, indicating a preference not to take examinations on specific date(s), countersigned by the College.

The Student Registry will consider the application and either:

- a) Feed the information into the drafting of the timetable. NB For those sitting examinations in Easter term, it may not be possible to confirm arrangements until the timetable has been finalised in April; or
- b) Pass on the information to the faculty/department preparing their own examination timetable;
- c) Or, where it has not been possible to amend the timetable, discuss alternative arrangements with the College.

The Student Registry will communicate the decision to the student and to their College.

Where a student is dissatisfied with the decision, they can appeal, within ten working days. The final decision rests with the Board of Examinations.

Prayers and assessment

Students are not permitted to leave a scheduled examination in order to pray. Students whose prayer time falls within an examination will need to arrange to fulfil their obligations to pray either before or after the examination.

Coursework assessment

Students receive advanced notice of deadlines for coursework assessment. Therefore, students who are observing religious festivals around the time of the deadline should plan their work to complete by the deadline prescribed by the course work.