

SOAS statement on religious observance and exam timetabling

1. SOAS appreciates the diversity of its student body that includes people from many different religious groups. Some of the faiths represented at the School include a requirement on adherents to fast at particular times of the year.
2. During some academic years the main examination period or the re-sit examination period overlaps (at least partially) with periods of religious fasting. The School understands that fasting will present some students with the challenge of managing reduced energy levels – particularly in the afternoon.
3. Given the constraints of the academic calendar and the diversity of faiths followed at the School, it would not be possible to change the dates of all examinations. Such a measure would have a disproportionate impact on the many events that make up the busy academic year.
4. SOAS does not wish to dictate to religious students how they should address this situation. Nevertheless, in order to assist our students, advice has been sought and the following options have been identified:
 - i. Students may decide not to take any particular steps and to continue with their fast as usual.
 - ii. Any student who believes that they may be substantially disadvantaged by their examinations timetable should speak to staff in Examinations who can discuss what, if any, special arrangements can be made. Consideration will be given by the School, but no commitment can be made to accommodate all requests as this would cause significant disruption to the exam timetable.
 - iii. Students may, in consultation with their religious advisor, consider that their examinations are sufficient justification to permit them not to fast, either just on examination days or perhaps for the whole examination period. The period of fasting can often be undertaken at a later time or some other arrangement could be considered.
5. Students affected by these issues may wish to seek support and guidance from the SOAS Student Advice and Wellbeing team the contact details of which can be found here: <http://www.soas.ac.uk/studentadviceandwellbeing/>