

To: The UK Campus Community

We know from self-study that the climate for learning on campus is critically important to student success and to the satisfaction felt by those who work at the university. As we strive for more and more of our students, faculty and staff to experience UK as a welcoming environment, we acknowledge the many aspects of diversity represented on campus and endeavor to be inclusive in the ways that we live, work and learn here. This involves respecting, among all else, the religious diversity on campus.

Throughout the academic year, members of our community observe various official high holy days of their respective religions. While we recognize the difficulty of trying to avoid scheduling important events and activities or canceling class on these holy days, we nevertheless encourage everyone to be sensitive to the importance of these days to the observers among us. We ask faculty to be flexible in allowing student observers to make up schoolwork missed on the official or commonly recognized high holy days. Similarly, we ask the same sensitivity of supervisors regarding employees.

You may be aware that the University Senate, our faculty governance body, has codified in its rules a policy on excused absences for observance of major religious holidays. The policy reads as follows:

Major Religious Holidays. Students are responsible for notifying the Instructor of Record in writing of anticipated absences due to their observance of such holidays no later than the last day for adding a class.
[RUS 5.2.4.2 Excused Absences]

With these shared interests of our community in mind, it would be very helpful to have all faculty include in their syllabi the language on major religious holidays cited above and underscore the responsibility that the policy places on students to notify their faculty in a timely manner at the opening of each term.

Equally important, it is incumbent upon faculty and staff to recognize that, for persons of faith across the Abrahamic religions (who constitute the overwhelming majority of persons of faith within the UK community), there is a small number of religious holidays of particular significance. As a caring community, we must be vigilant in our efforts to avoid scheduling events, academic or cultural, on those days. In what follows, we have attempted to identify the major religious holidays of the Abrahamic faiths.

Three high holy days are of particular importance to our practicing friends and colleagues of the **Jewish** faith. Keep in mind that observance of these days usually involves the evening before each holy day as well. Thus, observers are likely to absent themselves from events/activities on both the eve and the day of the observance:

◇ Rosh Hashanah (the Jewish New Year, celebration of the creation of the world, is a two-day observance. It occurred this year on September 8-10 and occurs next year from

sunset on September 28 to sunset on September 30, 2011.)

◇ Yom Kippur (also known as the Day of Atonement, it is the holiest day of the Jewish calendar. It occurred this year on September 17/18 and occurs next year from sunset on October 7 to sunset on October 8, 2011.)

◇ Pass Over (commemorates the story of the Exodus. Pass Over occurs this year from sunset on April 18 to nightfall of April 25, 2011 and focuses particularly on the first two days. It is especially important to the gathering of the family and thus often involves travel, thus observers may absent themselves from sunset April 18 to sunset April 20.)

During the period known as Ramadan, observers of **Islamic** faith spend a month of fasting during daylight hours from dawn to sunset. Ramadan occurred August 11-September 9, 2010 and next year will occur August 1-29, 2011. Observers may absent themselves from certain campus activities during this period. To our friends and colleagues of Islamic faith, the following high holy days are of particular importance. These official high holy days actually occur earlier each calendar, and so they may not fall on the same day every year.

◇ Eid al-Fitr (a three-day celebration of the end of Ramadan, of which the first day is most important. Observers may absent themselves from campus activities on the first of these high holy days. This year it was September 10-13, 2010 and next year it will occur on August 30-September 2, 2011.)

◇ Eid al-Adha (celebration of the end of Hajj, the Pilgrimage and holy day of the sacrifice. It will occur this academic year on November 15-19, 2010. Observers may absent themselves from campus activities on the first day of these high holy days.)

The most commonly observed of the official high holy days of the **Christian** faith are widely recognized in the academic calendar and include:

◇ Christmas Eve and Christmas Day (two-day celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ, December 24 & 25 each year)

◇ Ash Wednesday (the first day of Lent, the 40 days of preparation for Easter. It falls this academic year on March 9, 2011.)

◇ Good Friday (the day of Jesus' crucifixion, death and entombment and three days just before Easter Sunday--the day that Christ rose from the grave. Good Friday occurs this academic year on April 22, 2011. Easter Sunday will be on April 24, 2011.)