

## Guide to Major Religious Observances in the UK in 2023 & 2024 Likely to Impact on Learning and Working in a Higher Education Context

This guide to major religious observances in the world religions represented at Durham University has been compiled by the Chaplaincy Network with the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Unit. It identifies the key observances that are likely to impact on the learning and working of students and staff at the University. In developing this guide, we aim to encourage staff and students to be more mindful in scheduling and planning activities to facilitate faith/belief inclusion and to help foster good relations.

We acknowledge the support of various internal and external stakeholders in shaping this document and our understanding of the major religious observances and their impact on working and learning in a Higher Education context. These include the University's Eastern Orthodox, Hindu, Jewish and Muslim Chaplains, and Buddhist and Sikh colleagues in the North East.

It should be noted that this guide is not an exhaustive list of religious observances but rather those that are likely to impact on learning and working in the University. For a comprehensive calendar with a wide range of EDI observances and celebrations, see the [Durham University Inclusion Calendar](#).

For the purpose of this guide, we categorise and define impact as follows:

**High Impact:** The observance has a major working/learning impact on staff and students observing it. Whenever possible, scheduling of University work and learning activities should be avoided on these dates. If it is not possible to avoid these dates, reasonable considerations should be made for individuals impacted by the observance.

**Moderate Impact:** If it is necessary to schedule University work or learning activities on these festival dates, alternative arrangements may be required for some people.

### 2023

#### January 2023

5 January 2023

**Birthday of Guru Gobind Singh (Sikh) – HIGH**

6 January 2023

**Theophany (Baptism of Jesus) (Orthodox Christian) – MODERATE**

#### February 2023

18 February 2023

**Maha Shivratri (Festival of Lord Shiva) (Hindu) – MODERATE**

#### March 2023

8 March 2023

**Holi (Festival of Colours, Love and Spring) (Hindu) – MODERATE**

22 March 2023 (expected)

**Ramadan begins – lasts 30 days (Islam) – MODERATE**

30 March 2023

**Ram Navami (Birth of Lord Ram) (Hindu) – MODERATE**

#### April 2023

6 & 7 April 2023\*

**Pesach (Passover) (Jewish) (first 2 days of the festival) – HIGH\***

7 April 2023

**Good Friday (Crucifixion of Jesus) (Christian) – HIGH**

9 April 2023

**Easter Sunday (Resurrection of Jesus) (Christian) – HIGH**

12 & 13 April 2023

**Pesach (Passover) (Jewish) (final 2 days of the festival) – HIGH\***

14 April 2023

**Vaisakhi/Baisakhi (Spring Festival) (Sikh) – HIGH**

14 April 2023

**Great & Holy Friday (Crucifixion of Jesus) (Orthodox Christian) – HIGH**

16 April 2023

**Pascha/Easter Day (Resurrection of Jesus) (Orthodox Christian) – HIGH**

21 April 2023 (expected)

**Eid-ul-Fitr (Festival of Sweets) (Islam) – HIGH**

#### May 2023

5 May 2023

**Wesak (Buddha Day) (Buddhist) - MODERATE**

26 & 27 May 2023\*

**Shavuot (Pentecost Festival of Weeks) (Jewish) – HIGH\***

## June 2023

4 June 2023  
16 June 2023  
28 June 2023 (expected)

**Pentecost** (Gift of the Holy Spirit) (Orthodox Christian) – **MODERATE**  
**Martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev** (Sikh) – **MODERATE**  
**Eid-ul-Adha** (Holiday of Sacrifice) (Islam) – **HIGH**

## July 2023

28 July 2023

**Ashura** (Death of Husayn ibn Ali) (Islam [Shia]) – **MODERATE**

## August 2023

15 August 2023

**Dormition of the Mother of God** (Orthodox Christian) – **MODERATE**

## September 2023

6 September 2023  
16 & 17 September 2023\*  
25 September 2023\*  
27 September 2023  
30 September 2023\*

**Krishna Janmashtami** (Birth of Lord Krishna) (Hindu) – **MODERATE**  
**Rosh Hashanah** (New Year) (Jewish) – **HIGH\***  
**Yom Kippur** (Day of Atonement) (Jewish) – **HIGH\***  
**Mawlid al-Nabi** (Birthday of Prophet Muhammad) (Islam) – **MODERATE**  
**Sukkot** (Tabernacles) (Jewish) (first day) – **HIGH\***

## October 2023

1 October 2023\*  
7 October 2023\*  
8 October 2023\*  
24 October 2023

**Sukkot** (Tabernacles) (Jewish) (second day) – **HIGH\***  
**Shemini Atzeret** (8<sup>th</sup> Day of Assembly) (Jewish) – **HIGH\***  
**Simchat Torah** (Rejoicing with the Torah) (Jewish) – **HIGH\***  
**Vijaya Dashami/Dussehra** (Triumph of Lord Rama) (Hindu) – **MODERATE**

## November 2023

12 November 2023  
12 November 2023  
24 November 2023  
27 November 2023

**Diwali** (Festival of Lights) (Hindu) – **HIGH**  
**Bandi Chor Divas** (Release of Guru Hargobind) (Sikh) – **HIGH**  
**Martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur** (Sikh) – **MODERATE**  
**Birthday of Guru Nanak Dev Ji** (Sikh) – **HIGH**

## December 2023

25 December 2023

**Christmas Day** (Birth of Jesus) (Christian) - **HIGH**

**Saturday every week\***

**Shabbat** (Sabbath) (Jewish) – **HIGH**

## 2024

## January 2024

5 January 2024  
6 January 2024

**Birthday of Guru Gobind Singh** (Sikh) – **HIGH**  
**Theophany** (Baptism of Jesus) (Orthodox Christian) – **MODERATE**

## March 2024

8 March 2024  
11 March 2024 (expected)  
25 March 2024  
29 March 2024  
31 March 2024

**Maha Shivratri** (Festival of Lord Shiva) (Hindu) – **MODERATE**  
**Ramadan** begins – lasts 30 days (Islam) – **MODERATE**  
**Holi** (Festival of Colours, Love and Spring) (Hindu) – **MODERATE**  
**Good Friday** (Crucifixion of Jesus) (Christian) – **HIGH**  
**Easter Sunday** (Resurrection of Jesus) (Christian) – **HIGH**

## April 2024

10 April 2024  
13 April 2024  
17 April 2024  
23 & 24 April 2024  
29 & 30 April 2024

**Eid-ul-Fitr** (Festival of Sweets) (Islam) – **HIGH**  
**Vaisakhi/Baisakhi** (Spring Festival) (Sikh) - **HIGH**  
**Ram Navami** (Birth of Lord Ram) (Hindu) – **MODERATE**  
**Pesach** (Passover) (Jewish) (first 2 days of the festival) – **HIGH\***  
**Pesach** (Passover) (Jewish) (final 2 days of the festival) – **HIGH\***

## May 2024

3 May 2024  
5 May 2024  
23 May 2024

**Great & Holy Friday** (Crucifixion of Jesus) (Orthodox Christian) – **HIGH**  
**Pascha/Easter Day** (Resurrection of Jesus) (Orthodox Christian) – **HIGH**  
**Wesak** (Buddha Day) (Buddhist) – **MODERATE**

## June 2024

12 & 13 June 2024\*  
23 June 2024  
16 June 2024  
17 June 2024

**Shavuot** (Pentecost Festival of Weeks) (Jewish) – **HIGH\***  
**Pentecost** (Gift of the Holy Spirit) (Orthodox Christian) – **MODERATE**  
**Martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev** (Sikh) – **MODERATE**  
**Eid-ul-Adha** (Holiday of Sacrifice) (Islam) – **HIGH**

## July 2024

17 July 2024

**Ashura** (Death of Husayn ibn Ali) (Islam [Shia]) – **MODERATE**

## August 2024

15 August 2024  
26 August 2024

**Dormition of the Mother of God** (Orthodox Christian) – **MODERATE**  
**Krishna Janmashtami** (Birth of Lord Krishna) (Hindu) – **MODERATE**

## September 2024

15 September 2024

**Mawlid al-Nabi** (Birthday of Prophet Muhammad) (Islam) – **MODERATE**

## October 2024

3 & 4 October 2024\*  
12 October 2024  
12 October 2024\*  
17 & 18 October 2024\*  
24 October 2024\*  
25 October 2024\*

**Rosh Hashanah** (New Year) (Jewish) – **HIGH\***  
**Vijaya Dashami/Dussehra** (Triumph of Lord Rama) (Hindu) – **MODERATE**  
**Yom Kippur** (Day of Atonement) (Jewish) – **HIGH\***  
**Sukkot** (Tabernacles) (Jewish) – **HIGH\***  
**Shemini Atzeret** (8<sup>th</sup> Day of Assembly) (Jewish) – **HIGH**  
**Simchat Torah** (Rejoicing with the Torah) (Jewish) – **HIGH**

## November 2024

1 November 2024  
1 November 2024  
15 November 2024  
24 November 2024

**Diwali** (Festival of Lights) (Hindu) – **HIGH**  
**Bandi Chor Divas** (Release of Guru Hargobind) (Sikh) – **HIGH**  
**Birthday of Guru Nanak Dev Ji** (Sikh) – **HIGH**  
**Martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadar** (Sikh) – **MODERATE**

## December 2024

25 December 2024

**Christmas Day** (Birth of Jesus) (Christian) – **HIGH**

## Saturday every week\*

**Shabbat** (Sabbath) (Jewish) – **HIGH**

**\*Note:** These festivals start at sundown on the day before the date shown therefore, on HIGH dates, University work and learning activities should not be scheduled for the late afternoon or evening of the day before.

## Other sources of information relating to religious obligations during times of work or study:

- 1) In relation to exam timetabling, please note that students are required to complete a **Religious Observance Form** each academic year before the deadline of 31 October. See [6.2.10 : Religious Observance](#).
- 2) Guidance for Students Sitting Exams during Ramadan can be found at [here](#). Dr Mahshid Turner, Muslim Chaplain, is able to provide specific advice regarding Islamic observances: [m.f.turner@durham.ac.uk](mailto:m.f.turner@durham.ac.uk)
- 3) Guidance on staff requests for annual leave for religious reasons can be found [here](#).
- 4) Academic and teaching staff who would like to request some flexibility around their teaching responsibilities due to religious observance can refer to the [Teaching Availability Request Policy](#).