

## **Guide to Major Religious Observances in the UK in 2025 & 2026** **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 Buddhist, Eastern Orthodox, Hindu, Jewish and Muslim Chaplains, 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.

### 2025

#### **January 2025**

6 January 2025  
6 January 2025

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

#### **February 2025**

26 February 2025

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

#### **March 2025**

1 March 2025 (expected)  
14 March 2025  
30 March 2025 (expected)

**Ramadan begins – lasts 30 days (Islam) – MODERATE**  
**Holi (Festival of Colours, Love and Spring) (Hindu) – MODERATE**  
**Eid-ul-Fitr (Festival of the Breaking of the Fast) (Islam) – HIGH**

#### **April 2025**

6 April 2025  
13 & 14 April 2025\*  
14 April 2025  
18 April 2025  
18 April 2025  
19 & 20 April 2025  
20 April 2025  
20 April 2025

**Ram Navami (Birth of Lord Ram) (Hindu) – MODERATE**  
**Pesach (Passover) (Jewish) (first 2 days of the festival) – HIGH\***  
**Vaisakhi/Baisakhi (Spring Festival) (Sikh) – HIGH**  
**Good Friday (Crucifixion of Jesus) (Christian) – HIGH**  
**Great & Holy Friday (Crucifixion of Jesus) (Orthodox Christian) – HIGH**  
**Pesach (Passover) (Jewish) (final 2 days of the festival) – HIGH\***  
**Easter Sunday (Resurrection of Jesus) (Christian) – HIGH**  
**Pascha/Easter Day (Resurrection of Jesus) (Orthodox Christian) – HIGH**

#### **May 2025**

12 May 2025

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

## June 2025

2 & 3 June 2025\*  
7 June 2025 (expected)  
8 June 2025  
16 June 2025

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

## July 2025

6 July 2025

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

## August 2025

15 August 2025  
16 August 2025

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

## September 2025

5 September 2025  
23 & 24 September 2025\*

**Mawlid al-Nabi** (Birthday of Prophet Muhammad) (Islam) – **MODERATE**  
**Rosh Hashanah** (New Year) (Jewish) – **HIGH\***

## October 2025

2 October 2025  
2 October 2025\*  
7 & 8 October 2025\*  
14 October 2025\*  
15 October 2025\*  
20 October 2025  
21 October 2025

**Vijaya Dashami/Dussehra** (Triumph of Lord Rama) (Hindu) – **MODERATE**  
**Yom Kippur** (Day of Atonement) (Jewish) – **HIGH\***  
**Sukkot** (Tabernacles) (Jewish) (first 2 days of the festival) – **HIGH\***  
**Shemini Atzeret** (8<sup>th</sup> Day of Assembly) (Jewish) – **HIGH\***  
**Simchat Torah** (Rejoicing with the Torah) (Jewish) – **HIGH\***  
**Bandi Chor Divas** (Release of Guru Hargobind) (Sikh) – **HIGH**  
**Diwali** (Festival of Lights) (Hindu) – **HIGH**

## November 2025

5 November 2025  
24 November 2025

**Birthday of Guru Nanak Dev Ji** (Sikh) – **HIGH**  
**Martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur** (Sikh) – **MODERATE**

## December 2025

25 December 2025

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

## Saturday every week\*

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

## 2026

## January 2026

6 January 2026  
14 January 2026

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

## February 2026

15 February 2026  
18 February 2026 (expected)

**Maha Shivratri** (Festival of Lord Shiva) (Hindu) – **MODERATE**  
**Ramadan** begins – lasts 30 days (Islam) – **MODERATE**

## March 2026

4 March 2026  
20 March 2026  
26 March 2026

**Holi** (Festival of Colours, Love and Spring) (Hindu) – **MODERATE**  
**Eid-ul-Fitr** (Festival of the Breaking of the Fast) (Islam) – **HIGH**  
**Ram Navami** (Birth of Lord Ram) (Hindu) – **MODERATE**

## April 2026

2 & 3 April 2026  
3 April 2026  
5 April 2026  
8 & 9 April 2026  
10 April 2026  
12 April 2026  
14 April 2026

**Pesach** (Passover) (Jewish) (first 2 days of the festival) – **HIGH\***  
**Good Friday** (Crucifixion of Jesus) (Christian) – **HIGH**  
**Easter Sunday** (Resurrection of Jesus) (Christian) – **HIGH**  
**Pesach** (Passover) (Jewish) (final 2 days of the festival) – **HIGH\***  
**Great & Holy Friday** (Crucifixion of Jesus) (Orthodox Christian) – **HIGH**  
**Pascha/Easter Day** (Resurrection of Jesus) (Orthodox Christian) – **HIGH**  
**Vaisakhi/Baisakhi** (Spring Festival) (Sikh) - **HIGH**

## May 2026

1 May 2026  
22 & 23 May 2026\*  
27 May 2026  
31 May 2026

**Wesak** (Buddha Day) (Buddhist) – **MODERATE**  
**Shavuot** (Pentecost Festival of Weeks) (Jewish) – **HIGH\***  
**Eid-ul-Adha** (Holiday of Sacrifice) (Islam) – **HIGH**  
**Pentecost** (Gift of the Holy Spirit) (Orthodox Christian) – **MODERATE**

## June 2026

16 June 2026  
26 June 2026

**Martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev** (Sikh) – **MODERATE**  
**Ashura** (Death of Husayn ibn Ali) (Islam [Shia]) – **MODERATE**

## August 2026

15 August 2026  
26 August 2026

**Dormition of the Mother of God** (Orthodox Christian) – **MODERATE**  
**Mawlid al-Nabi** (Birthday of Prophet Muhammad) (Islam) – **MODERATE**

## September 2026

4 September 2026  
12 & 13 September 2026\*  
21 September 2026\*  
26 & 27 September 2026\*

**Krishna Janmashtami** (Birth of Lord Krishna) (Hindu) – **MODERATE**  
**Rosh Hashanah** (New Year) (Jewish) – **HIGH\***  
**Yom Kippur** (Day of Atonement) (Jewish) – **HIGH\***  
**Sukkot** (Tabernacles) (Jewish) – **HIGH\***

## October 2026

3 October 2026\*  
4 October 2026\*  
20 October 2026

**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 2026

8 November 2026  
8 November 2026  
24 November 2026  
24 November 2026

**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 2026

25 December 2026

**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 staff on the observance of 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](#). If you are unsure as to what is suitable in your circumstances, then please contact your [HR Business Partner](#).