



January 12, 2024

TO: Deans, Directors, Faculty, and Instructional Academic Staff  
CC: Facilities and Administrative Unit Directors, Teaching Assistants  
FROM: Charles Isbell, Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs  
Lori Reesor, Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs  
Heather Daniels, Secretary of the Faculty  
RE: Religious Observances Policy and Guidelines

We write to remind you of UW–Madison’s [religious observances policy](#). Our policy is meant to be sensitive to the needs of individual students. As you finalize your syllabi for the upcoming term and head into the semester, please review these guidelines:

### **Religious Observances**

State law mandates that any student with a conflict between an academic requirement and any religious observance (including travel time) must be given an alternative for meeting the academic requirement. There are a variety of valid claims, and there is no practical, dignified, or legal means to assess individual claims.

With this in mind, please:

- Proactively plan ahead to avoid conflicts between examinations or major course activities and religious observances when possible. You can use [this calendar](#) (scroll to the end of the message on the page) to assist in your planning. You can also [add religious observances to your Outlook calendar](#).
- Communicate with your students early (e.g., mention in your course syllabi and class announcements), and highlight your shared responsibilities. Even as we ask you to plan ahead, students are responsible for notifying instructors *within the first two weeks of classes* of the date(s) when they request relief due to a religious observance.
- Accept students’ requests at face value.
- Be prepared to offer students alternative pathways to fulfill course requirements (including class attendance) in cases where conflicts cannot be avoided.

**Putting policy into practice** – The attachment has further explanation and guidance on putting these policy requirements into practice.

### **Election Day Observances**

Similarly (while not legally required), we ask that instructors please follow these guidelines regarding election day observances:

- Proactively plan ahead to avoid conflicts between examinations or other major course activities and election days when possible.
- Communicate with your students early (e.g., mention in your course syllabi and class announcements) and highlight the shared responsibility – students are responsible for notifying instructors at least two weeks prior to an election day about their commitment to work as an election official and thus their need to miss class.
- Be prepared to offer students alternative pathways to fulfill course requirements (including class attendance) in cases where conflicts can’t be avoided.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact:

Heather Daniels, Secretary of the Faculty, 608-262-3958, [sof@secfac.wisc.edu](mailto:sof@secfac.wisc.edu)

John Zumbrunnen, Vice Provost for Teaching and Learning, 608-262-5701, [zumbrunnen@wisc.edu](mailto:zumbrunnen@wisc.edu)

Christina Olstad, Dean of Students, 608-262-1451, [dean@studentlife.wisc.edu](mailto:dean@studentlife.wisc.edu)

Ulrich Rosenhagen, Director of the Center for Interfaith Dialogue, 608-890-1665, [rosenhagen@wisc.edu](mailto:rosenhagen@wisc.edu)

## CALENDAR FOR SPRING SEMESTER 2024

The list does not include all possible religious observances and cultural observances that may be requested by students, but rather should be used as a guide for understanding potential scheduling conflicts for major religious observances that may be observed by a number of students in your class.

Martin Luther King Jr Day	15 January (Mon)
Last day to cancel enrollment without transcript record	22 January (Mon)
Instruction begins	23 January (Tue)
Last day to cancel spring enrollment and have no spring transcript record	31 January (Wed)
Last day for 100% tuition adjustment on dropped class	2 February (Fri)
<b>Lunar New Year (East Asia)</b>	<b>10 February (Sat) ***</b>
<b>Ash Wednesday (Christian)</b>	<b>14 February (Wed)</b>
<b>Nirvana (Parinirvana) Day (Buddhist)</b>	<b>15 February (Thu)</b>
<b>Election Day</b>	<b>20 February (Tues)</b>
<b>Magha Puja Day (Buddhist) (dates vary by region)</b>	<b>24 or 26 February (Sun or Tue)</b>
<b>Maha Shivaratri (Hindu) (dates may vary)</b>	<b>8 March (Fri)</b>
<b>Ramadan (Islamic)</b>	<b>10 or 11 March- 9 or 10 April**</b>
<b>Naw Ruz (Zoroastrian/Persian and Baha'i)</b>	<b>21 March (Thurs)</b>
Spring recess	23-31 March (Sat-Sun)
<b>Purim (Jewish)</b>	<b>24 March (Sun)*</b>
<b>Holi (Hindu) (dates may vary)</b>	<b>25 March (Mon)</b>
<b>Hola Mohalla (Sikh)</b>	<b>25-27 March (Mon-Wed)</b>
<b>Good Friday (Christian)</b>	<b>29 March (Fri)</b>
<b>Easter (Christian)</b>	<b>31 March (Sun)</b>
Classes resume	1 April (Mon)
Enrollment for summer term begins	1 April (Mon)
Election Day	2 April (Tues)
Enrollment for fall term begins	8 April (Mon)
<b>Eid al-Fitr (end of Ramadan) (Islamic)</b>	<b>9 or 10 April (Tue or Wed)**</b>
<b>New Year (South and Southeast Asia and Sri Lanka)</b>	<b>13-15 April (Sat-Mon)***</b>
<b>Vaisakhi (Sikh)</b>	<b>13 April (Sat)</b>
Last day to withdraw from Spring term (undergraduate students)	19 April (Fri)
<b>Ridvan (Baha'i)</b>	<b>19-30 April (Fri-Tues)</b>
<b>Mahavir Jayanti (Jainism) (date may vary)</b>	<b>21 April (Sun)</b>
<b>Passover (Pesach) (Jewish)</b>	<b>23-30 April (Tue-Tue)*</b>
<b>Beltane (Interfaith)</b>	<b>1 May (Wed)</b>
Last day to withdraw from Spring term (graduate students)	3 May (Fri)
Last class day	3 May (Fri)
<b>Good Friday (Orthodox Christian)</b>	<b>3 May (Fri)</b>
Study day	4 May (Sat)
<b>Easter (Orthodox Christian)</b>	<b>5 May (Sun)</b>
Exam (summary) period	5-10 May (Sun-Fri)
<b>Ascension Day (Christian)</b>	<b>9 May (Thu)</b>
Commencement ceremony: doctoral and MFA candidates	10 May (Fri)****
Commencement ceremony: undergraduate and master's degree candidates	11 May (Sat)****

### Spring 2024 Key Deadlines:

[registrar.wisc.edu/dates/](https://registrar.wisc.edu/dates/)

Please contact the Office of the Registrar for the Apply to Graduate deadline.

\* Observances of Jewish holidays begin at sunset on the day preceding that which is listed as the holiday.

\*\* Observances of Islamic holidays begin at sunset on the day preceding that which is listed as the holiday. The dates of Ramadan are based on the lunar cycle, and may vary by one day.

\*\*\* New Year's or Lunar New Year's celebrations take place in many countries during these periods; exact days of observance may vary. These dates are of religious and cultural significance to many Buddhists, Hindus, Sikhs, and others.

\*\*\*\* The official date of degree conferral on the diploma will be 12 May 2024.

### Secretary of the Faculty