

## **Cultural and Religious Events Calendar**

A resource designed to assist staff responsible for assessing applications for learning and assessment adjustments based on cultural and religious grounds

This calendar identifies the religious or cultural events that are considered obligatory for a practising/participating member of the communities identified and for which an assessment adjustment should be considered.

The calendar was developed in consultation with State-level representative bodies for each religion or cultural group and is intended as a guide to assist staff in achieving fairness, consistency and a timely response for students who apply for a learning or assessment adjustment based on cultural or religious grounds.

It is important to note that holy days normally begin at sundown on the day before the day specified.

It is also important to note that there can be differences in the recognition and timing of observance of religious festivals among adherents of different sects or denominations of a religion and that some events (such as Chinese New Year and Ramadan) are linked to Lunar or other calendars and so these dates will change from year to year. The dates provided in this document relate to 2016. You can easily find the date for any event in a subsequent year by visiting the Interfaith calendar, a link to which is provided under Useful Resources below.

## Suggested adjustment:

Where any class or assessment is scheduled to commence or conclude after 5 pm on the day before, or at any time on any recognised day of compulsory religious observance a student may apply to be absent from that class (or relevant part of that class) and, in the case of an assessment, may apply to have that assessment rescheduled.

<b>Date (may vary annually)</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Group</b>	<b>Description</b>
Saturdays	<b>Shabbat</b>	Judaism	Shabbat is the seventh day of the Jewish week and a day of rest in Judaism. Commences from sundown on Friday.
5 January	<b>Guru Gobind Singh Sahib birthday</b>	Sikhism	The tenth and the last Guru or Prophet-teacher of the Sikh faith.
7 January	<b>Feast of the Nativity</b>	Orthodox Christianity	
8 February	<b>Chinese New Year</b>	Chinese communities worldwide (including many Buddhists, Taoists and Confucians)	Also called Lunar New Year or Spring Festival; both a cultural and religious festival. Chinese New Year's Eve is known as <i>chú xī</i> and means "Year-pass Eve". Traditionally begins on the first day of the first month in the Chinese (lunar) calendar and ends with Lantern Festival which is on the 15th day.
15 February	<b>Nirvana Day (Parinirvana Day)</b>	Buddhism & Jainism	A festival that commemorates the death of the Buddha when he reached Nirvana at the age of 80. It is celebrated by some Buddhists.
21 March	<b>Naw-Rúz</b>	Bahá'í	New year
23 March	<b>Magha Puja Day (Makha Bucha)</b>	Buddhism	An important religious festival celebrated by Buddhists in Thailand and Cambodia. This festival is a veneration of Buddha and his teachings.

<b>Date (may vary annually)</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Group</b>	<b>Description</b>
24 March	<b>Purim</b>	Judaism	Purim is a Jewish holiday that commemorates the deliverance of the Jewish people from destruction in the ancient Persian Empire. Work should be avoided.
25 March	<b>Good (Holy) Friday</b>	Western Christianity	Commemorates the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Observed during Holy Week as part of the Paschal Triduum on the Friday proceeding Easter Sunday.
27 March	<b>Easter</b>	Western Christianity	Central religious feast in the Christian liturgical year. Western Christianity celebrates Easter on the first Sunday after the full moon following the Northern hemisphere vernal (Spring) equinox (between 22 March and 25 April), whereas many Orthodox churches base their Easter date on the Julian calendar.
13 April	<b>Vaiskahi or spelt as Baisakhi</b>	Sikhism	An ancient harvest festival, marking the beginning of a new solar year. It is a significant holiday in the Sikh calendar
21 April	<b>First day of Ridván</b>	Bahá'í	A 12 day festival commemorating the commencement of Baha'u'llah's prophethood. The most holy of the Baha'i festivals.
22 - 23 April	<b>New Year</b>	Buddhism	Celebrated by Theravadan Buddhists
23-30 April	<b>Passover (Pesach)</b>	Judaism	Jewish holiday celebrated on the 15th day of the Hebrew month of <i>Nisan</i> . The first and the last day of the Passover are considered major Jewish holidays where the rules of <i>Shabbat</i> apply. No work is permitted on 19-20 April and 25-26 April. Work is permitted only on 21, 22 and 24 April with certain restrictions.
29 April	<b>Ninth day of Ridván</b>	Bahá'í	
29 April	<b>Good (Holy) Friday</b>	Orthodox Christianity	
30 April	<b>Mahavir Jayanti</b>	Jainism	Anniversary of the birth of Lord Mahavira the 24th Tirthankar ( <i>a person who achieves enlightenment</i> ) and the 'founder' of modern Jainism.

<b>Date (may vary annually)</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Group</b>	<b>Description</b>
1 May	<b>Easter</b>	Orthodox Christianity	
2 May	<b>Twelfth day of Ridván</b>	Bahá'í	
15 May	<b>Wesak (Visakha Puja or Buddha Day)</b>	Buddhism	The most important and universal of the Buddhist festivals. It celebrates the Buddha's birthday, and, for some Buddhists, also marks his enlightenment and death.
15 May	<b>Pentecost</b>	Western Christianity	A prominent feast commemorating the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles and followers of Jesus. Sometimes described as the 'Birthday of the Church'. Celebrated 7 weeks after Easter Sunday.
23 May	<b>Anniversary of the Declaration of the Báb</b>	Bahá'í	The Báb was the forerunner of Baha'u'llah, founder of the Baha'i faith. His mission was to prepare the world for the coming of Bahá'u'lláh and he declared it in the evening of 22 May 1844.
26 May	<b>National Sorry day</b>	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	The national sorry day is an annual event to express regret over the historic mistreatment of the indigenous people of Australia. The date of the event commemorates the ' <i>Bringing Them Home</i> - Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families' being handed to the Federal Government on 26 May 1997.
27 May – 3 June	<b>National Reconciliation week</b>	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	Celebration of culture and history.
28 May	<b>Anniversary of the Ascension of Bahá'u'lláh</b>	Bahá'í	Anniversary of Bahá'u'lláh's death in 1892.

<b>Date (may vary annually)</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Group</b>	<b>Description</b>
6 June	<b>Ramadan</b> <sup>1</sup>	Islam	<b>Ramadan</b> occurs during the ninth month of the Islamic (Lunar) calendar. A month-long vigil which requires fasting during daylight hours. Eid-ul-Fitr marks the celebration of the end of the fast.  For the period from the commencement of Ramadan until the day prior to Eid-ul-Fitr a student may seek to have only a single assessment per day during this period and no assessment should conclude beyond 5 pm;
12 – 13 June	<b>Shavu'ot</b>	Judaism	Commemorates the anniversary of the day God gave the Torah (Judaism's founding legal and ethical religious texts) to the entire Israelite nation assembled at Mount Sinai. No work is permitted.
19 June	<b>Pentecost</b>	Orthodox Christianity	
3 – 10 July	<b>NAIDOC week</b>	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	Commemorates the history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
7 – 9 July	<b>Eid-ul-Fitr</b>	Islam	Eid-ul-Fitr marks the celebration of the end of the Ramadan fast.
9 July	<b>Anniversary of the</b>	Bahá'í	The Martyrdom of the Báb took place on July 9, 1850 in Tabríz at noon.

<sup>1</sup> Muslims are required to pray five times each day. Only two of these five prayers occur during working hours. The time period for each daily prayer spans several hours, so students usually fit prayers into their normal breaks. Performing prayers takes only a few minutes.

On Fridays, males attend congregational noon prayers in a mosque or university prayer room. This takes 30-60 minutes and usually begins at 12.30 or 1.30 (daylight saving time). Friday prayers are compulsory for observant Muslim males, so many will try to accommodate this in their timetable.

**Flexibility in observing the fast during Ramadan:**

Muslims abstain from food and water from sunrise to sunset during the month of Ramadan. Exemptions from fasting exist for valid reasons. The missed days of fasting can then be made up later after Ramadan.

However, where a student does observe the fast, the likely impact on a student's alertness and energy levels of the rigours of fasting, rising early and retiring late in the evening during Ramadan should be considered in relation to general workload during this period. For example, it is unreasonable to require a fasting student to undertake two exams on that day.

<b>Date (may vary annually)</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Group</b>	<b>Description</b>
	<b>Martyrdom of the Báb</b>		
19 July	<b>Asalha Puja Day (Asanha Puja or Asarnha Bucha)</b>	Buddhism	A Theravada Buddhist festival commemorating the Buddha's first sermon in the Deer Park in Benares India and the founding of the Buddhist <i>sangha</i> ( <i>monastic Sangha</i> of ordained Buddhist monks or nuns, or the assembly of all beings possessing some high degree of realisation).
14 August	<b>Tisha B'Av</b>	Judaism	An annual fast day in Judaism, named for the ninth day ( <i>Tisha</i> ) of the month of Av in the Hebrew calendar. Work should be avoided, particularly before midday.
25 August	<b>Janmashtami – Krishna Jayanti</b>	Hinduism	A festival celebrating the birth of Krishna, recognised by most Hindus as an incarnation of Vishnu (the highest avatar – <i>manifestation of a deity or supreme being</i> ). Celebrated over two days. The first day is called Krishan ashtami or Gokul ashtami. The second day is known as Kaal ashtami or Janam ashtami.
6 – 15 September	<b>Paryushana Parava</b>	Jainism	The most important Jain <i>festival</i> , it consists of eight (Swetambara) or ten (Digambara) days of intense fasting and repentance.
11 – 14 September	<b>Eid-ul-Adha</b>	Islam	<b>Eid-ul-adha</b> , sometimes called the Festival of Sacrifice, celebrates closing of the annual Hajj pilgrimage in Mecca. On Fridays, a student may seek a longer lunch break to allow time for Friday Prayers.
1 - 10 October	<b>Navaratri (Durga Puja)</b>	Hinduism	Major festival lasting nine days which symbolises the triumph of good over evil. Dedicated to Durga, the mother goddess, who destroyed the demon Mahishasura after a nine day battle.
3 – 4 October	<b>Rosh Hashanah</b>	Judaism	The Jewish New Year. It is the first of the High Holidays or <i>Yamim Noraim</i> ('Days of Awe'), celebrated ten days before Yom Kippur. No work is permitted.
12 October	<b>Yom Kippur</b>	Judaism	Also known as Day of Atonement, the holiest day of the year for the Jews. Traditionally observed with a 25-hour period of fasting and intensive prayer, with most of the day in synagogue services. No work is permitted.

<b>Date (may vary annually)</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Group</b>	<b>Description</b>
17 – 23 October	<b>Sukkot</b>	Judaism	Also known as the Feast of Booths, Feast of Tabernacles; a Biblical holiday celebrated on the 15th day of the month of Tishrei (late September to late October). It is one of the three biblically mandated festivals Shalosh regalim on which Jews were commanded to make a pilgrimage to the Temple in Jerusalem. No work permitted on 13-14 October. Work is permitted on 16-19 October with certain restrictions.
20 October	<b>Anniversary of the Birth of the Báb</b>	Bahá'í	
24 October	<b>Shemini Atzeret</b>	Judaism	A Jewish holiday celebrated on the 22nd day of the Hebrew month of Tishrei (first month of calendar). No work is permitted.
25 October	<b>Simchat Torah</b>	Judaism	Means rejoicing with/of the Torah, a celebration marking the conclusion of the annual cycle of public Torah readings, and the beginning of a new cycle. No work is permitted.
20 October	<b>Anniversary of the Birth of the Báb</b>	Bahá'í	
30 October	<b>Diwali (Festival of Lights)</b>	Hinduism & Jainism	The most important Hindu and Jain festival of the year, celebrated by families performing traditional activities together in their homes.
2 November	<b>Anniversary of the Birth of Bahá'u'lláh</b>	Bahá'í	
14 November	<b>Guru Nanak Dev Sahib birthday</b>	Sikhism	Guru Nanak Sahib was the First Nanak and the founder of Sikhism.
25 December	<b>Christmas</b>	Western Christianity	A holiday commemorating the birth of Jesus Christ. Celebrated on 7 January by the Orthodox Churches. It marks the beginning of the larger season of Christmastide, which lasts 12 days.

# Useful Resources

## General:

Interfaith Calendar

<http://www.interfaithcalendar.org/index.htm>

Ngarara Willim Centre – RMIT

<http://www.rmit.edu.au/browse;ID=5hmzpruj21ly;STATUS=A?QRY=ngarara%20willim&STYPE=ENTIRE>

BBC – Religion – A portal to an A to Z listing of the world's religions with useful information including their holy days and festivals and a religious calendar. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/>

## Faith Specific:

Australian Baha'is – <http://www.bahai.org.au/>

Buddhist Council of Victoria – <http://www.bcv.org.au/>

Hindu Community Council of Victoria - <http://www.hinduicc.org.au/>

Hindu Council of Australia - <http://www.hinducouncil.com.au/index.html>

Jains in Australia - <http://jains.australians.com/>

Melbourne Shwetambar Jain Sangh Inc. - <http://www.melbournejainsangh.org/>

Jewish Community Council of Victoria – <http://www.jccv.org.au/>

Islamic Council of Victoria – <http://www.icv.org.au/>

Sikh Interfaith Council of Victoria - <http://www.sikhinterfaithvic.org.au/>