

A Resolution of the Associated Students of Western Washington University

“In Support of Muslim Students Seeking Religious Accommodations for Ramadan”

The Associated Students of Western Washington University recognizes the diverse backgrounds represented in our campus community. We recognize that to foster an environment that embodies our strategic mission of “inclusive success,” we must be sensitive to and honor the needs of all students, staff, and faculty. In recognition of challenges students are facing due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, Muslim students will be navigating in-person academia while observing the holy month of Ramadan.

WHEREAS, the holy month of Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar, occurs every year [1]; and

WHEREAS, this month is of importance to the approximate 1.8 billion followers of Islam – whom include a number of Western Washington University students, staff, and faculty [2]; and

WHEREAS, during Ramadan, Muslim students abstain from food and water from dawn to dusk, or sunrise to sunset, whilst adhering to the month’s spiritual traditions of prayer, meditation, reflection, and maintenance of good character [3, 4]; and

WHEREAS, fasting is a mandatory act for all Muslims who are able and fulfills one of five pillars of Islam, Sawm [1]; and

WHEREAS, Eid al-Fitr, a three-day holiday of celebration with friends and families occurs directly after Ramadan [5]; and

WHEREAS, Muslim students may adhere to differing conditions in the observance of Ramadan due to cultural and religious variability [6]; and

WHEREAS, this act of worship takes a mental and physical toll on Muslim students that may impair day-to-day functioning, such as difficulty completing assignments, taking exams at certain times, and attending classes [7]; and

WHEREAS, Ramadan may be difficult for Muslim students away from their families; and

WHEREAS, Muslim students may experience food insecurity due to limited availability of dining options recognizing and accommodating observance of Ramadan [4]; and

WHEREAS, there is mental, spiritual, and physical risk to Muslim students observing Ramadan in Bellingham due to a recognized history of Islamophobia [8]; and

WHEREAS, Senate Bill 5166, effective July 8, 2019, states, “educational institutions must develop policies to accommodate students’ absences to allow students to take holidays for reasons of faith or conscience... so that students’ grades are not adversely impacted by the absences” [9]; and

WHEREAS, Senate Bill 5166 also states that faculty are required to “accommodate students who, due to observance of religious holidays, expect to be absent or endure a significant hardship during certain days of the course or program” [9].

NOW, THEREFORE IT BE RESOLVED BY THE ASSOCIATED STUDENTS OF WESTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

THAT, administration and faculty acknowledge that Ramadan begins over 2023 Spring Break, are proactive about recognizing Ramadan, and encourage students to seek accommodations; and

THAT, faculty refrain from implementing unconditional Ramadan accommodations for all Muslim students and instead work with Muslim students on a case-by-case basis to define reasonable Ramadan accommodations; and

THAT, faculty is courteous with reasonable absences of Muslim students due to the observance of Ramadan; and

THAT, faculty is courteous with 11:59 p.m. deadlines, and if a student who is fasting needs to complete their assignment during the hours after sunset, implement a 24-hour grace period with no impact to the student’s grades; and

THAT, exams, and quizzes, if strictly timed and on limited hours, can be taken with reasonable accommodations at a different time as discussed between the student and professor; and

THAT, the Dean of each college ensure that this document is sent to each Department Chair and faculty member.

PASSED AND APPROVED by the Associated Students of Western Washington University Student Senate at their special meeting on March 1, 2023.

PASSED AND APPROVED by the Associated Students of Western Washington University Executive Board at their regular meeting on March 2, 2023.

[Signature]

Rahma Iqbal
Chair, ASWWU Student Senate

[Signature]

Sargun Handa
Chair, ASWWU Executive Board

cc: Sabah Randhawa, President
Melynda Huskey, Vice President for Enrollment and Student Services
Litav K. Langley, Assistant Vice President for Access, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
Jacqueline Hughes, Chief Diversity Officer and Executive Director of the Office of Equity
Brad Johnson, Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs
Scott Young, College of Business and Economics Dean
Caskey Russell, Fairhaven College of Interdisciplinary Studies Dean
Christopher Bianco, College of Fine and Performing Arts Interim Dean
Teena Gabrielson, College of the Environment
Paqui Paredes Méndez, College of Humanities and Social Sciences Dean
Janelle Leger, College of Science and Engineering Dean
Kevin Roxas, Woodring College of Education Dean
Scott Linneman, Honors College Director

[1] <https://www.muslimaid.org/media-centre/blog/spiritual-benefits-of-ramadan/>

[2] <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/08/09/muslims-and-islam-key-findings-in-the-u-s-and-around-the-world/>

[3] <https://www.eatright.org/food/cultural-cuisines-and-traditions/holidays-and-celebrations/ramadan-the-practice-of-fasting>

[4] <https://feed.georgetown.edu/access-affordability/supporting-muslim-college-students-during-ramadan/>

[5] <https://www.bpl.org/blogs/post/the-origins-and-practices-of-holidays-laylat-al-qadr-eid-al-fitr/>

[6] <https://www.bpl.org/blogs/post/the-origins-and-practices-of-holidays-ramadan/#:~:text=There%20are%20some%20differences%20on,before%20they%20break%20their%20fast.>

[7] <https://muslimlife.wfu.edu/ramadan-accommodations/impact-on-students/>

[8] <https://noisywatersnw.com/2017/08/18/bellinghams-fortress-of-faith-listed-as-a-hate-group-by-the-splc-facebook-post-sj-robson/>

[9] <https://lawfilesexternal.wa.gov/biennium/2019-20/Pdf/Bills/Senate%20Passed%20Legislature/5166-S.PL.pdf?q=20230227145715>