

MARCH 2024



TOOLKIT

RAMADAN ACCOMMODATIONS

A guide for campus administrators and educators on ensuring Muslim student success during Ramadan

AUTHORED BY THE MUSLIM STUDENTS ASSOCIATION OF THE US & CANADA



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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

ABOUT US

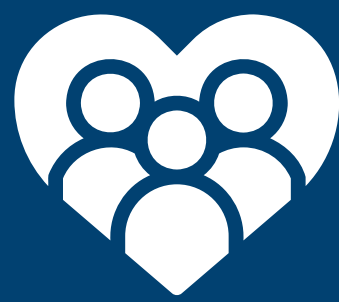
Established in January 1963, the Muslim Students Association of the U.S. & Canada – also known as MSA National – serves Muslim students during their high school, college, and university careers by facilitating their efforts to establish, maintain, and develop local MSA chapters. MSA National was first established at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign by a conference of Muslim students from around the U.S. and Canada. MSA National has been a uniting forum for Muslim students from diverse backgrounds for over 60 years.

Our Mission

To seek the pleasure of Allah (SWT) by empowering Muslim students with resources aimed at fostering character and leadership development (tarbiyyah), campus activism and da'wah, and connecting for a unified vision.

Our Vision

A unifying movement, rooted in deen, of all Muslim Student Associations, cultivating safe and transformative spaces for all Muslims on campus and continuing to serve the Ummah beyond graduation.



Muslim students often experience **a variety of obstacles** during the month of Ramadan if they are attending academic institutions that are not familiar with Muslim religious practices. For some students, Ramadan can be a difficult time if it is spent alone, without a community or family. A **2020 poll by the Institute for Social Policy and Understanding (ISPU)** found that younger Muslims, ages 19 to 29, are most likely to experience religious discrimination.

Campus administrators and educators should commit to **transforming their campuses** to one that is welcoming and inclusive to all Muslims, and provide reasonable accommodations as needed to ensure the safety and success of all Muslim students.

BACKGROUND

Every year, Muslims fast daily from dawn until dusk during **Ramadan**, which is the **9th month of the Islamic Calendar**. Fasting during Ramadan is one of the five obligatory pillars, or commandments, in Islam. This year, Ramadan is anticipated to begin on **Sunday, March 10, 2024, at sunset** and end on **Tuesday, April 9, 2024, at sunset**. The start and end dates may vary depending on different schools of thought within the Islamic tradition; however, the majority of Muslims in North America will be observing Ramadan this year on the aforementioned dates. The last night 10 nights of Ramadan are called the **Nights of Qadr**, and Muslims will increase their acts of worship even more to attain God consciousness.

Ramadan marks the revelation of the **Holy Quran**, which is our holy book. The month allows Muslims to reconnect with God (Allah), the Holy Quran, and our faith. It is a time to cleanse our souls, enable a reconnection with our faith, and promote self-growth.

The day after the end of Ramadan is a religious holiday called **Eid-al-Fitr**, or the "Festival of the Breaking of the Fast". It involves a special prayer and sermon in the morning, followed by various community and individual celebrations with one's friends and family.

CONSIDERATIONS

Because Muslims will go **long hours without food or drink**, and because of the shift in our sleeping schedules, our bodies will take some time to adapt to the new natural rhythm. Ramadan is not a fitness fad or diet regimen, so considerations should be made not to **compare this spiritual and religious practice** with those above. Muslims who are fasting may experience **dehydration, lack of sleep, fatigue, and low energy**. Lack of support for fasting Muslims can lead to physical or mental distress, discrimination, and not feeling understood.

WHAT DO MUSLIMS DO IN RAMADAN?

Fasting: Muslims abstain from dawn until dusk from eating and drinking, including water.

- The pre-dawn meal or breakfast is called **suhoor**.
- The meal to break the fast at dusk is called **iftar**.
- Muslims fast for self-restraint and God-consciousness.

Spirituality & Worship: Aside from the **five daily prayers**, many Muslims will pray extra nightly prayers and engage in other religious activities throughout the day.

- These acts of worship allow for reflection and contemplation of one's self and one's relationship with Allah (God).
- The additional night prayer is called **Taraweeh**. Depending on the person and community, Taraweeh typically takes 1-3 hours to complete.
- Taraweeh is usually done in congregation with other Muslims.
- Muslims also tend to increase their recitation of **The Holy Quran**.

Charity & Community: Spending time with the less fortunate and communal gatherings are important practices in Ramadan.

- Muslims typically feed other fasting people with communal iftars or dinners.
- Muslims will also increase their volunteer and community service towards others during this month to increase God-consciousness.
- Muslims tend to increase their charitable donations during the month.

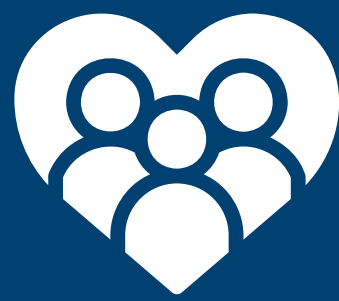
SNAPSHOT OF A FASTING STUDENT

HOUSTON, TX - USA

4:00 AM	Suhoor pre-dawn meal
6:15 AM	Fajr morning prayer
9:00 AM	First class begins
1:30 PM	Dhuhr noon prayer
5:00 PM	Asr afternoon prayer
6:00 PM	Last class ends
7:30 PM	Maghrib & Iftar evening prayer & meal to break the fast
8:45 PM	Isha night prayer
10:00 PM	Taraweeh extra night prayer
12:00 AM	End of Day

TORONTO, ON - CANADA

4:00 AM	Suhoor pre-dawn meal
5:30 AM	Fajr morning prayer
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HOW TO SUPPORT MUSLIM STUDENTS

This section will cover the six key areas to focus on when ensuring the success of Muslim students during Ramadan. Special attention is paid to prioritizing student health and safety, while also utilizing accommodation requests when available.



Compassion, Acknowledgement, & Cognizance

Understanding and acknowledging Ramadan is of the utmost importance for campus administrators and educators. Muslim students are foundational to the fabric of any campus, and efforts should be made to educate and celebrate Muslim traditions. Examples of this include:

- **Publicly acknowledging** and posting about Ramadan and Eid-al-Fitr through the campus-wide email listserv and social media, such as:
 - “Ramadan Kareem and/or Ramadan Mubarak!”
 - “We wish you a blessed and happy Ramadan.”
 - “May this Ramadan bring joy, health, and wealth to you.”
- Educate staff about accommodation requests that are in line with your campus’ **policy on religious observances and accommodations**.
- Provide suhoor and iftar meals and opportunities for Muslims to gather.
- Wishing students well during this religiously dedicated time.
- **Cultivating a spirit of appreciation** and respect for the Muslim community.
- Meeting with Muslim students to check on their mental health and overall well-being.
- Refrain from saying things like:
 - “I can’t understand how you do it.”
 - “Don’t you get hungry?”
 - “That’s not healthy for you.”



Student Safety

Due to the schedule change, more Muslim students may be out early in the morning or late at night for prayers. Examples of ways to prioritize student safety include:

- Increasing availability for **safe rides/shuttles**
- **Extended hours** for safe-walk partners
- Increased **presence of safety officers** on campus

Academic Support

The **Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution** protects an American's right to exercise their religious beliefs; and **Title VI of the Civil Rights Act** of 1964 protects one from religious discrimination, harassment, and retaliation. Muslim students may opt to request religious accommodations for exams or other strenuous activities. In particular, schools that utilize the quarterly term system **should accommodate requests where final exams fall during Ramadan**. All accommodations should be offered with the effort and intention to minimize student stress. Examples of reasonable accommodations include:

- Offering students **reasonable extensions** for classes that fall during sunset hours, as students will need to break their fast.
- Providing students opportunities **to take an exam or test earlier in the day**, given the struggle of a changed schedule and eating habits.
- Allowing Muslim students to **not take more than 1 exam** in a 24-hour period.
- Support holiday requests, especially during Eid-al-Fitr and the Nights of Qadr.
- Allow opportunities to take a class virtually or remotely. Flexibility with students is key to supporting their success both inside and outside of the classroom.

Meals

Given the long hours of fasting without food or drink, **halal food availability** should be prioritized to ensure that students are continuing to receive healthy meals. Examples of meal accommodations include:

- **Extended dining hall hours**: allow students to eat after sunset and to pick up pre-packaged meals for suhoor.
- Host **on-campus iftars** provided by the Office for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion or Student Success.
- Increase student awareness of on-campus iftars and suhoor opportunities.

Prayers & Worship

Providing a space for the **five daily prayers** and Taraweeh prayers on campus allows students, staff, and faculty the flexibility to attend as often as their schedules permit. Providing a space on campus also ensures student safety and assures Muslim students that **the campus is welcoming towards them**. Examples of accommodations for prayer include:

- Providing a clean, empty, and accessible room for students to gather and pray.
- Meeting with the **Muslim Students Association (MSA)** on campus to ensure that the room is open and available during specific hours.
- Allowing Muslim students to leave class to pray or break their fast.
- Being mindful of evening programs conflicting with Iftar, or the sunset meal to break the fast.

Campus Life

Campuses with a sizeable number of on-campus residents are presented with a unique opportunity to **cultivate a community that feels welcoming** and allows students to build a home away from home. Examples of ways to ensure this include:

- Designating a **prayer space** near dorms and halls for prayers and congregational meals.
- **Intolerance** of substance use in housing.
- Providing **education** that a student's altered schedule may impact their roommates.
- Hosting iftars or suhoors regularly.
- Providing **snacks and halal, warm, nutritious meals**, especially during the weekends when food may not be as available.

RESOURCES

Education & Tools

- [Shoulder-to-Shoulder Campaign](#)
- [The Non-Muslim Guide to Fasting During Ramadan](#)
- [Ramadan Information Sheet](#)
- [Calendar of Important Islamic Dates](#)
- [An Overview of Ramadan and Fasting \(Slides\)](#)
- [Muslim Advocates: Guide to Seeking Religious Accommodations for Ramadan in School or College](#)
- [Ramadan Guide \(Alberta Teachers' Association\)](#)
- [9 Ways To Support Students During Ramadan](#)
- [Ramadan Teaching Resources](#)

Mental Health

- [Naseeha Mental Health](#)
- [RUH App](#)

Legal

- [CAIR National](#)
- [Muslim Advocates](#)
- [National Council of Canadian Muslims](#)



For more questions, please contact
info@msanational.org

Or view our resources at
www.msanational.org