

Jewish Medical Association UK

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August 2022
[Deans of Medical Schools]

On behalf of the Jewish Medical Association (UK) I am writing to provide you with details of Jewish festivals during the 2022 - 23 academic year. We hope that this is useful for your timetabling. We hope too that it helps to avoid unnecessary distress and anxiety for students, and unnecessary problems for staff.

As you are probably aware, the variability in dates from year to year arises because the Jewish calendar uses a lunar year. There is also variability in how these festivals and fasts are observed – for example only some require non-attendance – and variability in the degree of observance in the Jewish community.

There is a long tradition of Jews working in healthcare professions, and there is explicit recognition that healthcare – “saving life” – takes priority. In parallel Jewish religious observance is part of our religious freedom. Overall, we hope that it will be possible to negotiate for students to achieve the appropriate balance.

We would be most grateful if you could draw this information to the attention of those responsible for timetable planning and examination scheduling during the coming year, as these are the areas where Jewish students may encounter problems about clashes between their religious observance and course participation.

If you would like us to send a copy of this letter to any other members of staff in your Medical School, please let us know as soon as you can, preferably with contact details for them, so that it will reach them as soon as possible. There is also a link to it on our website

We also co-ordinate our work in this area with the University Jewish Chaplaincy, who have a network of Jewish chaplains throughout the UK: <https://www.mychaplaincy.co.uk/>,

If you have any further queries either about festivals, or about any other matters relating to Jewish medical and healthcare students, you can reach us via our Administrative Officer, Mrs Hilary Cane directly [Jewish Medical Association (UK): (info@jewishmedicalassociation.org)] and we will be happy either to be of assistance directly or help you with additional points of contact.

With best wishes

(Prof) David R Katz
(Executive Chair)

Festivals

There are several festivals when work is not permitted and there are limitations on private study particularly using technology.

These festivals commence on the previous evening at sunset. For example, in 2022 Jewish New Year commences on Sunday 25th and ends at nightfall on Tuesday 27th. These festivals are:

New Year - Rosh Hashanah: 26th / 27th Sept 2022
 Tabernacles – Sukkot: 9th /10th Oct 2022
 Eighth Day of Assembly - Shemini Atzeret: 17th Oct 2022
 Rejoicing of the Law - Simchat Torah: 18th Oct 2022
 Passover – Pesach: 5th / 6th and 12th / 13th April 2023
 Pentecost – Shavuot: 26th / 27th May 2023

Fast Day

Day of Atonement

The major annual Jewish fast day is the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) which starts on the evening of Oct 4th and ends at sunset on Oct 5th. Work is not permitted, and any form of private study is limited.

Sabbath - Shabbat

During the winter months Sabbath begins on many Fridays before 17.00. This varies from week to week – the earliest such Sabbath start time is 15.40 on the 9th and 16th of December.

Observant Jews will want to stop work activities an hour before sunset on Sabbath (and festivals) to enable them to travel home.

Of course, the reciprocal applies – Sabbath in these weeks ends at nightfall on Saturday afternoons

Other festivals and fast days

There are several other festival days which do not require interruption in work and study. These also start on the previous night at sunset

Intermediate days of Tabernacles: 12th – 16th Oct 2022
 Feast of Lights – Hanukkah: 19th – 26th Dec 2022
 New Year for Trees - Tu Bishvat: 6th Feb 2023
 Feast of Lots – Purim: 7th March 2023
 Intermediate days of Passover: 8th – 11th April 2023
 33rd day of the Omer Period - Lag Ba'Omer: 9th May 2023

There are several other fast days which do not require interruption in work and study. These start at sunrise except where asterisked* which starts on the previous night at sunset.

Fast of Gedalia: 28th Sept 2022
 Fast of 10th of Tevet: 3rd Jan 2023
 Fast of Esther: 6th March 2022
 Fast of 17th Tammuz: 6th July 2023
 *Fast of 9th Av: 27th July 2023