

**A RESOLUTION OF THE ASSOCIATED STUDENTS OF
WESTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY
Sen. J.Res. 2023/24-03**

“Supporting Muslim Students Seeking Religious Accommodations for Ramadan”

WHEREAS, The Associated Students of Western Washington University recognizes the diverse backgrounds represented in our campus community, and

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, including many Western Washington University students, staff, and faculty [2], and

WHEREAS, this year the month of Ramadan lasts from around March 10 to April 8, 2024 [3], 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 [4, 5], and

WHEREAS, Muslim students may adhere to differing conditions in the observance of Ramadan due to cultural and religious variability [6], 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, 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, for many Muslim students this toll will be in addition to the mental and physical toll caused by the catastrophic Israeli siege on Gaza, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem in Palestine, and

WHEREAS, for many Muslim students these tolls are in addition to the mental and physical toll caused by the continued and lingering impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, including long-COVID, and

WHEREAS, Muslim students may experience food insecurity due to the limited availability of dining options that recognize and accommodate the observance of Ramadan [5], and

WHEREAS, during the second half of Ramadan, the residential dining halls will not be open before sunrise [8, 9], and

WHEREAS, during the entirety of Ramadan, the residential dining halls will have less than an hour of regular dinner service after sunset [8, 9], and

WHEREAS, there is mental, spiritual, and physical risk to Muslim students observing Ramadan in Bellingham due to a recognized history of Islamophobia [10], and

WHEREAS, there has been an acute rise in Islamophobia and racism in Bellingham and at Western that has placed additional mental, spiritual, and physical risk on our Muslim students, and

WHEREAS, Eid al-Fitr, a three-day holiday of celebration with friends and families occurs directly after Ramadan [11], and

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

WHEREAS, in this context, the ASWWU further recognizes 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; and

44 **WHEREAS**, Senate Bill 5166, effective July 8, 2019, states, “educational institutions must develop policies to
45 accommodate students’ absences to allow students to take holidays for reasons of faith or conscience... so
46 that students’ grades are not adversely impacted by the absences” [12]; and

47 **WHEREAS**, Senate Bill 5166 also states that faculty members are required to “accommodate students who,
48 due to observance of religious holidays, expect to be absent or endure a significant hardship during certain
49 days of the course or program” [12].

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51 **NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE ASSOCIATED STUDENTS OF WESTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY:**

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53 **THAT**, the ASWWU respects and supports the needs of our Muslim students; and

54 **THAT**, the ASWWU acknowledges the diversity among our Muslim students; and

55 **THAT**, the ASWWU Student Government is willing to help individual students receive the accommodations
56 they need, if such help is requested; and

57 **THAT**, the ASWWU encourages Muslim students to seek religious accommodations for spring quarter under
58 their Senate Bill 5166 rights by reaching out to their instructors; and

59 **THAT**, the ASWWU requests that the administration and faculty acknowledge that Ramadan takes place
60 from around March 10 to April 8 this year; and

61 **THAT**, the ASWWU requests that faculty members and instructors

- 62 1) acknowledge that Ramadan begins the week before Winter Quarter Finals,
- 63 2) are proactive about recognizing Ramadan, and encourage students to seek accommodations,
- 64 3) refrain from implementing unconditional Ramadan accommodations for all Muslim students and
65 instead work with Muslim students on a case-by-case basis to define reasonable Ramadan
66 accommodations,
- 67 4) are courteous with reasonable absences of Muslim students due to the observance of Ramadan,
- 68 5) are courteous with 11:59 p.m. deadlines, and if a student who is fasting needs to complete their
69 assignment during the hours after sunset, implement a 24-hour grace period with no impact to the
70 student’s grades,
- 71 6) allow exams and quizzes to be taken with reasonable accommodations, including at a different time,
72 as discussed between the student and instructor; and

73 **THAT**, the ASWWU requests that the Dean of each college ensure that this document is sent to each
74 Department Chair, faculty member, and instructor; and

75 **THAT**, the ASWWU requests that University Dining Services, Dining at WWU (Chartwells) provides food
76 options that accommodate the observance of Ramadan, including providing adequate full-service hours
77 before sunrise and after sunset and providing for take-out options; and that the University Administration
78 ensure the provision of such accommodations.

79 *Agreed to in the Student Senate March 6, 2024*

80 *Agreed to in the Executive Board March 7, 2024*

81 cc: Sabah Randhawa, President
82 Brad Johnson, Provost
83 Melynda Huskey, Vice President for Enrollment and Student Services
84 Leonard Jones, Director of University Residences
85 Andrew Gaynor, District Manager, Dining at WWU
86 Students, Faculty, and Staff

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

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

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[3] <https://www.islamicfinder.org/special-islamic-days/ramadan-2024/>

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

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

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[6] <https://www.bpl.org/blogs/post/the-origins-and-practices-of-holidays-ramadan/>

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

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[8] <https://dineoncampus.com/WWU/dining-halls>

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[9] <https://www.timeanddate.com/sun/usa/bellingham?month=2>

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

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

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

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