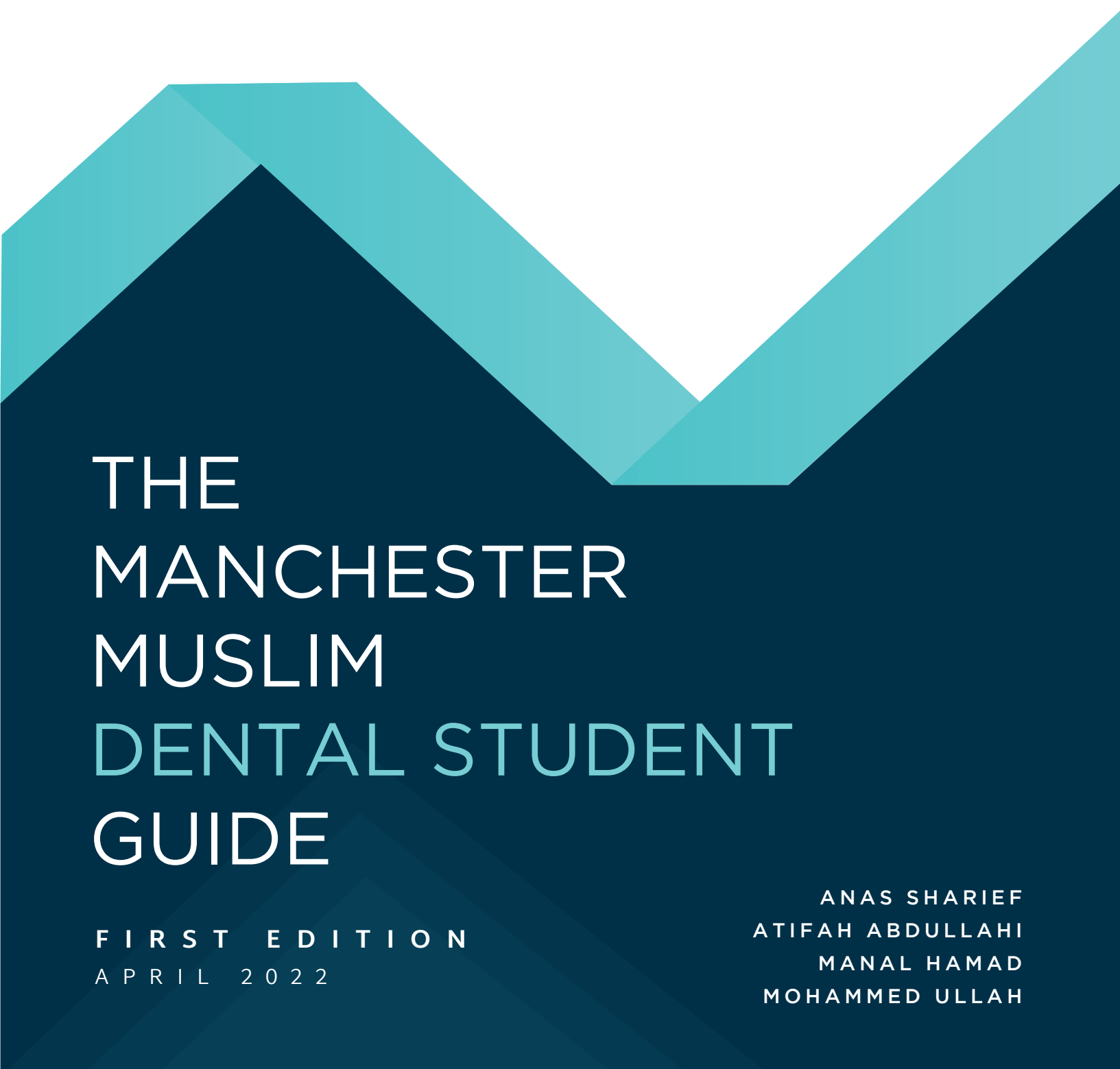


THE MANCHESTER MUSLIM DENTAL STUDENT GUIDE

— *First Edition* —





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FIRST EDITION
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To download a digital copy of this guide, please visit www.manchesterisoc.com.

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Contents

Introduction	02
Starting University	03
Accommodation	05
Ṣalāh	08
Daily Prayers	08
Jumu'ah Prayers	10
Prayer Spaces on Campus	12
Islamic Calendar	13
Ramaḍān	13
Eid	15
Clinical Environment	16
Ḥijāb and Modesty	16
The Beard and Fit-Testing	17
Islamophobia	18
Wellbeing	20
Conclusion	22

Introduction

In the name of Allāh: the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful, the Healer, and the Maintainer of Life

Congratulations on making it to dental school! All those long hours of hard work have paid off! This marks the beginning of a new journey, filled with ups and downs, challenges, and most importantly, new opportunities. These will be some of the best years of your life, and we have created this guide to help you navigate through them.

We know that coming to university can be a daunting experience, and as a Muslim dental student you may face certain challenges related to your faith.

This guide is written **for** dental students **by** dental students. It aims to help Muslim students by offering some practical tips, advice, and answers to frequently asked questions.

Our colleagues, Dr. Wafa Kashbour and Dr. Rebecca Craven, have reviewed the content to ensure that it is a useful and accurate resource to help you during your journey through dental school. This project has been overseen and approved by Chaplain Mohammed Ullah and Prof. Nikolaos Silikas, so that the guide can be referenced by students as a source of authority to aid in resolving any issues that they may face.

We hope this guide will empower you as Muslim students, both undergraduates and postgraduates, and give you the support you need to overcome any issues you may face due to your faith during your time at dental school.

May Allāh SWT bless your journey through dental school and allow it to be a means of benefit for you in this world and the next.

Starting University

'Freshers week' is one of the most exciting times of the year, with so much to do and so many new people to meet. It's always nice to be able to attend the freshers events with your fellow course-mates and explore the freshers fair to see what's in store for you.

However, many of the events organised for first-year students often involve alcohol or take place in environments that can be uncomfortable for Muslim students.

Here are some common questions Muslim students may ask at the start of dental school:

"My coursemates are all going to a Freshers Pub Crawl and have invited me to come along! I don't want to go because of the alcohol and the club environment. What should I do?"

Don't feel that you have to take part in anything you're uncomfortable with – in this case, just explain to them that you can't take part due to your religious beliefs. You can also speak to your EBL tutor, academic advisor, or student pastoral support services – all of whom can support you – in person or over e-mail.

Moreover, there is no harm in suggesting alternative ways to meet up with friends and colleagues, such as getting together at coffee shops or restaurants. You will be pleasantly surprised at how accommodating people can be.

"So, are there any alternative freshers events on campus?"

Definitely! Other societies on campus host a variety of events: for example, the UoM Islamic Society runs many Muslim-friendly events during freshers week and throughout the year. From educational classes to social/sports link-ups, and food crawls to theme park trips, there's always something to do – so come along; it's a great place to make new friends!

For the latest events, be sure to check out their website at www.manchesterisoc.com, as well as their Facebook and Instagram page [@manchesterisoc](https://www.instagram.com/manchesterisoc)!

Meeting new people and making friends

University can be a daunting experience at first, but making friends is a lot easier than it seems. Here's some tried and tested suggestions for how you can meet new people:

- **Join Facebook/WhatsApp groups for your course, accommodation, or societies.** These group chats tend to be set up before starting the course and will help you get acquainted with those you'll be studying with.
- **Sit with people in your lectures and start up a conversation.** This might seem scary, but it really does work – just introduce yourself to the person next to you – you might end up becoming friends!
- **Go out with people after EBL or your other classes.** Invite people to get coffee/food, go to the library, or even just on a walk together!
- **Join societies.** During 'Freshers' Week', societies put on a range of events and stalls. This is a fantastic way to meet people you might not have otherwise met from other courses.
- **Volunteering.** There's a range of societies that offer volunteering opportunities in addition to organisations in the local community. This is a chance to do good deeds while expanding your social circle.
- **Get a job.** A part-time job is a nice way to meet people you wouldn't normally have the chance to – just make sure you'll be able to maintain a balance with your studies!
- **If you live in halls, speak to your flatmates and neighbours.**
- **Host a gathering.** Invite people to your accommodation and tell them they're welcome to bring their own friends – this is a really good way to network and meet new people!
- **Most importantly, don't isolate yourself from people!** Remember, everyone is in the same boat – finding your people might take some time, but when you do, it'll be amazing!

Accommodation

Moving into new accommodation can be a very exciting experience for any student! This may be your first time moving away from home or living with strangers, so it's important to set your boundaries and expectations from the beginning.

“Will I be able to make any requests regarding the accommodation that I will be allocated?”

After submitting your student accommodation application form, you can email accommodation@manchester.ac.uk to request to be allocated to a 'lifestyle moderated area'. These are areas provided by the university where students have requested to adopt a moderated lifestyle in respect of alcohol, parties, noise, etc. The University cannot guarantee a permanently quiet or alcohol-free environment, but, by grouping like-minded people together, it is hoped that they can at least provide a 'space' where a moderate lifestyle might flourish.

“Are there any alternatives to university provided accommodation?”

Private accommodation is also another option for students to consider. Although it may be more expensive in some cases, this alternative can be suitable for students who are unable to secure university provided accommodation, students that are looking for a wider range of facilities, or students that would like to be able to select their roommates. The UoM Islamic Society Facebook page or WhatsApp groupchats can be good places to meet potential roommates.

“I have been placed into a mixed gendered flat for the year. Is there anything I can do to switch to a same-gendered flat?”

There are currently no single-gendered halls available at the University of Manchester. However, you can request a single gender flat using the email above. Please note, though, that there is no guarantee that you will be able to get one.

“I’m extremely uncomfortable being in the accommodation I have been allocated. Is there anything I can do to switch halls?”

To switch halls, visit www.accommodation.manchester.ac.uk/current/here/info and scroll down to the ‘Transfer Between Halls’ section where all the relevant information can be found. For issues that are unable to be resolved through the website, email the accommodation manager for more help.

“I’ve moved into catered halls and I don’t know if they can provide me with halal food.”

In halls, halal food can be provided if you order it before arrival. It's a bit frustrating sometimes having to ask for it every time, but gradually the staff will get to know your face and should be ready with your dish as you get there. All catered halls provide Halal food. If you have any issues, make sure you raise it with the accommodation manager, and if necessary, email the head of catering to resolve any issues at alison.shedlock@manchester.ac.uk.

“I’m really worried that my flatmates are going to be messy, or that they’re going to contaminate our shared kitchen spaces with pork and alcohol.”

This can be an awkward conversation to have, but trust us, every Muslim living in halls has gone through this! Try approaching your flatmates in a friendly manner, explaining to them that you don’t feel comfortable with alcohol/pork being left on the shared food preparation spaces, and that it's important for them to thoroughly clean all the equipment they’ve used. Most students are helpful in preventing cross-contamination between halal and haram foods by using sealed containers, different cooking utensils, foil on the grill pan, etc. Additionally, ask if you can section off a part of the fridge for your use only. If you don’t feel comfortable, then check your halls of residence guidance on bringing your own fridge to your room!

When moving into halls, bring your own plates, cutlery, cups, pans, and cleaning equipment (e.g., sponges, scrubbers). If your halls come with cleaning staff, it can be helpful to talk to staff who clean the shared living spaces about the importance of not cross-contaminating dirty plates/utensils and your kitchen items, etc., as they are unlikely to know unless you speak to them!

“My flatmates only want to socialise in an environment that I am not comfortable in (i.e., parties with alcohol, clubbing, etc)!”

It's important to know that you shouldn't ever feel pressured into doing something that you're not comfortable with. At the beginning of your tenancy, it would be advisable to explain to your flatmates how you feel about the nature of these gatherings as early as you can. The majority of non-Muslim students we have encountered tend to respect this decision and will try to make changes to accommodate you. You can always offer alternatives to such environments if you want to get to know your flatmates/neighbours in a better environment – going to a restaurant for a meal or watching a movie are great alternatives!

Also, you don't have to restrict your social group to your flatmates; meeting people in your hall's common room or joining your residence hall's Facebook group is also a way to find like-minded people living in your building.

“I'm worried about where I can pray in my halls and people coming in and out of my room with their shoes on.”

In your accommodation, your room is probably the only suitable place to pray knowing the environment is clean, but you can always ask if there is a designated space. Other students are likely to wear shoes in other parts of the accommodation. If your halls come with cleaning staff, it can be helpful to talk to staff who clean your room and explain that outdoor shoes on your floor can make it unclean for prayer, as they are unlikely to know unless you speak to them.

“Where can I perform ablution in my halls of residence?”

There are unlikely to be low-level sinks in university accommodation, making foot-washing a challenge. If you have ensuite accommodation, this should not present any difficulties; however, if you are living in accommodation with shared bathrooms, you may have to explain to other students that you need to use the hand wash basins for washing feet. Remember, always be considerate and wipe down any excess water, leaving it just as clean as you found it!

For more information about rented and leased properties in Manchester, you can visit www.manchester.ac.uk/study/experience/accommodation, in which the university provides more detailed advice on accommodation.

Ṣalāh

Ṣalāh, the second of the five pillars of Islām, is a form of worship compulsory for all eligible Muslims – five times a day. Wuḍū' (ritual abultion) is a compulsory condition of the prayer. As university students, it's important that we take time out of our day to fulfil this obligation.

The obligatory prayers are performed at specified periods during the day: Fajr (pre-dawn until sunrise), Ṣuhr (after the sun is at the highest point), 'Asr (late afternoon), Maghrib (just after sunset), and 'Ishā' (until midnight).

Religion and belief are protected characteristics in The Equality Act of 2010, which means that although universities tend to be secular, they will still accommodate the needs of their religious students. This includes offering prayer rooms or multi-faith spaces on campus.

Daily Prayers

We understand that timetables can change frequently, especially during clinical years, and it can be hard to observe the five daily prayers.

“How can I make sure that I’m able to pray during teaching sessions?”

Most lessons will not have a set break during the session, or the break may happen at a time not suitable for prayer. These examples can be problematic, especially during the winter months, where the allotted prayer times are shorter and often multiple prayers will have elapsed during your teaching session. For teaching sessions that may have a suitable break in the middle – utilise this break time to make wuḍū' and pray.

Therefore, at the beginning of the semester, we recommend that you email your tutors, explaining your situation and asking for a 5-minute break to pray. The idea of asking directly can be daunting, but you should feel confident knowing that this is an important religious act and, if asked respectfully, the tutor should understand the importance of praying. You should try to take this break to pray at the most appropriate time, ideally one which would cause minimal disruption to the session and your learning, and should do your best to return promptly. ...

... The ideal scenario would be to pray before/after your session in a designated prayer space, so you do not disrupt the session and can maximise your clinical exposure. However, where this would cause a considerable delay in returning to your lesson, you may decide to use a nearby unoccupied room. In this situation, you must ensure that there are no upcoming bookings for this room and that there aren't any staff/students intending to use the space while you pray.

“How can I make sure I don’t miss praying on time during an afternoon clinic?”

The solution to this will depend on the nature and location of your session. Leaving to pray during the middle of a session can be difficult if you are treating patients, as you will not be able to leave in the middle of a patient’s treatment or consultation. In this case, you should still do your best to be efficient with your time before/during/after your sessions to ensure that you both pray and attend your session. However, if there is a chance to step out for a 5-minute break between patients, or patient cancels, then this may be a good opportunity to ask your tutor if you can excuse yourself to go pray. Do not feel intimidated to ask, as people often step out between patients for a coffee or bathroom break; just be sure that you have asked your tutor, that you are not disrupting the session, and that you return promptly.

Aerosol Generating Procedure (AGP) clinics pose another dilemma regarding prayers, as you are not permitted to leave the room until the fallow time is over, as doing so poses infection control issues. These clinics are now more common due to COVID-19 regulations; however, as the NHS SOPs become eased, this should be a less common occurrence and students will be able to operate normally, which will mean that you may be able to follow the tips mentioned above. In the meantime, we recommend doing things like setting up your bay and speaking to your tutor as early as possible (or even before the start of the session) so that you can pop out to pray before it is time to bring the patient in. Alternatively, clear your bay and write your notes efficiently to ensure you can leave early/on time. If appropriate, you can even pray as soon as fallow time is over (providing the patient has left) and then returning promptly afterwards to write up your notes and clean down your bay.

“I’ve been asked by a patient if there is a place to pray. Where can they go?”

There is a prayer room on the 2nd floor of the Dental Hospital, just opposite the student common room. Patients are allowed to use this room to pray, however, they must be always accompanied by a student/member of staff while they are in the staff area of the building. If there is an appropriate time during the appointment for someone to take them, then the patient may pray there. Alternatively, refer to the ‘Prayer Spaces on Campus’ section of this guide for other places the patient can go to pray.

Jumu'ah Prayers

The Jumu'ah (Friday) prayer is obligatory for Muslims to attend in congregation on Fridays; it replaces Dhuhr and consists of a sermon followed by a shortened prayer. The time may vary slightly throughout the year, but it usually takes place around midday. The Jumu'ah prayer is very important for Muslims, so it can be difficult to navigate when there are timetable clashes.

"O believers! When the call to prayer is made on Friday, then hasten to the remembrance of Allāh and leave off your business. That is best for you, if only you knew." [Qur'ān, 62:9]

"I'm concerned that next semester/year, I will be scheduled to have a session that clashes with the Jumu'ah prayer. Is there anything I can do about this?"

It is very important that you notify the dental school about this via email, requesting that they make your Friday afternoon available so you can attend the Jumu'ah prayer. If you are yet to start university, make sure you email the dental school as soon as you receive your acceptance letter. For students currently at university, make sure you email your year group administrator regarding your upcoming year's timetable. We strongly advise that you do this before the end of your current academic year, thereby giving enough time for the dental school to organise their schedules.

These requests can be made for variety reasons, including work or sporting commitments, so do not hesitate to request for this to be facilitated for your Jumu'ah prayers. You can use the email template at the end of this section to submit your request to the allocated year group lead and administrator at the dental school. It is important that they are made aware in advance of the publication of student timetables to avoid any issues with rescheduling.

"I've only just noticed that I have a timetabled session that clashes with Jumu'ah prayers. What should I do now?"

Email your year group administrator as soon as you can and inform them that you have Jumu'ah prayers at this particular time. Ask them whether your timetable can be amended to accommodate the prayer. This issue can sometimes be resolved if the admin team has enough advance notice. For example, you may be able to attend the same session at a different time/day, or swap sessions with another student. Alternatively, depending on the timings, it may be acceptable to inform your session lead that you will be slightly late to the session (if appropriate).

“I’m in the Dental Hospital before and after Jumu’ah prayers. Is there anywhere on campus where I can pray in congregation?”

The McDougall Prayer Hall is a 5-minute walk away from the Dental Hospital and holds two Jumu’ah prayers every week. You are able to check the prayer times online (www.manchesterisoc.com) to see if either of the congregations will be offered during your break time. Alternatively, there are various local masājīd that offer Friday prayers at differing times. It’s worth checking out their websites or notice boards, to see which would be most suitable for yourself. There is also a small prayer room within the Dental Hospital that can accommodate a few people, so it’s possible to organise your own congregation.

Jumu’ah Email Template

Send this email to your year group administrator.

Good morning/afternoon,

I hope you are well.

I am emailing you about the “timetabled session”, which I have scheduled for Fridays at “time”. Unfortunately, this will make it difficult for me to attend the Jumu’ah prayer, which is an important religious commitment. Therefore, I would be grateful for your assistance with organising a solution which would allow me to attend both the Jumu’ah prayer and the teaching session I have been allocated.

Many thanks,

We hope these templates will be helpful. Remember, the most important thing with faith-related issues and concerns is to speak up about them to the right people, in the right way, at the right time.

If you face any issues then CC the University Muslim Chaplain (mohammed.ullah@manchester.ac.uk) into the email, as he will be able to support you.

Prayer Spaces on Campus



McDougall Prayer Hall

Burlington St, Manchester, M15 6WP

Number 91 on campus map



Cavendish Prayer Room

All Saints Building, Manchester, M15 6BH



Alliance Manchester Business School

Second Floor - Room 2.014

Number 29 on campus map



Coupland Building 3

First Floor - Room 1.105

Number 47 on campus map



Ellen Wilkinson Building

Second Floor - Room 2.30Z

Number 77 on campus map



Engineering Building A

Ground Floor - Welfare Room

Number 24 on campus map



Stopford Building

Third Floor - Room 3.400

Number 79 on campus map



St. Peter's House Chaplaincy

First Floor - Chaplaincy Quiet Room

Number 32 on campus map



University Dental Hospital of Manchester

Second Floor - Multi-Faith & Prayer Room

Number 41 on campus map



University of Manchester Students' Union

Second Floor - Faith Space

Number 68 on campus map

Map Legend



Main UoM
Prayer Hall



Main MMU
Prayer Room



Extra UoM
Prayer Room

Islamic Calendar

The Islamic Calendar, known as the Hijrī Calendar, commemorates the migration of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH from Mecca to Medina in 622 CE. It is used by Muslims around the world to determine the dates of religious events and observances. It is a lunar calendar, which means that the exact day that these events fall on is contingent on a sighting of the moon. These dates will shift annually in comparison to the Gregorian calendar, as the lunar year is around 11 days shorter than the solar year.

Ramaḍān

Ramaḍān is one of the holiest months in the Islamic calendar; it is a month of fasting and refraining from eating and drinking. It is a time that Muslims look forward to and seek to develop themselves in a time of reflection and self-purification. Fasting during Ramaḍān is one of the pillars of the faith and an obligation for all Muslims (with some exceptions), and it is therefore a really important part of a Muslim's calendar.

“O, Believers! Fasting is prescribed for you – as it was for those before you – so perhaps you will become mindful of Allāh.” [Qur’ān, 2:183]

“I really want to make the most out of Ramaḍān through worship and prayer, but university takes up a lot of time. How do I strike that balance?”

This is a common question among students and those who have to go to work during Ramaḍān. Allāh swt says, **“Once the prayer is over, disperse throughout the land and seek the bounty of Allāh. And remember Allāh often so you may be successful.” [Qur’ān 62:10]**

Seeking the bounty of Allāh SWT means seeking a livelihood. There is a balance in Islam between spirituality and work/study – the two are not mutually exclusive.

You can make the intention for your studying and time at university to be a form of worship, and hopefully, it will count as such because you're studying and learning to earn a living as well as to improve the lives of others.

Quick tips for students during Ramaḍān

Fasting from dawn till dusk and attending late-night tarāwīḥ prayers can pose difficulties for students when spending long hours at university. Have a read of our top tips on how to cope in Ramaḍān:

- Be aware when Ramaḍān is approaching and let your tutor know that you will be fasting.
- Maintain good sleeping habits: having a nap when you come back from university is a good energy booster.
- Ask your tutor if there is a quiet and private space nearby in which you can pray.
- If you have an exam or a long session coming up in the day, make sure that you conserve your energy in the morning and avoid any laborious activities.
- Be sure to drink plenty during the night, so that you don't get dehydrated while you are at university or during clinics.
- During suḥūr, the meal eaten before the fast starts, eat healthy foods that will provide you with energy throughout the day.
- Avoid overeating at iḥṭār, the meal eaten to break the fast, so that you do not feel bloated.
- If you find that your individual health is being compromised or affecting your patients' quality of care, consult the Muslim Chaplain for some support.
- If you are ill, pregnant, or travelling far distances you should seek advice before fasting from knowledgeable Muslim leaders.

Eid

There are two Eids in Islām: Eid al-Fitr, which is a three-day celebration; and Eid al-Aḍḥā, the greater Eid, which is a four-day celebration.

Eid al-Fitr falls on the first day after the end of the month of Ramaḍān, and the day of Eid-ul-Aḍḥā follows the completion of the annual Ḥajj pilgrimage.

The Eid celebrations are key dates in the Islamic calendar, forming a major part of the Muslim identity, and are the highlight of the year.

“Eid is coming up – can I take a time off to celebrate?”

The dental school has a procedure for applying for additional leave. The regulations will have been discussed at your induction, but are also accessible on the blackboard site throughout the year. This guidance will be under the ‘Information’ tab, in the ‘Applying for a Day Off’ folder.

When taking time off for Eid al-Fitr, the procedure is as follows. Once the date of the month of Ramaḍān is known, you must fill in the form as soon as possible (available on blackboard), notifying the school of the two potential dates that Eid may land on. For example, if Ramaḍān is announced for the 1st of March, we know Eid will definitely fall on either the 30th or the 31st of March, so you will need to include those two days on the form.

However, if those 2 days fall on a weekend, then you do not need to complete the form. If only one of the days fall within a clinical or teaching day, then you should still fill the form in as a precaution.

For Eid al-Aḍḥā, the procedure is similar, but you should notify the school as soon as the date of Dhū al-Ḥijjah is announced.

This will account for your absences at the university sessions that you have been scheduled, but it is also good practice to email your tutor to notify them and explain why you will be absent.

If you have any clinical commitments, you will need to go to the helpdesk in the Dental Hospital and ask for your patients’ appointments to be rescheduled. This will need to be done as soon as you are aware of the dates that Eid may fall on.

Clinical Environment

Hijāb and Modesty

The Hijāb is an obligation from Allāh SWT. Therefore, for dental students who wear the Hijāb, it is important for them to navigate the challenges that can arise in clinical environments without feeling like they need to compromise on their values.

It is important to be aware that NHS Trust guidelines state that you can wear the Hijāb in a clinical environment, as long as it is a new Hijāb that has been washed at 60 degrees celsius.

“I’m worried about having to be ‘Bare Below the Elbows’ in clinical environments. What should I do?”

This is a very common issue faced when in the clinical environment. Each trust will have its own dress code policy, however, it is important to know what the NHS advises. The NHS England Guidance (released in April 2020) clearly states that “Uniforms may include provision for sleeves that can be full length when staff are not engaged in direct patient care activity”. Therefore, if you are asked to roll up your sleeves when you’re in the clinic reading patient notes or engaged in other non-patient activities, then explain the above guidelines to them.

However, in line with national guidelines, you will need to roll up your sleeves when directly caring for patients. Understandably, this can still be a compromising issue and we suggest that in this situation you use disposable sleeves. During any procedure, you should ensure that these are covering your wrists to your elbows. They should be worn in the same way as disposable gloves; put them on in the patient area, immediately dispose of them after each patient, and replace them before the next patient interaction. In the Dental Hospital, there are disposable sleeves that you can collect at the dispensary. If you feel uncomfortable due to the translucency of the sleeves, then you can use multiple sleeves.

Long sleeve tops are allowed under scrubs, as long as you roll up the sleeves when in directly caring for patients. Make sure that any full or three-quarter length sleeves are not loose or dangling – they must be able to be rolled back and kept securely in place during hand-washing and direct patient care.

The Beard and Fit-Testing

Maintaining a beard is a religious obligation for Muslim men and is part of the prophetic tradition. There are issues that can arise in the clinical environment, particularly relating to fit-testing, that may challenge these Islamic values. We want to assure dental students that there are alternatives to shaving off your beard.

“I’ve got an AGP session coming up and need to be fit-tested in order to take part. What should I do?”

Fit-testing is a mask fitting procedure that requires a clean shave so that a tight seal can be formed to prevent leakage of contaminated air. This is especially important when dealing with Aerosol-Generating Procedures (AGPs). This can be an issue for Muslim students, as facial hair prevents the formation of a tight seal. In addition, there are a variety of AGP sessions that a dental student must partake in, such as restorative clinics, paediatrics, outreach placement, side surgeries, etc.

The Dental Hospital has made accommodations for students and staff who wish to observe these religious obligations by providing access to respiratory hoods for clinical sessions. These hoods can be worn as a replacement for an FFP3 mask during AGP sessions. At the beginning of the academic year, if you require a hood for your sessions, you should let the dental school know, and you will be supplied with an individual mask for the hood. You must bring this mask with you to each AGP session that you attend.

In order to be allocated a hood to use on the day of your session, you must email the restorative clinical lead for that day – ideally a week in advance. There are a limited number of hoods, so please ensure that you have arranged to use one prior to your session. Hoods are stored in the room next to the clinical skills facility, and when collecting the hood on the day, you must get the keys for the room from the dispensary (with the permission of the clinical lead). When you take the hood, check that all the parts and batteries are functioning before locking the room behind you. Once you are finished, wipe down the hood and return it. Please also ensure that you put the batteries on charge before returning the keys to the dispensary. Do take care of the equipment and ensure it is clean and ready for the next user.

If you are unsure about whether your clinical session/placement will require being fit-tested, then it is best to contact the staff member listed on your timetable to ask them beforehand so you can come to the session prepared and be able to take part. If you have an extra session or are nursing for someone, please ensure that the necessary arrangements have been made for yourself or your nurse in advance.

Islamophobia

“What can Islamophobia actually look like in a clinical setting?”

In our conversations at university or clinics, it can be tricky to tell whether questions about our faith are asked out of genuine curiosity or are an indirect attempt to offend and belittle us.

Genuine questions, even if they seem surprising or bizarre at first, can turn into really healthy and open conversations about certain topics relating to your faith. It can be a good way to tackle misconceptions and educate others about your beliefs and practices.

However, if you are being singled out and are getting asked what your viewpoints are regarding the conflicts in the Middle East, or if an aspect of your faith is being belittled (beard, headscarf, topi, etc.), that is **not** okay. This is discrimination. Even if the perpetrator did not mean to offend you, if you feel like you're being put in a vulnerable position and feel hostility towards you or your beliefs, then please do speak up about it!

“Somebody at my accomodation/on campus has made a racist or Islamophobic comment towards me. What can be done?”

The University has measures in place to combat any form of discrimination on university premises. It is really important to speak to someone about any incidents that have taken place. For more information, see the reporting Islamophobia section below.

“What reporting procedures are there?”

There are various reporting procedures available for students:

Speak to the University Muslim Chaplain

Our university is very fortunate to have a Muslim Chaplain, Mohammed Ullah, whom you can speak to about any issues you may be having with your faith, well-being, academics, and more related topics. To reach out you can email him at **mohammed.ullah@manchester.ac.uk**.

Report and Support

This is an initiative, whereby you can report acts of hate, harassment, and discrimination – either anonymously or by speaking confidentially to an advisor, who will talk you through the various options you have. You can access it at **www.reportandsupport.manchester.ac.uk**.

Submitting a Concern

This University procedure allows students to report another student or staff member within 40 days of an incident occurring. This is a two-stage process, the first being an informal stage in which you email an informal concern to your Student Support staff, writing about the incidents that have occurred and the possible outcomes you wish to see. If you aren't happy with the outcome of your informal complaint, or wish to take things further, you can go to the formal stage. Again, please contact your Student Support staff, who will follow their concerns. In extreme circumstances, you may wish to complete an official complaint form with the university. You will have to write about the incidents that have occurred, the steps you took to resolve it informally, why the response to the informal complaint was unsatisfactory, and what outcomes you wish to see. You can access more information here:

www.manchesterstudentsunion.com/academic-advice/student-complaints-procedure

www.regulations.manchester.ac.uk/academic/regulation-xvii-student-complaints-procedure

UoM Dental Inclusion

This is a student-led initiative that focuses on inclusivity and seeks to make the dental school a place where all students can feel welcome and participate fully. Any discrimination within the dental school is a major issue we would all want to address. So, if you have a concern on a local dental level, and are uncomfortable sharing this with a member of staff, then there is a group of student colleagues with whom you can share your concerns. They are there to support you in dealing with your concern, and can help you escalate this further through the relevant avenues. You can contact them by email at **uom.dental.inclusion@gmail.com**.

Wellbeing

Support and Wellbeing

The University of Manchester Dental School takes its academic and pastoral support of students very seriously.

All students will have an annual check-up meeting with their year lead, and a meeting each semester with their EBL tutor, in which they will discuss how their year has been, as well raising any problems that they may be facing, whether they are academic, financial, emotional, etc.

We recognise that adapting to university life and living away from home is challenging, and that being a dental student can be stressful – knowing where to start can be overwhelming. The university has a Student Services team that is available to help students with day-to-day concerns. You can find support for whatever challenge you're facing - whether it's your mental health, your studies, money, housing, relationships, or any other concern at **www.studentsupport.manchester.ac.uk**.

If you're feeling persistently sad, demotivated, or anxious, please reach out to someone! Sometimes it can be easy to think we are just being lazy, but if such feelings persist, you might need to seek support and talk to someone – even if that just means venting to friends and family about how you're feeling.

Always remember, if things are really difficult for you, there are options – you can speak confidentially to your EBL tutor, senior tutor, or year lead about ways to improve things for you. You can also reach out to mental health services at the university for additional support or book an appointment with your GP.

There is a common misunderstanding that having a mental health condition or to be struggling with difficult emotions is a sign of weakness. This is totally wrong. Our services and staff are here to support you through the programme. It is an important professional responsibility that you look after yourself and your health in all aspects, so please utilise these services that are there to help.

The dental school has a dedicated Student Experience Officer who focuses on student pastoral support. If you have any wellbeing issues, you can email her at **teresa.m.smith@manchester.ac.uk**.

Disciplinary Procedures

We hope that students do not have to go through any disciplinary procedures while at the dental school. However, every year a number of students attend the School Fitness to Practice Panel. If this happens to you, then remember, **you are not alone!** Reach out for support – the quicker you can reach out the better – and you will be guided throughout the process. The most important thing to remember is that the panel is trying to find out more about the issues that you face and explore ways to help you. The panel comprises of senior academic staff who are experienced in addressing issues and will be able to suggest the next course of action. Remember to prepare for the panel meeting and maintain a polite and professional approach throughout it.

Mental Health Support

The University of Manchester offers a variety of services that can support you with mental health issues. Here are some contacts below:

Counselling Service - www.counsellingservice.manchester.ac.uk

Chaplaincy - mohammed.ullah@manchester.ac.uk

External Services - Muslim Youth Helpline is a helpline service for young Muslims, offering support and signposting seven days a week (4pm –10pm) by phone, WhatsApp, webchat, and email. It is free and confidential - www.myh.org.uk

Please be assured that these agencies are separate from the dental school and you can speak freely, knowing that anything you tell them is kept confidential.

Concerns for Others

If you are concerned about a fellow student, please encourage them to use one of the above contacts to get help, and talk to a member of the student support team to alert them about the student.

Conclusion

So, there you have it, the first edition of **The Manchester Muslim Dental Student Guide**! We hope that the content covered in this guide has provided you with solutions and practical advice to make your experiences easy during your time at dental school.

You may have noticed a theme throughout this guide – proactiveness. As Muslims, we need to be confident enough to speak up for ourselves and ask for support when we need it. In most cases, reasonable adjustments can easily be made. Even in situations in which there may not currently be a solution, it is our responsibility to make sure that our voices are heard, so that these issues can be identified and tackled.

We appreciate that additional issues may arise that haven't been covered by this guide. If they do, please get in touch using the contact information found throughout the guide.

Lastly, we pray that this guide highlights that being a **Muslim** and a **dental student** are **not mutually exclusive**. Rather, we should be confident of our Muslim identity, remembering that **Allāh SWT has promised that He will always facilitate a way for us, inshā'Allāh!**



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