

27 July 2017

Dr Matthew Offord MP
House of Commons
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Dear Dr Offord MP,

Parliamentary Question 1731: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what guidance her Department has published to ensure examination bodies take a flexible approach when religious observance prevents candidates from taking exams on particular dates

Nick Gibb MP, Minister for Schools Standards, has asked Ofqual to respond to you directly regarding your recent parliamentary question. A copy of this response will be placed in the House of Commons library.

The timetabling of exams is a matter for the exam boards and is coordinated by their representative body, the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ). JCQ have published the principles used when developing the exam timetable: <https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/key-dates-and-timetables/construction-of-the-common-timetable%E2%80%93gce-and-gcse-qualifications>. These include that exam boards 'take account of religious festivals, where appropriate.'

JCQ confirms that decisions on exam scheduling take account of a range of issues so the timetable is as fair as possible for all pupils. The exam timetable each year is finalised a year ahead, and is the result of consultation with stakeholders, including religious groups. The summer 2017 exam timetable was finalised in May 2016 following consultation with exam boards and stakeholders.

As I am sure you will appreciate, students must take their exams at the published time, to make sure exam papers remain secure and that exams are fair for all.

Yours sincerely,



Sally Collier
Chief Regulator