Dear CODOS Members

Per the request from some of you, I have written some of ideas for helping with creating a framework for thinking about Ramadan accommodations.

One option may be for faculty to allow for a range of submission times for exams. As it appears, all exams will have to be submitted electronically and therefore it may be helpful to think about reasonable accommodations as follows:

1.) Having options for exam submission deadlines (some students participating in Ramadan may prefer to do their exams at night after they have eaten a full meal, had their coffee and hydrated sufficiently; others may prefer early in the morning before they become lethargic) and therefore allowing students to select from two or three time options (i.e. the deadline being 11am, 5pm or 1am) seems reasonable.

2.) Giving students the option of an extension in time or date. For instance, if the normal exam submission date is Friday May 8th, perhaps an extension for Sunday May 9 would be reasonable for students participating in Ramadan. Or if the time deadline is 5pm, allow for a 12-hour extension for students participating in Ramadan so that its 5am.

3.) Eliminate any east coast time requirements so that in both cases above, the time is based on the students own respective time zone.

Specifically for graduate students in professional schools, like law school where exams on the computer screen involve hours of writing and proper hydration is required because of the mental exhaustion, having the option to do the exam in the middle of the night or early morning (like 5 or 6am) is extremely helpful for some students. This may involve changing the deadline time in the computer system itself.

Furthermore, giving students the chance to declare via a simple Google doc application of whether they will participate in Ramadan, may help provide an idea of exactly how many students would need the accommodations.

Finally, Ramadan tasks each person differently but in general, I have found that people who fast have two kinds of experiences:

1.) Some have hard mornings because they stay up all night and sleep around 5am. They wake up around 10 or 11 and start their day. If they are normally used to caffeine, they have headaches during the day so this makes concentration and focus on screens difficult until they are able to break their fast and get caffeine. Usually after about an hour after fast breaking, they are good and ready to go but this means they will be up for most of the night, and sleep for most of the day. In short, they become nocturnal for Ramadan.
2.) Other people break their fast, eat and pray and then sleep for a bit. They wake up pre-dawn for the Ramadan meal, pray and sleep for a bit and may wake up at 9 and start their day. So they end up with less sleep more than one sleep session and over time this catches up with them. In short, these folks end up being sleepy for days on end, even if they are awake. Their normal function is impaired slightly on account of long-term fatigue.

In general, what I'm getting at is that when thinking about Ramadan's impact and how to balance the right accommodations that meet institutional requirements for exams along with student needs, the Rosetta Stone approach that I have found most helpful is to give the students options and let them choose, with the caveat that they are bound to stick with their choice and that they are only offered the accommodations based on participation in Ramadan. I have found that once you set a precedence for accommodations in one year, it will remain in the minds of students and expect for it to be applied the following year, so craft the accommodations with a long-term precedence in mind.

I hope this helps and my apologies for the lengthiness.

Best

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