

210



**THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY**  
(International) in the United Kingdom  
Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations

# 2016 PROSPECTUS





## DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

**We are delighted that you are considering applying for the MA in Muslim Cultures at the Aga Khan University's Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations (ISMC). You will be part of a dynamic cohort of students on a two-year academic journey, led by a world-class faculty.**

There is a growing awareness of the need to focus on the common humanity shared by the world's citizens, collectively recognising and embracing that common humanity requires a sustained and reflective engagement with what is unfamiliar. Within this context, the Institute provides a space for a full and free dialogue.

The MA programme will equip you with new knowledge and the necessary intellectual, analytical and leadership skills to be able to make a meaningful and positive contribution to society.

For many of our students, the choice to continue their education to a higher level is about widening perspective and increasing opportunities. Our prospectus will help you decide whether ISMC is an interesting prospect. Please do visit our website to find out more about the opportunities and challenges we have to offer.

*Your time at ISMC will shape and develop you, informing your thinking and understanding about all aspects of Muslim societies."*

**David Taylor**

*Director, Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations*



## WHO WE ARE

Based in London, the Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations (ISMC) is part of the Aga Khan University, a private university that promotes human welfare through research, teaching and community services.

ISMC's mandate is to illuminate the historical and contemporary aspects of Muslim societies and to create a platform for fresh thinking about their futures through research, publications, public events and an interdisciplinary master's degree that attracts students from around the world to its London campus.

Based on the principles of quality, access, impact and relevance, the University has campuses and programmes in South Asia, the Middle East, Europe and Africa. Through its needs-blind admissions policy, the University offers the most promising leaders and thinkers of tomorrow the opportunity to serve and the skills to help communities solve their most pressing challenges.



## WHY ISMC?

**An MA from ISMC will give you the competitive edge in your chosen field. Our students graduate with knowledge and experience that equips them for a diverse range of future options, including postgraduate study and careers in government, development, policy and leadership.**

ISMC is committed to strengthening research and teaching about the heritage of Muslim societies, looking specifically at how this can be applied in a contemporary context.

Our approach is multi-faceted and applies a framework of world cultures, humanities and social sciences.

Research at ISMC focuses on issues that remain relatively unexplored within Muslim contexts, bringing together scholars from around the world through its workshops, conferences and fellowships programme.

ISMC publications focus on discovering fresh ways of thinking about Muslim civilisations by bringing together a broad spectrum of analysis and insight from the wider academic community and mainstream media.

### ***Funding***

ISMC offers generous financial assistance to all students who are admitted to the programme. Applicants should check the **[aku.edu/ismc](https://aku.edu/ismc)** for up-to-date information and application form.



## WHERE WE ARE: *London*

### *Academic*

As a postgraduate student in London you will benefit from world-class facilities on your doorstep. ISMC is minutes away from the British Library, the British Museum and many universities, including the School of Oriental and Asian Studies and the University of Central London, Birkbeck and University of London. Our own library is home to many rare manuscripts as well as all the supporting texts and multi-media facilities you will need for your studies.



### *Base*

You will be based in the centre of London on Euston Road. Your accommodation is in the heart of King's Cross, a 10-minute walk away from the University and at the hub of London's transport network with easy access to the UK and Europe on your doorstep.

### *Culture*

London offers the opportunity to experience world-class culture. Among the many highlights are The Tate, the National Galleries, the Victoria and Albert Museum, hundreds of theatres and music venues. Our new student halls of residence in King's Cross are a five-minute walk from Kings Place, a live-music and performance space and home of the London Sinfonietta, as well as The Place, an international dance venue.

### *Diversity*

It is often said that every nation is represented in London. The city is constantly changing, always exciting and offering new experiences and opportunities.





## OUR APPROACH

### *Teaching and Learning*

**Studying at ISMC centres on an extensive curriculum that ensures students leave us with an excellent knowledge of Muslim cultures and civilisations. Our faculty are engaged in world-leading research and students benefit from their extensive knowledge of their subjects. Within the disciplines of social sciences and humanities our students study a number of subjects including development studies, economics, political science, art, architecture, history, literature, comparative religion and law.**

In the first year, students are introduced to theories and concepts of historiography, epistemology, anthropology, sociology, cultural studies and the philosophy of language. A highlight of the first year is a four-week language immersion programme abroad helping students to deepen their knowledge and understanding of another language, typically Arabic or

Persian. The trip comes at the end of an intensive year of language learning which offers significant benefits for future career and study options.

Seminars include research methodology, development challenges in a Muslim context as well as law and governance. The first year also includes study and research towards a dissertation requirement which offers students the opportunity to incorporate field work into their chosen subject. Our faculty take advantage of the enormous range of opportunities on offer in London to stretch and challenge our students who are strongly encouraged to attend lectures, discussions and performances which will enhance their learning and understanding. And the Institute's own programme of events held throughout the year offer themed and one-off opportunities to hear a range of international academics, scholars and experts in their field.





## *Programme Structure*

The MA in Muslim Cultures is a two-year programme which consists of a number of different elements: core and elective courses, a field-based language immersion programme, a leadership skills programme and fieldwork which contributes to a dissertation.

Courses are grouped into five components:

- Introduction to the Humanities and Social Sciences
- Muslim Heritages as Part of World Cultures
- Contemporary Muslim Contexts
- Methodologies
- Languages

During the two-year MA Programme, students must complete a total of 24 courses, consisting of:

- 15 core courses
- 6 language courses
- 3 electives

Students are also required to complete a language immersion programme and a leadership skills programme.

During their second year, students prepare a dissertation of up to 20,000 words on a theme of their choice.

In general, assessment is based on presentations, written assignments and examinations. Passing the dissertation is a prerequisite for graduation from the MA Programme.



# YEAR 1

## TERM 1

### *Core courses*

- Introduction to the Humanities and Social Sciences
- Writing in the Humanities
- Sacred Across Cultures
- Classical Arabic I or Persian/Turkish I

## TERM 2

### *Core courses*

- Late Antiquity
- History of the Qur'an in Classical and Contemporary Scholarship
- Renaissance, Enlightenment and the Advent of Modernity
- Classical Arabic II or Persian/Turkish II

## TERM 3

### *Core courses*

- Formation of Muslim Thought: Theology and Law
- Muslim Responses to Modernity and Post-Modern Theories
- Muslim Cultures in the 14th to 18th Centuries
- Classical Arabic III or Persian/Turkish III

# YEAR 2

TERM 1	<p><b><i>Core courses</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Development Challenges in Muslim Contexts</li> <li>■ Research Methodology and Dissertation Planning I</li> <li>■ Classical Arabic IV or Persian/Turkish IV</li> </ul>	<p><b><i>Elective courses</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Muslim Reformers in India in the 18th and 19th Centuries</li> <li>■ Religion, Law and Society in Muslim Contexts</li> <li>■ Paths in Sufism - Past and Present</li> </ul>
TERM 2	<p><b><i>Core courses</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Themes in Muslim Arts and Architecture in the Contemporary Period</li> <li>■ Gender, Nation and Muslim Identities</li> <li>■ Classical Arabic V or Persian/Turkish V</li> </ul>	<p><b><i>Elective courses</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Globalisation, Poverty and Development</li> <li>■ Migration and Diasporas</li> </ul>
TERM 3	<p><b><i>Core courses</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Trends in Modern and Contemporary Literature</li> <li>■ Research Methodology and Dissertation Planning II</li> <li>■ Classical Arabic VI or Persian/Turkish VI</li> </ul>	<p><b><i>Elective courses</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Muslims in Western Contexts</li> <li>■ Traditions and Change in Sub-Saharan Africa</li> <li>■ Historiography of the Nation</li> </ul>

In-depth course descriptions are available online



## *Languages*

This compulsory component seeks to familiarise students with Arabic or, in the case of Arabic-speaking students, another language spoken by Muslims (Persian or Turkish). This emphasis on languages will enable students to familiarise themselves with foundational sources such as the Qur'an, collections of hadith and works on exegesis, theology, law, philosophy and science. It is also a window to other material related to Muslim cultures in various parts of the world.

## *Language Immersion Programme*

During the summer term of their first year, students travel to a country relevant to their language studies to undertake a compulsory three-week intensive language course and complete a language-based assignment.

This important feature of the MA Programme exposes students to cultures, communities and ways of life different from their own. It allows students to experience language in its social and lived dimensions while furthering their understanding of diversity and pluralism.



## ***Leadership Skills Programme***

The primary objective of this training is to start a process of integrating students' learning in the development of leadership skills congruent with today's fast-paced, multi-cultural organisational requirements.

## ***Dissertation and Fieldwork***

Students must submit their dissertation by the second Friday in September. The maximum length of the dissertation is 20,000 words including table of contents and bibliography/references but excluding the appendices. The dissertation is worth 15 credits and students must achieve a pass mark in order to graduate. Dissertations are marked by two internal markers and an external examiner.

During the second summer of the MA Programme students may undertake an optional four-week field project. Students' field projects will focus on an area of their interest and constitute the research component of their dissertation. Faculty support and input is available for students to develop their ideas.



## THE FUTURE IS HERE

### *New library – world-class resources including rare and ancient manuscripts*

Our brand new joint library has a unique collection of works on Islamic studies and Muslim civilisations. A leading centre and repository for rare and significant resources, the library holds close to 41,000 items on all facets of Muslim cultures and tradition in several European, Asian and Middle Eastern languages, including English, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Urdu, Gujarati, Sindhi, Tajik, Arabic, Persian, Turkish and Ottoman Turkish including 560 titles in its rare book collection.

In addition to the rare book collection, the library has also benefitted from donations of personal collections and papers of prestigious scholars in the field of Islamic studies. Some of these special collections, such as the collection of Annemarie Schimmel, are housed in separate locations, while others have been integrated with the library's general collections.

With more than 1,400 items, the reference collection is the library's second largest compilation after the general collection, holding a range of single and multi-volume reference works on Islamic studies. The library subscribes to a range of online databases and e-journals specialising in the humanities and social sciences to provide students and scholars with electronic and remote access to important resources.









## BRAND NEW ACCOMMODATION IN THE HEART OF KING'S CROSS

### *Welcome to our brand new accommodation*

ISMC students now benefit from brand new purpose-built accommodation. Spacious rooms with en-suite bathrooms, well-equipped, airy kitchen and eating areas and comfortable chill-out spaces for relaxation and study come together to make up some of London's highest-quality student accommodation. Each bedroom is equipped with a bed, table, desk and wardrobe. Feel free to bring your personal items to make it your own.

Student accommodation is organised by the Registrar's Office and students are strongly advised to finalise arrangements with the office before arriving in the UK. All first-year students in receipt of financial assistance are expected to live in University accommodation and in the second year, subject to approval by the Director, students may be able to live in alternative accommodation.



Illustration only



## FACULTY AND RESEARCH

### *Faculty*

#### SARAH BOWEN SAVANT

*Associate Professor*

Specialising in Early Islam; the Study of Religion; Historiography; Late Antique Iran and Iraq; Prophetic biography.

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#### GIANLUCA PAROLIN

*Associate Professor*

Specialising in Comparative Law, Regional Governance and Constitutional Arrangements, Citizenship in the Arab World, Maslahah and Maqasid al-Shari'ah, Fiqh al-Aqalliyyat.

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#### STEPHANE PRADINES

*Associate Professor*

Specialising in Islamic Art and Archaeology; Swahili Coast and Archaeology in Sub-Saharan Africa; Egypt and Urban Archaeology in Cairo; Muslim Fortifications.

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#### KATHRYN SPELLMAN-POOTS

*Associate Professor (On temporary leave)*

Specialising in Muslims in the UK; Muslims in Western Societies; Women and Gender in MENA; Diasporic Studies and Transnational Migration; Iranian Diaspora; Gender and Religious Practices in Contemporary Libyan Society.

#### JEFF TAN

*Associate Professor*

Specialising in Development Studies; Malaysian Political Economy; Privatisation, Entrepreneurship and Innovation; Late Industrialisation; Developmental State Theories; Governance and Corruption.

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#### DAVID TAYLOR

*Director and Associate Professor*

Specialising in Indian nationalism; Indian political thought; right-wing political movements in India; mass media and politics in India; Islam and politics in Pakistan.

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#### PHILIP WOOD

*Associate Professor*

Specialising in Christian Orient; Late Antiquity; Syriac; Hagiography and Historiography; Ethnogenesis and Communalism; History of the Caliphate; Diaspora; Migration; Religious Minorities in Modern Syria and Iraq.

## *Visiting Lecturers*

SHABNAM-MIR AFZALI

KEYA ANJARIA

JAVIERA ATENAS

ANA BARANDALLA

EMINE CAKIR

HADI ENAYAT

MURRAY LAST

LUAY MOHAMMAD

WAELODEH

FARID PANJWANI

ALI PAYA

FAROUK TOPAN

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## STUDENT LIFE

**Before the start of their first academic year, students participate in a week-long orientation programme. This essential preparatory week familiarises students with both the Institute's and London's academic resources, and offers an introduction to the cultural attractions of the city. Students have the opportunity to meet the Institute's faculty and staff and the Institute also organises social activities and tours, including excursions to nearby places of historical interest.**

To live in London for two years is to experience one of the greatest cities in the world. Your accommodation in King's Cross places you in the very centre of the city and ensures that your travel costs should be minimal.

London boasts world-class shopping opportunities for every budget and for every occasion. Our great department stores, Selfridges, John Lewis, Harrods and Harvey Nichols, offer a luxury experience while vibrant markets from Camden and Portobello to Whitechapel and Petticoat Lane offer bargains and colour. Hundreds of countries are represented in London and each has developed their own shops and restaurants ensuring that a taste of home is never far away.



### *Registrar's Office*

The Registrar's Office deals with all matters related to student life such as admissions, advisory services, visas, counselling, extra-curricular activities, accommodation, health, special needs, and student and alumni records.

### *Faculty Advisors*

Each student is assigned a faculty advisor. Students are encouraged to consult their advisor for support and guidance on academic matters.

### *Careers Advice*

ISMC works hard to create opportunities for students to network with people and organisations where job openings or internships may exist.

### *Alumni*

Our alumni are working in a wide range of careers including development and studying for PhDs in universities across the world. The Aga Khan University Alumni Association is a powerful and influential networking association and our alumni automatically become members.





## HOW TO APPLY

### *Eligibility*

To be considered for admission to the MA Programme, applicants are required to hold the following:

- 1** An undergraduate degree (equivalent to a UK bachelor's degree), from an accredited/recognised university, preferably in the humanities or social sciences.
- 2** Evidence of English language proficiency.
  - *A valid IELTS (Academic) result – Overall band score: 6.5 (with a minimum of 5.5 in all four components). Both overall and individual component requirement must be met. Please note that we only accept IELTS results from test centres approved by UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI). For more information, please visit the UKVI website. Please note that without a valid and approved IELTS test result, we will not be able to consider your application.*
  - *An applicant is deemed to have met the language requirement if they are a national of one of the following countries: Antigua and Barbuda, Australia, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Canada, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, New Zealand, St Kitts and Nevis, St Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, the United Kingdom and the United States of America.*

AKU-ISMC uses the UK NARIC database to determine the equivalency of international qualifications. If you are not sure about the equivalency of your qualifications, you are encouraged to contact the Assistant Registrar, ISMC before making an application.



## *Admission Procedures*

The application deadline is 29 February 2016 for the September 2016 intake. Candidates wishing to apply for the MA in Muslim Cultures must provide the following:

- 1** A completed application form.
- 2** A personal statement, describing their reasons for wishing to enrol in the programme.
- 3** An official copy of their undergraduate degree and attested copies of academic transcripts. (If a document is not in English a fully certified translation must be provided. The translation must include details of the translator and confirm that it is an accurate translation of the original. It must be dated and include the original signature of the translator).
- 4** Valid proof of English proficiency i.e. UKVI Approved IELTS.
- 5** Two references, submitted either directly to the Registrar's office (via email or courier) or along with the application in a sealed envelope(s) with the referee's signature across the seal. Referees must be familiar with your academic and/ or professional work to date. At least one referee should be familiar with your academic work. If your referees would like to submit the reference letter via email, please download the reference form, fill in your details and request your referees to send it directly to Registrar's office at [ismc.registraroffice@aku.edu](mailto:ismc.registraroffice@aku.edu)

## *Further Information*

For further information regarding the MA in Muslim Cultures please contact the Registrar's Office: email: [ismc.ma@aku.edu](mailto:ismc.ma@aku.edu)



## SELECTION

Admission to ISMC is based on merit and a scholarly aptitude. ISMC seeks to admit students of the highest potential. Students are selected for admission without regard to their age, marital status, race, gender, ethnic origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability, social background or any other distinction. All shortlisted candidates will be invited for an interview (candidates living outside the UK will be interviewed via Skype or video conference) and may be asked to write a short essay.

### ***Tuition Fees***

The annual tuition fee for the academic year beginning September 2016 is £11,710. In cases where a student withdraws from the MA Programme, tuition for the entire term will be charged. Alternatively, students may pay their fees in four instalments of £2,927.50.

### ***Financial Assistance***

Through its Financial Assistance Programme, the University ensures that no individual is denied entry because of inability to pay tuition, living expenses and other costs.

Assistance will be provided through loans or scholarships to supplement personal resources. This is based upon the evaluation of a student's need from financial data provided. Unless otherwise stated, every student is expected to make some contribution towards fees, accommodation or subsistence.

### ***Scholarships***

For information on funding opportunities specifically for international students, please see the following: [www.scholarships.net](http://www.scholarships.net).

Applicants will be required to demonstrate:

- Informed views about contemporary issues in Muslim societies.
- A strong interest in the humanities and social sciences and in the study of Muslim cultures and societies.
- An ability to articulate clearly and analyse complex intellectual concepts.
- Applicants are also assessed through several other criteria including scholastic achievement, work experience (if applicable), academic interests, referees and extra-curricular activities.
- The decision of the University is final.





## NOTES

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Hazel Thompson - page 4 and page 8

Sohail Merchant - page 12

The Aleppo Room, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin - Museum für Islamische Kunst – page 27

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