

PROSPECTUS

THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY

(International) in the United Kingdom Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations

2022

www.aku.edu/ismc

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Blue Mosque, Tabriz, Iran

WELCOME

Professor Leif Stenberg Dean, Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations

The Aga Khan University's Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations (AKU-ISMC) is unique. As part of the international Aga Khan University, which is itself part of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), we act as a bridge between Europe and the Global South. The Institute is intentionally located in London, a thriving multicultural city and therefore a hub for intellectual exchange between scholars from around the world. Our mission statement is ambitious and requires everyone within the AKU-ISMC community to think creatively and cooperatively about how to address the complex challenges facing the world, both now and in the future.

Here at AKU-ISMC, we carry out excellent research on the contemporary and historical aspects of Muslim societies. Every faculty member is research active and brings that scholarly dedication into their student interactions. We aim to nurture our students' intellectual development, allowing them to become genuine members of our research community. At AKU-ISMC, they are not just the recipients of lectures and seminars, they are the life blood, the very essence, of the Institute.

We are committed to fostering a welcoming and productive environment for everyone at AKU-ISMC, particularly our students. We have a prize-winning campus building, student accommodation with dedicated study spaces, an excellent library, and world-class academic facilities at your fingertips. Our tight-knit student community offers a unique opportunity to grow and develop, both intellectually and personally.

I look forward to welcoming you in person.

Professor Stephen Lyon

Head of Educational Programmes, Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations

The global pandemic has challenged AKU-ISMC in some interesting ways. When we all went into lockdown and began working from home, I am sure that most people were anxious and uncertain about how we could maintain the close relationships that are the bedrock of the MA in Muslim Cultures. Our programme is built on getting to know our students and letting them know us and our research. Could we replicate the depth of interactions that we had relied on in our teaching in online platforms? It was a demanding year for all of us, but one of the things we have learned is that online sociality is real. Humans can develop meaningful relationships through computer mediated communication.

As we emerge from the lockdown and begin to forge those face-to-face relationships that have historically dominated our interactions with students, we have learned of the importance of human connectedness. We are social creatures, and we thrive when we interact and exchange with others. We believe that this experience has enriched our teaching and proven that we can act and react effectively to foster an excellent learning environment in which our students thrive. We remain as committed as ever to the AKU mission and enabling our students to become the champions of that mission in every walk of life.

I very much look forward to continually adapting our teaching and learning environment to allow our students to grow and develop holistically in ways that prepare them for the rich and diverse careers they go on to pursue.

ABOUT US

Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations

Established in 2002, AKU-ISMC addresses fundamental challenges of the human condition as they are expressed across the diverse societies of the Muslim world and their diasporas. Offering an interdisciplinary Master of Arts in Muslim Culture that attracts students from around the world to its London campus, AKU-ISMC explores the diverse histories of Muslim societies, as well as new paths and possibilities in a time of change, challenge and opportunity.

London offers the ideal location for the Institute, with its international flavour; excellent cultural scene, both historic and contemporary; thriving arts and academic communities; and as a city in which freedom of thought and expression are encouraged.

AKU-ISMC is a member of the Knowledge Quarter, which is a partnership of over 100 – and growing – academic, cultural, research, scientific and media organisations. These organisations are actively engaged in the advancement and dissemination of knowledge and are within a one-mile radius of King's Cross. They include the University of London, Google, The Crick Institute and The Guardian.

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The Aga Khan University

Established in 1983, AKU is a unique hybrid: an institution of academic excellence that is also an agent for social development. The University has campuses and programmes in South Asia, Europe and Africa. The University operates on the core principles of impact, quality, relevance and access, and prepares its students to lead change in their societies and to thrive in the global economy.

RESEARCH

Research is at the heart of what AKU-ISMC does, both for faculty and students. In its 2020 Strategy, AKU-ISMC identified five priority areas of excellence for the next five years which represent not only areas of existing excellence, but are also pillars of the wider goals of AKDN:

Governance: We investigate who has a voice in decision-making, the processes by which decisions are made and who is ultimately accountable for the consequences of those decisions and their implementation.

Digital Humanities: We partner historical and literary expertise with computer science as we push the boundaries of what can be done with big data in the humanities. Our Digital Humanities research priority demands global partnerships to re-examine data in ways that were unimaginable even a generation ago.

Historiography: We investigate how accounts of the past are not simply records of fact, but also interventions. We ask how educational institutions, museums, media organisations and proponents of heritage use history today to shape loyalties and senses of belonging and whose interests these identities serve.

Muslim Cultures in the Indian Ocean: For us, the Indian Ocean is a centre, not a periphery, for the understanding of Muslim cultures since the sea was a link historically between cities, ports and peoples in the Middle East, Africa and Asia. We support the protection, conservation and heritage management of Indian Ocean cultures, and focus in our research on texts, objects, sites and monuments.

Arts and Popular Culture: We explore the possibilities and limits of human imagination, whether in high or mass-mediated popular culture. Creativity can be understood in relation to wider social, economic or consumer culture contexts.



MA IN MUSLIM CULTURES

The programme at AKU-ISMC provides expert insight and understanding of Muslim cultures and civilisations, both contemporaneously and historically. Our programme develops the skills to engage critically with challenges facing Muslim societies. Our teaching is student-centred and our academics seek to enhance student learning through a diverse approach that applies a framework of world cultures, humanities and social sciences to Muslim contexts.

Part-Time Study

The MA in Muslim Cultures can be studied on a part-time basis. Part-time students take between 6 and 9 credits each semester. One MA course is normally equal to 3 credits, so this means part-time students take either 2 or 3 courses per semester. They must complete their degree within 6 years to be awarded the MA in Muslim Cultures. Only applicants who already hold the right to study in the UK can be considered for part-time study on the MA. Students opting for part-time study pay tuition fees based on the number of credits they choose to study each semester.

I have always been aware of the fact that Islam is much more than a religion, and AKU-ISMC has provided me with the opportunity to understand this further and truly contributed to my intellectual perspective. I have learned a lot from the faculty who are experts in various interesting fields, ranging from history to architecture.

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Talha Murat, AKU-ISMC Student

AKU-ISMC & COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY DUAL DEGREE PARTNERSHIP

This Dual Degree Partnership with Columbia University's Middle East Institute brings together two of the world's leading institutions for the study of Muslim cultures and civilisations, enabling exciting academic exchange between both institutions' faculty and providing an opportunity for students to learn from some of the world's leading scholars in their fields. The vision is to create an Islamic Studies degree for the 21st Century. The Dual Degree pathway is approximately a two and a half-year commitment. Students will spend Part 1 of the programme at Columbia University in the City of New York and Part 2 at AKU-ISMC in London and receive degrees from both institutions. Immersed in the vibrant intellectual communities of two of the world's great cities, graduates will be prepared for a wide range of careers in government, journalism, public policy, international development and academia.



MEET THE FACULTY

Language Teachers

Luay Mohammed (Arabic) Ehsan Solaimani (Persian)



Sevgi Adak Assistant Professor

Women and gender in modern Turkey; women's history and contemporary feminisms in the Middle East; Turkish politics; history of modern Turkey; politics of secularism in Turkey; state–society relations in the Middle East.



Sanaa Alimia Assistant Professor Migration in modern South Asia; surveillance; governance and population control in the modern Muslim world.



Alex Bellem Language Programme Coordinator and Assistant Professor

Comparative and theoretical phonology; phonetics; Middle Eastern languages; Arabic dialects.



Walid Ghali Head Librarian and Associate Professor Islamic manuscripts tradition and codicology; teaching introduction to Sufism; Islamic poetry; the Quran in Muslim life.



Stephen Lyon Head of Educational Programmes and Professor of Anthropology Political anthropology; Pakistan and Pakistani diaspora; computational methods; conflict; kinship.



Jonas Otterbeck

Head of Research and Professor of Islamic Studies Islamic studies; youth culture; gender; Muslims in Europe; migration; culture studies.



Gianluca Parolin Professor of Law

Comparative law; regional governance and constitutional arrangements; citizenship in the Arab world; maslahah and maqasid al-Shari'ah; fiqh al-aqalliyyat.



Stéphane Pradines Professor of Islamic Art and Architecture

Islamic art and archaeology; Swahili coast and archaeology in Sub-Saharan Africa; Egypt and urban archaeology in Cairo; Muslim fortifications.



Sarah Bowen Savant Professor of History

Early Islam; the study of religion; historiography; late antique Iran and Iraq; prophetic biography; digital humanities.



Leif Stenberg Dean and Professor of Islamic Studies

Islam and modern science; various aspects of contemporary Sufism; Muslims in Europe; Islamic movements; questions concerning theory and method in the study of Islam.



Jeff Tan Associate Professor

Development studies; Malaysian political economy; privatisation; entrepreneurship and innovation; late industrialisation; developmental state theories; governance and corruption.



Philip Wood Professor of History

Christian Orient; late antiquity; Syriac; hagiography and historiography; ethnogenesis and communalism; history of the caliphate; diaspora; migration; religious minorities in modern Syria and Iraq.



TEACHING & LEARNING

At AKU-ISMC, you will cover an extensive curriculum ensuring that you leave us with an excellent knowledge of Muslim cultures and civilisations. Our faculty are engaged in world-leading research and you will have the opportunity to benefit from their extensive knowledge of their subjects. Within the disciplines of social sciences and humanities, you will be introduced to general theories and concepts. You will also study a number of subjects including development studies, economics, political science, art, architecture, history, literature, comparative religion and law within Muslim contexts.

Our faculty take advantage of the enormous range of opportunities on offer in London to stretch and challenge our students, and you are strongly encouraged to attend lectures, discussions and performances which will enhance your learning and understanding.

Structure

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The MA in Muslim Cultures offers core and elective courses as well as fieldwork opportunities that might take place in collaboration with AKDN, which can contribute to your thesis.

Our courses offer you the chance to engage with interdisciplinary approaches to the study of Muslim Cultures. We offer courses that draw on social sciences and humanities disciplines including anthropology, archaeology, gender studies, history, international relations, political science as well as religious studies.

The research methods courses provide critical knowledge and skills that not only equip you to produce high quality original research theses, but also enhance your employability and opportunities to pursue further research studies at the doctoral level.

MA in Muslim Cultures

Core Courses

Semester 1

Muslim Societies in a Changing World
Research Methods in the Social Sciences and Humanities I
Arabic or Persian

Elective Courses

Late Antiquity

- Gender and Sexuality in the Middle East
- Religion, Law and Society in Muslim Contexts
- Development Challenges in Muslim Contexts
- Paths in Sufism
- Islam and Creativity
- Authority and Legitimacy in Islamic History
- Art and Architecture in Muslim Cultures
- Religion, Politics and the State in the Middle East
- The Politics of Modern Muslim Mobility
- International Relations: Race, Racism and Power
- One Hundred Years of Islamic Family Law Reform
- The Islamicate World 2.0: Studying Islamic Cultures through Computational Textual Analysis

Note: The elective courses might vary from one year to another and not all of them will necessarily be offered every year.

Students take a total of 24 credits of coursework + 6 credits of thesis Semester 1: 9 credits core courses + 3 credits from the elective course list Semester 2: 6 credits core courses + 6 credits from the elective course list Coursework is composed of 15 core credits + 9 elective credits + 6 credits of thesis

Semester 2

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Research Methods in the Social

Sciences and Humanities II

Arabic or Persian

Semester 3

Thesis

Language Programme

During the summer after completion of the first two semesters, you have the option to travel to a country relevant to your language studies to undertake a three to four-week intensive language course and complete a language-based assignment. This option exposes you to cultures, communities and ways of life different from those with which you may be more familiar. The aim is to offer an experience of language in its social and lived dimensions while furthering understanding and appreciation of diversity and pluralism.

Thesis and Fieldwork

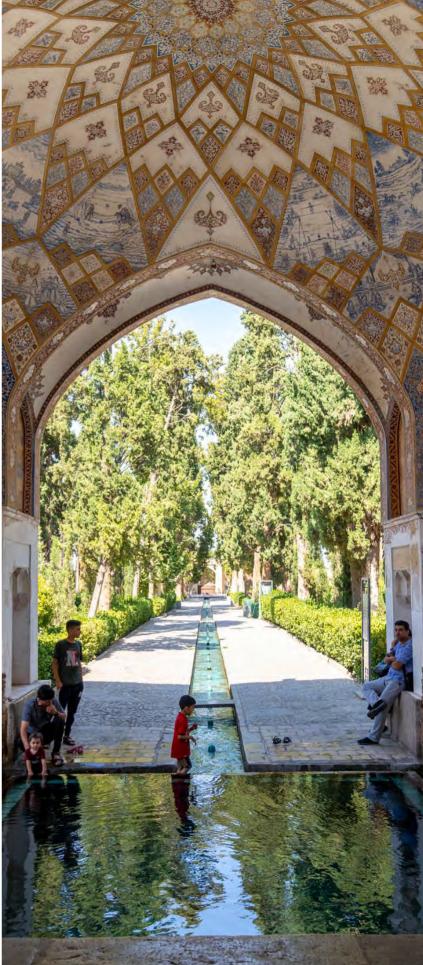
In the third semester, you prepare a 20,000-word thesis on a theme of your choice. The thesis is worth 6 credits and you must achieve a pass mark in order to graduate. This may include an optional field project in a relevant location. Theses are independently marked by two internal markers and moderated by an external examiner. You are assigned a thesis supervisor after the first semester of the programme. Supervisors and students work closely together to develop and revise the research design and carry out the project.

Assessment

AKU-ISMC prides itself on innovative assessment mechanisms. We integrate presentations, written assignments, examinations, group and individual work, quizzes, posters and practical techniques, which you undertake during the first two semesters. Passing the thesis is a prerequisite for graduation from the MA programme. You will also be provided with feedback on your progress by our course convenors and your faculty advisor.

IT Facilities

The Aga Khan Centre is equipped with excellent IT facilities. Most teaching rooms have interactive white boards, projectors and drop screens. AKU-ISMC offers a state-of-the-art blended learning environment that capitalises on collaborative communication technologies. Students who do not have a satisfactory laptop computer are supported through an interest-free loan scheme.



Support

While studying with us you can access support and help if you need it. We know that moving into a new environment and being away from home can be a challenge and AKU-ISMC offers a wide range of support and guidance designed to help you settle in.

If you need more professional guidance, then you can speak to your assigned faculty advisor who will give you support and offer advice on your academic and research matters. AKU-ISMC students are also entitled to access the Westminster Counselling Service.

Your Voice Matters

The Student Council: The Council meets twice in every semester and is co-chaired by the Head of Educational Programmes and an elected student representative.

AKU-ISMC students' voices and opinions matter to us. As an AKU-ISMC student you will have the chance to share your views through:

• Electing two student representatives to attend the regularly scheduled Student Council meetings.

• One of the Student Council Representative is appointed as a member of the Education Committee. The Education Committee oversees curriculum development and manages teaching delivery at AKU-ISMC.

Course evaluations provide an opportunity for you to feed into the future direction of the programme and help to achieve the best quality of education and academic excellence.

AGA KHAN LIBRARY

The Aga Khan Library holds over 100,000 print and electronic titles focusing on Muslim civilisations and their diasporas around the world, as well as a broad range of research topics. The Library has materials on the study of Muslim minorities, Shia in general and the Ismailis in particular, and a unique collection which includes books in English and several other European, Asian and Middle Eastern languages.

The Library has developed the Aga Khan Library Digital Collections platform to facilitate online access to its rare collections that comprise thousands of manuscripts, out-of-print publications and maps produced across the Muslim world. Beyond written texts, the Library has built up a collection of documentary and feature films covering a wide range of themes and regions and a collection of audio recordings of religious and popular music from all over the Muslim world. The Library has three dedicated subject librarians to provide expert guidance to help students and scholars with their research. It is also a member of Jisc Library Hub Discover, a network of academic and research libraries in the United Kingdom and Ireland; and through its partnership with OCLC, has made its holdings available in WorldCat, an international library catalogue.

STUDENT LIFE

London

AKU-ISMC is located in the heart of London. This means that you are able to enjoy and experience the various cultural attractions this big city offers. Our campus is surrounded by libraries, universities, theatres, museums, restaurants, shops, parks and much more. It is also a few minutes away from the British Library and the British Museum, two of our Knowledge Quarter partners. Your accommodation is in walking distance of the Aga Khan Centre and many educational opportunities and entertainments, minimising your travel costs.

Events and Short Courses

AKU-ISMC hosts a number of events and short courses throughout the year that are open to the public, academics, professionals, and our students and alumni.

Recent activities have included a discussion on "Numerals and Their Alternatives in the Middle East and Europe", an online exhibition entitled "Black Monuments Matter" and online short courses series on Muslim cultures and societies. This is in addition to a joint lecture series coproduced by the Aga Khan University's Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations, Aga Khan Trust for Culture, Aga Khan Agency for Habitat and Aga Khan Museum.

We also have many special public talks with distinguished academics and non-academics in which students are given the opportunity to meet with guest speakers



VICTORIA HALL, KING'S CROSS

Our student residence, Victoria Hall, in the heart of King's Cross is an 11-storey building designed by award-winning London-based architects Stanton Williams. Within the building you will find stylish communal spaces, which include a gym, reading room, meeting and A/V room and a lounge area. These spaces allow for regular art classes, film nights and other activities put on for residents to give them the opportunity to meet other students and relax.

In addition, a courtyard and roof terrace, inspired by the gardens of the Maghreb and Andalucía add to the design of the building and the space available to residents. These gardens reflect richness and diversity of students who come from around the world, speak multiple languages and have different cultures, and of the cosmopolitan city of London; a place that allows you to experience a worldclass culture, where both tradition and modernity meet.





AGA KHAN CENTRE

AKU-ISMC is housed in the Aga Khan Centre in King's Cross, London. The centre is a place for education, knowledge, cultural exchange and insight into Muslim civilisations. The building is designed to represent the values of openness, dialogue and respect for different viewpoints (pluralism). The organisations that are located here work together to bridge the gap in understanding about Muslim cultures and to connect the public to global development issues.

A key feature of the Aga Khan Centre is a series of six Islamic gardens that reflect approaches to landscape architecture from different regions of the Muslim world and the great diversity of cultures.

Around AKU-ISMC

Surrounding your accommodation and the academic building are the green spaces, shops, restaurants and bars of King's Cross, offering café society, cinemas, fitness facilities and events for you to enjoy.

In addition to access to the Aga Khan Library, which is rich in rare and important resources, you are eligible to apply for membership of the British Library.

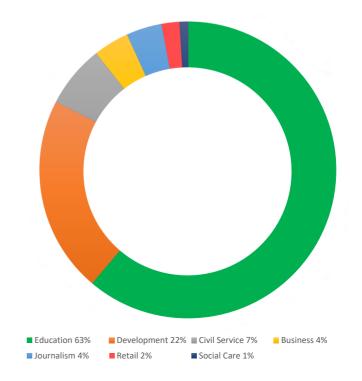


AFTER AKU-ISMC

AKU-ISMC's MA programme is a truly global qualification, which opens doors to many different career paths. Our alumni work and study around the world, including Tunisia, USA, Egypt, Canada, Pakistan and UK.

Our graduates are a diverse group and are now following careers in journalism, teaching and business, working for national and international organisations and NGOs, including AKDN.

Some graduates choose to pursue further studies and have entered establishments such as the University of Oxford and Harvard University. Many go on to pursue an academic career, teaching in universities and continuing their own research into specific areas of expertise.



Coming to AKU-ISMC has been one of the defining moments of my life. Well-designed courses, new and collaborative projects and more importantly a really congenial atmosphere that opened up a new horizon of opportunities for me.

Ayşe Gökçen Yücel, AKU-ISMC Alumna



In order to be considered for admission to our MA programme, you are required to have the following:

1. An undergraduate degree (equivalent to a UK bachelor's degree), from a university accredited/recognised by UK ENIC, preferably in the humanities or social sciences.

- 2. English Proficiency Requirement:
- IELTS for UKVI (Academic) Overall band score: 6.5 (with a minimum of 5.5 in all four components). The IELTS for UKVI (Academic) Test can be booked online at: https://ieltsukvises.bntishcouncil.org. PTE Academic UKVI is also accepted. You must achieve a level of CEFR B2, which for PTE Academic UKVI is a score of 59.
- In accordance with UK visa rules, the Institute exempts candidates from the IELTS for UKVI test, if they have completed their undergraduate studies in a majority English-speaking country. Such candidates will be required to submit a UK ENIC Statement of Comparability, which can be obtained by going to the UK NARIC website:

If you are not sure about the equivalency of your qualifications, you are encouraged to contact the AKU-ISMC Programme Administrator: ismc.admissions@aku.edu before making an application.

APPLYING TO AKU-ISMC

HOW TO APPLY

Admission Procedures

Applications for admission are welcome twice per year. Admission decision process is as follows:

- Spring Applications (April June)
- Applicants who have the right to study in the UK already, can apply for full or part-time study in the spring (April June), for entry in the following September.
- Autumn Applications (October January)
- Applicants who require a student visa can apply for full-time study in the autumn application window
 (October - January) for entry in the following September.
- Applicants who have the right to study in the UK already, can apply for full or part-time study.
- Part-time students can begin either in September or January.
- Full-time students must begin their programme of study in September.

To apply for the MA in Muslim Cultures, you must complete the application form online by clicking on the following link: www.aku.edu/apply-online.

NOTE: You must complete the online application and upload the necessary documents within the application itself. These include:

1. An official copy of your undergraduate degree and attested copies of academic transcripts. (If a document is not in English a fully certified translation must be uploaded).

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 signature of the translator).

2. Valid proof of English proficiency:

The UK ENIC Statement of Comparability, if your last qualification was awarded in a majority English speaking country, which can be obtained by going to the UK ENIC website: www.enic.org.uk.

Or

Applicants whose last qualification was not awarded in a majority English-speaking country will be required to sit an UKVI Approved IELTS or Pearson exam (pearsonpte.com/ pte-academic-ukvi).

IELTS for UKVI (Academic) tests can be booked by going to: ieltsukvisas.britishcouncil.org.

NOTE: The test MUST be the UKVI-approved IELTS or Pearson exam. You **MUST** submit the proof of satisfactory language proficiency results at the time of application.

ÖZTÜRKLER

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The MA in Muslim Cultures has been a unique and enriching experience for me, and the courses are very engaging. Now that we are coming out of lockdown, I can't wait to have in-person classes, visit the library and attend events. The experience of London itself is quite unparalleled.

Sadiqa Noreen, AKU-ISMC Student

TUITION FEES

Fee Structure for MA in Muslim Cultures		
Particulars	Frequency	(£, GBP)
Security Deposit (refundable)	One time	200
Tuition Fee	Per semester*	1750
Summer Language Immersion Programme	Optional	1200
Accommodation	Weekly	330
NHS Surcharge	Yearly	300

*Tuition Fees: £146.67 per credit (full-time students in 2021-2022 pay £1750/semester for 12 credits).

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Through our Financial Assistance Programme, the University aims to ensure that every student who is made an academic offer can afford the tuition fees, living expenses and other costs associated with pursuing the MA programme. Both full-time and part-time students are eligible to apply for financial assistance, however, only full-time students will be eligible for AKU subsidised housing in Victoria Hall.

Assistance will be provided through loans or scholarships to supplement personal resources and may include subsidised accommodation at Victoria Hall. This is based upon the evaluation of a student's need from financial data provided. Every student is expected to contribute towards fees, accommodation and subsistence.

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WHERE TO FIND US

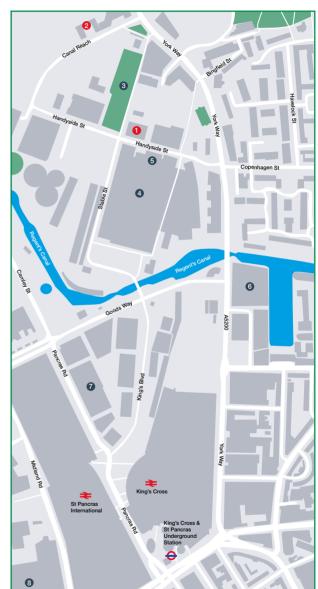
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Overview Map

1 AKU-ISMC, Aga Khan Centre 2 Victoria Hall King's Cross 3 The Guardian Media Group 4 The British Library 5 UCL 6 Lord's Cricket Ground 7 SOAS
8 The British Museum
9 Harrods
10 Big Ben, Westminster
11 The London Eye
12 St Paul's Cathedral
13 The Shard



Local Map

1 AKU-ISMC, Aga Khan Centre

- 2 Victoria Hall
- 3 Lewis Cubitt Park
- 4 University of the Arts, Central St Martins
- 5 Platform Theatre 6 The Guardian Media Group 7 Google UK
- 8 The British Library

Virtual Open Days

Virtual open days are an opportunity for you to speak with faculty members, admissions officers, current students and alumni. We will be holding them throughout the year. Details will be listed on the website as dates are confirmed and if you sign up to our email list, we will contact you to invite you to register.

If you are interested in receiving emails about virtual open days, key dates in the application process and invitations to events – both virtual and on campus – then sign up to our email list at: www.aku.edu/ismc/about/Pages/sign-up-form.aspx.

Special Thanks

To AKU-ISMC students, alumni and the photographers for their valuable contribution to this work.

- Photos by Christopher Wilton-Steer, AKF: P 2, 6, 7, 8, 12, 13, 21 & 24. Find out more about these places at: www.wilton-photography.com.
- Photos by Karim Shallwanee, AKU-ISMC alumnus: P 14 & 25 (in class and AKC).



Website: www.aku.edu/ismc



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QAA Reviewed

Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education