



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

## MASTER OF ARTS IN MUSLIM CULTURES PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION

**Awarding Body:** The Aga Khan University - Karachi, Pakistan

**Teaching Institution:** The Aga Khan University (International) in the United Kingdom (accredited by the British Accreditation Council)

**Final Award:** Master of Arts in Muslim Cultures

**FHEQ Level equivalent:** 7 (M: Masters)

**Total number of credits required:** 90 (25 taught courses and a dissertation, 1 credit is equal to 50 hours of work including independent study)

**Length of programme:** Twenty-four months

**Mode of Study:** Full-time

**Mode of Language:** English

### Overall Aims of the Programme

The overall aim of the Master's Programme is to contribute to the creation of a cadre of intellectuals capable of engaging with contemporary challenges, particularly those faced by Muslims, by enabling them to draw upon modern academic tools, critical thinking, and ethical signposts inspired by their traditions.

Graduates from the Programme will be researchers, able to identify gaps in, and advance current scholarship about Muslim cultures through systematic analysis and who will have the skills to critically engage with the complex challenges faced by Muslim societies in original and creative ways.

The graduates of this Programme will be forward-looking individuals and life-long learners, distinguished by their ethical commitment to humanity, yet fully aware of the importance, as well as, the limitations of their heritages and traditions.

### Programme Outcomes

Develop graduates who:

- utilise the tools of the social sciences and humanities for the advancement of research and scholarship on issues relevant to the study of Muslim histories, cultures and societies;
- are able to undertake, through multiple methodologies, and critique existing research and systematically explore the gaps in scholarship within and about Muslim heritages, cultures and societies;
- have a respect for heritage and the plurality of world cultures, able to think independently, critically and creatively about solutions to complex contemporary challenges facing Muslims and the contexts in which they live, in an ethical and informed manner;
- are empowered facilitators of change within society, who can translate knowledge acquired to varied academic and non-academic audiences, and who are committed to continuous intellectual enquiry and moral reasoning in the areas of concern to Muslim societies and the contemporary world in general.

## **Academic (Intellectual) skills**

- Students should become precise and cautious in their assessment of evidence, understanding through practice what texts can and cannot tell us
- Students should be able to question interpretations, however authoritative, and reassess evidence for themselves
- Students should be able to work accurately and independently in the reading and interpretation of the primary sources of the text
- Students should be able to identify and assess critically core interpretive approaches and methodological assumptions in discussions of all areas of relevant social and cultural phenomena
- Students should be able to conduct independent research in relevant academic fields
- Students should be able to articulate and communicate effectively on topics of relevance to Muslim civilisations
- Students should be able to know the key principles and policy guidelines on research ethics for the social sciences and humanities

## **Practice skills**

- Participate actively in reasoned debate and discussion
- Academic writing
- Data gathering and analysing
- Qualitative research
- Leadership skills
- Organisation and time management skills, cultural and inter-cultural sensitivity
- Study a variety of written and digital material, in libraries and research institutes
- Computer literacy skills for academic purposes e.g. endnotes

## **Teaching and Learning Methods**

- Teaching on the MA programme is firmly student-centred and requires active participation at all stages. This assumes a process of dialogue involving teachers and students as part of a community of enquirers. Students will be exposed to multiple viewpoints and interpretations to help them understand the value of personal engagement and subjectivity in the pursuit of knowledge.
- Class sizes are never more than 20 – 25, and in many cases smaller. The lecturer presents material for class discussion, which then extends to more general concepts and theories, including methodological questions. Students are expected to read extensively and to make presentations to the class. Visual and audio material is included where appropriate to the topic under discussion.
- Language learning courses are taught by mother-tongue speakers with extensive experience of language teaching. Students are expected to develop competence in all four skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing.

## **Assessment**

- Assessment of learning outcomes is conducted in accordance with the guidelines of the AKU Board of Graduate Studies and is based on the principle of ‘assessment for learning’. It has both formative and summative dimensions.
- Within AKU-ISMC, assessment is overseen by the Head of Educational Programmes and the Academic Standards Committee.
- The assessment scheme for each course is formulated by the relevant faculty member and is included in the course outline. Normally it will consist of assessment of class presentations and participation and mid and end-course written assignments or examinations. Students will be provided with ongoing feedback on their progress by their faculty advisors.

- Assessment is overseen by one or more external examiners, whose responsibilities include overall review of the programme and moderation of standards. External examiners have access to all assessed material, i.e. papers, course work and examination scripts. They are expected to provide an annual report to the Institute.

### **Programme Structure**

During the two-year MA Programme, students complete a total of twenty-four taught courses, consisting of fifteen core courses, six language courses and three elective courses. There is also a required language immersion course and leadership skills programme in the first summer. Students devote the summer of their second year to researching and writing a dissertation of up to 20,000 words.

### **Quality Assurance Mechanisms**

- Regular student feedback through component coordinators and HEP
- Student feedback through anonymised course evaluation
- Annual review by external examiners
- Periodic internal and external reviews
- Students' achievements and destinations

Last updated on 17 February 2015