



THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY

(International) in the United Kingdom

Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations



PROSPECTUS

2023



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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. We encourage a diversity of views and opinions, which is why we are located in the heart of London, a city that celebrates plurality and novel thinking.

Our faculty always bring their research interests to the forefront of lectures and seminars, demonstrating their willingness to combine practice with theory and the benefits this commitment brings. This is central to our mission statement, therefore, we constantly engage students in new ideas to stimulate their intellectual development. At AKU-ISMC, our students are not just recipients of teaching, they are the very lifeblood of the Institute.

As ever, we remain dedicated to creating a nurturing learning environment for talented scholars who, through constant engagement with teaching staff, develop in remarkable ways. We have an award winning campus, student accommodation with dedicated study spaces, and a fantastic library. Our learning community is diverse and welcoming, offering students the chance to develop socially, professionally, and intellectually. As a vital part of the Aga Khan University and the Aga Khan Development Network, there are always opportunities for personal development.

I look forward to welcoming you in person.

ABOUT US

Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations

AKU-ISMC was established in 2002 to address fundamental challenges across the diverse societies of the Muslim world and their diasporas. We offer an interdisciplinary Master of Arts in Muslim Culture that attracts students from around the world to our London campus, where we explore the diverse histories and cultures of Muslim societies.

London is an ideal location for the Institute, with its international flavour, dynamic cultural scene, both historic and contemporary. London has thriving arts and academic communities and has long been a city in which freedom of thought and expression are encouraged and protected.

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



The Aga Khan University

AKU was established in 1983 as 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 is at the heart of AKU-ISMC , both for faculty and students. In its 2020-2025 Strategy, AKU-ISMC identified five priority areas of excellence which represent not only areas of existing excellence, but are also pillars of the wider goals of AKDN:

RESEARCH

Governance: We investigate voices in decision-making, the processes by which decisions are made and accountability 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 of 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 all societies. Our teaching is student-focussed and our scholars seek to enhance student learning through diverse approaches that apply humanities and social sciences frameworks to better understand Muslims in social, historical, cultural and political 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.



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My journey at AKU-ISMC has already strengthened my language skills, connected me with professionals in my desired field and challenged me academically. I am originally from a small town in Kentucky, so it has been wonderful to collaborate with students and staff from such diverse cultural and academic backgrounds, as a supplement to my studies.

Elizabeth Turner, AKU-ISMC Student



AKU-ISMC & COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY DUAL DEGREE PARTNERSHIP

The 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, 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 a world class interdisciplinary graduate opportunity in Islam and Muslim cultures for the 21st Century.

The Dual Degree pathway is a two and a half-year commitment. Students spend Part 1 of the programme at Columbia University in New York City and Part 2 at AKU-ISMC in London and upon successful completion of the programme 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
Associate Professor and Head of Research
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; Introduction to Sufism; Islamic poetry; the Quran in Muslim life.



Jonas Otterbeck
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-aqalliyat.



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 and Head of Education and Learning
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, including historical, political, economic and religious institutions, beliefs and contexts. 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 relevant theories and concepts. You will also study a number of subjects including development studies, economics, political science, art, architecture, history, literature, linguistics, comparative religion and law within Muslim contexts.

Throughout the two semesters of coursework, students enhance their research skills through two dedicated courses that include a series of practical workshops that give students first-hand experience in producing, analysing and writing up primary and secondary data. The research skills that students develop at AKU-ISMC are designed not only to help them produce excellent research theses, but also to enhance their career prospects through careful training in transferrable analytical skills. 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

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.



Core Courses

Semester 1:

- Muslim Societies in a Changing World
- Research Methods in the Social Sciences and Humanities I (Concepts and Questions)
- Arabic or Persian

Semester 2:

- Research Methods in the Social Sciences II (Practical Workshops)
- Arabic or Persian

Semester 3:

- Thesis

Elective Courses

- Emperors, Prophets and Caliphs, 500-900
- 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 be offered every year. Also, details of the programme are subject to change.

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.

Language Programme

During the summer after completion of the first two semesters, AKU-ISMC organises a self-funded 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 examiners 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, also, 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.



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I am glad to be a part of the MA programme at AKU-ISMC. One of my favourite subjects is Arabic language because, in addition to the interesting curriculum, students can be creative and write poems, stories, and dialogues in Arabic. This in turn makes the learning experience very exciting!

Meher Bano Mirzayee, AKU-ISMC Student

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 academic 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.

The Vice Provost Student Affairs and Services Advisory Committee

AKU's Registrar's Office has set up 5 committees across all its campuses (Pakistan, UK, Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania). The membership for this committee is composed of one student from each undergraduate and graduate programme in country with at least one member from the final year graduating class, and as applicable, one should be someone who lives in a University hall of residence.

The main objectives of this committee:

1. To provide students an opportunity to discuss matters that will strengthen the quality and breadth of student experience and student wellbeing at AKU.
2. To offer advice and recommendations, while understanding constraints to strengthen the operation of these offices, including programming that impacts students' personal and professional development, wellbeing, and contributes to rich community interaction among AKU students.
3. To suggest opportunities for their personal and professional development.





AGA KHAN LIBRARY

The Aga Khan Library, London, houses an incomparable collection of more than 100,000 modern titles in print and electronic format. These works cover all aspects of Islamic studies, with particular focus on Muslim cultures and their worldwide diasporas and Muslim minorities, the Shia in general and the Ismaili in particular.

The Library has built the Aga Khan Library Digital Collections to facilitate online access to its rare collection that comprises hundreds of manuscripts, out-of-print publications and maps produced across the Muslim world. Beyond written documents, the Library has developed 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 six dedicated librarians to provide expert guidance to students and scholars to navigate the collections and help with their research.



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 entertainment options, 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 included a celebration of our 20th Anniversary which started by honouring the remarkable career of Dr Farouk Topan, a world-renowned expert in Swahili literature. This was followed by an inauguration of our year long 20th Anniversary celebrations and a range of events that reflect on the future direction of AKU-ISMC. Simultaneously, the Governance Programme organised a dialogue series on *Population Surveillance, the Body, and Mobility*. 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 Andalusia add to the design of the building and the space available to residents. These gardens reflect the 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 world-class 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.

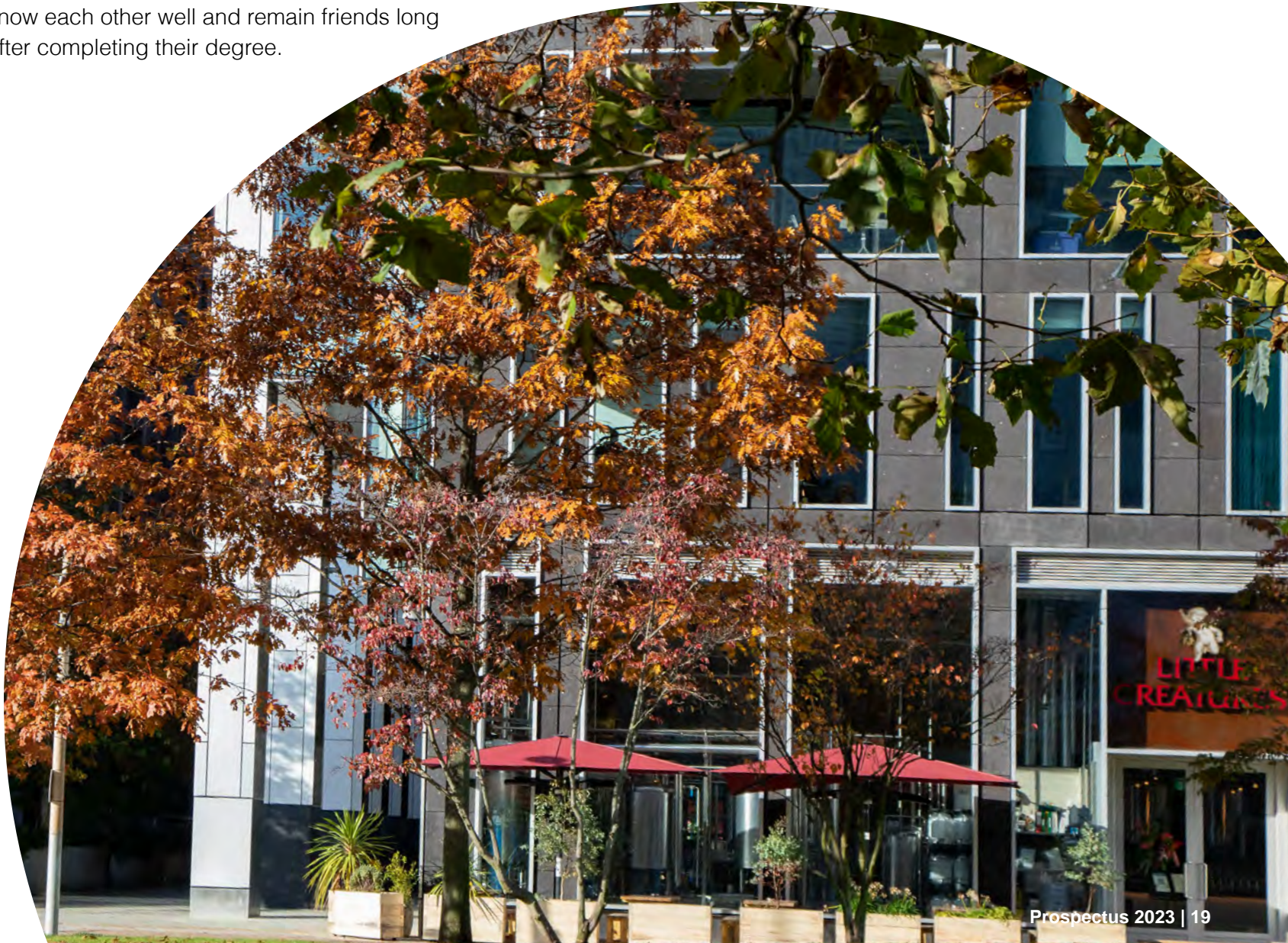
A key feature of the Aga Khan Centre is a series of six Islamic gardens that reflect approaches to landscape architecture from different regions of the Muslim world and the great diversity of cultures.



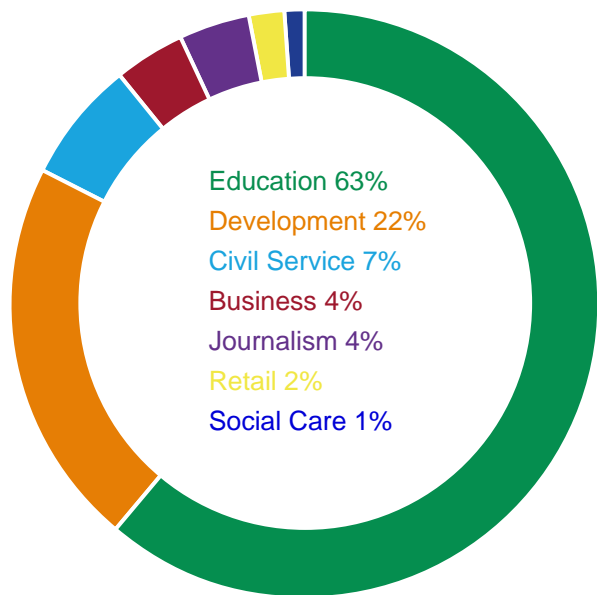
AROUND AKU-ISMC

Surrounding your accommodation and the academic building are the green spaces, shops, restaurants, cafes and pubs of King's Cross, offering 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.

AKU-ISMC offers further social activities including days out to explore parts of the UK beyond London, and more local events. Our students often get to know each other well and remain friends long after completing their degree.



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.





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The impact of the journey I had with AKU-ISMC is reflected in my everyday experiences as I continue growing both professionally and personally. The lifelong lessons learnt at this amazing institution leave their imprints across various aspects of my life. No doubt, this was something inimitable, something similar cannot happen twice.

Shahriyor Mazabshoev, AKU-ISMC Alumnus

APPLYING TO AKU-ISMC

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://ieltsukvisas.britishcouncil.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 ENIC website: www.enic.org.uk.

3. Two references, submitted directly to the Admissions Inbox (via email).

Referees must be familiar with your academic and/or professional work to date. At least, one referee should be familiar with your academic work. Referees should use reference form provided; please download the reference form, fill in your details and request your referees to send it directly to AKU-ISMC at ismc.admissions@aku.edu. We do not accept these as hardcopies and they should only be sent electronically.

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



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.



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The superb education provided by AKU-ISMC is definitely one of the best I have ever had. The rich resources and convenient environment here are ideal to develop your research interests and elevate your knowledge remarkably.

Ilies Sidlakhdar, AKU-ISMC Student

TUITION FEES

Fee Structure for MA in Muslim Cultures

Particulars	Frequency	(£, GBP)
Tuition Fee	Per semester*	1800
Summer Language Immersion Programme	Optional	2750
Accommodation	Weekly	340
NHS Surcharge	Yearly	470

*Tuition Fees: £150.00 per credit (full-time students in 2022-2023 pay £1800/semester for 12 credits).

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

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.



WHERE TO FIND US

Address: Aga Khan University's Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations,
Aga Khan Centre, 10 Handyside Street, London, N1C 4DN
United Kingdom

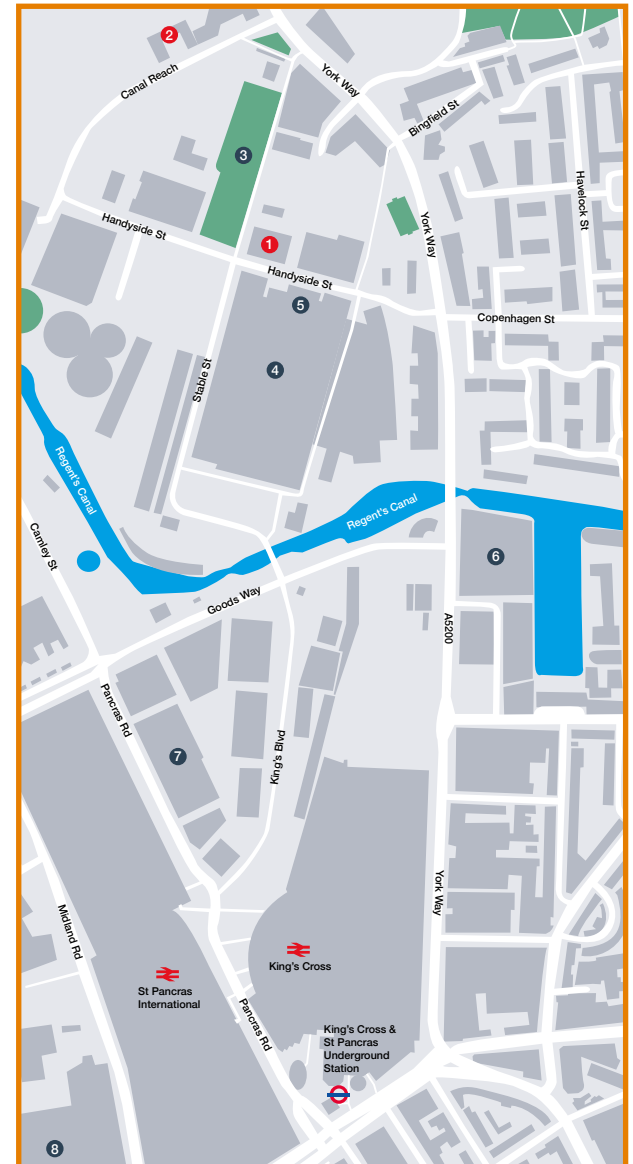
Contact Us: Tel: +44 (0)20 7380 3800

Fax: +44 (0)20 7380 3830

Admissins Office Email: ismc.admissions@aku.edu

AKU-ISMC Email: ismc@aku.edu

Website: www.aku.edu/ismc



Overview Map

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

Local Map

- | | |
|---|----------------------------|
| 1 AKU-ISMC, Aga Khan Centre | 5 Platform Theatre |
| 2 Victoria Hall | 6 The Guardian Media Group |
| 3 Lewis Cubitt Park | 7 Google UK |
| 4 University of the Arts,
Central St Martins | 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.

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 and alumni for their valuable contribution.

Photo Credit: Jonathan Goldberg.



@akuismclondon



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AKU-ISMC



AKU ISMC

Website: www.aku.edu/ismc



THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY

(International) in the United Kingdom

Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations

www.aku.edu/ismc

Incorporated in England as a company limited by guarantee no.
4448389 | Registered Charity Number 1179136

QAA Reviewed

Quality Assurance Agency
for Higher Education