



THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY

(International) in the United Kingdom

Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations

2017 PROSPECTUS

www.aku.edu/ismc



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.

Our student body is truly international spanning Armenia, Austria, Canada, Egypt, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Nigeria, Pakistan, South Africa, Syria, Taiwan, Tajikistan, Tunisia, the United Kingdom and the United States.

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. The Institute was established in 2002 to provide a space for debate, research and scholarship on the Muslim world. 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.

“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



ABOUT ISMC

The Aga Khan University is a unique hybrid: an institution of academic excellence that is also an agent for social development. The University prepares men and women to lead change in their societies and to thrive in the global economy. Founded on the principles of quality, access, impact and relevance, the University has campuses and programmes in South Asia, 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.

Based in the heart of London, ISMC's mandate is to occupy a vacant space in the discourse on the Muslim world by promoting scholarship that opens up new perspectives within Muslim societies on key issues such as tradition and modernity, religion and the state, pluralism and unity and the nature of community in an era of global connection and change. 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.



WHY ISMC?

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

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.

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.

“The two years I spent at ISMC taught me the importance of reflecting on the past, identifying the gaps in the present and how we might change things in the future.”

Shabriyor Mazabshoev, 2016 cohort

Funding

ISMC offers generous financial assistance to those students who meet our criteria. Through its Financial Assistance Programme the University ensures that no individual is denied entry because they are unable to pay tuition, living expenses and other costs.



STUDYING AND LIVING IN THE HEART OF LONDON

The Institute's location in the heart of London, an international metropolis in which freedom of thought and expression are encouraged and protected, is an important advantage.

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

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 African

Studies, Birkbeck and the London School of Economics. ISMC is part of one of the greatest knowledge clusters in the world. The area around King's Cross, Euston and Bloomsbury is home to unparalleled knowledge resources ranging from early manuscripts, breakthrough medical research, cutting-edge technology and a wealth of history. And it is this vibrant mixture of culture and science, history and technology that gives the area its unique intellectual energy. 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.

Our new student hall of residence is in the heart of King's Cross, a 10-minute walk away from the ISMC and at the hub of London's transport network with easy access to the UK and Europe on your doorstep. Our accommodation is within five minutes' walk of some of London's most popular restaurants and bars as well as a thriving cultural scene.

London offers the opportunity to experience world-class culture. Among the many highlights are The Tate, the National Galleries, the Victoria and Albert Museum and hundreds of theatres and music venues.





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.

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.

In the first year, students are introduced to theories and concepts of historiography, epistemology, anthropology, sociology and cultural studies. 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 Muslim contexts as well as law and governance. The second year also includes study and research towards a dissertation requirement which offers students the opportunity to incorporate fieldwork into their chosen subject.



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 preparation for employment 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 (see page 12)
- 3 electives

Course details and the number of courses required may be subject to change.

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.

Assessment is based on presentations, written assignments and examinations. Submitting a satisfactory dissertation is a prerequisite for graduation from the MA Programme.



Introduction to the Humanities and Social Sciences

The humanities and social sciences courses introduce the students to theories of historiography, epistemology, anthropology, sociology and cultural studies that are relevant for an understanding of current debates in the humanities and social sciences. Emphasis will be laid on theories that enable students to approach themes of other components, particularly those on issues relevant to past and present Muslim cultures, in an independent, critical and creative manner.

Core Courses

- Relevance of the Humanities and Social Sciences
- Writing in the Humanities
- Sacred Across Cultures



Muslim Heritages as Part of World Cultures

Courses will introduce students to the idea that Muslim heritages are an integral part of world cultures and their histories. Selected aspects of world cultures that are intrinsically related to the formation of Muslim religious thought and practices, Muslim scholarship and Muslim political discourses and experiences will be studied.

“In terms of my learning, ISMC showed me how to think differently about everyday notions. We learnt that it is never bad to have a question, but we should always try to uncover the answer. And throughout, ISMC remained our support system when we felt homesick while we were away from our families and homes.”

Hinna Jessani, 2016 cohort

Core courses

- History of the Qur'an in Classical and Contemporary Scholarship
- Late Antiquity
- Formation of Muslim Thought: Theology and Law
- Muslim Material Cultures before 1800

Elective courses

- Muslim Reformist Thought in South and South East Asia
- Historiography of the Nation
- Religion, Law and Society in Muslim Contexts

Contemporary Muslim Contexts

The contemporary Muslim context courses introduce students to major areas of relevance to present Muslim cultures. The choice of courses is guided by an attempt to address substantial domains of social, cultural, political and economic studies.

Core courses

- Renaissance, Enlightenment and the Advent of Modernity
- Muslim Responses to Modernity and Post-Modern Theories
- Development Challenges in Muslim Contexts
- Trends in Modern and Contemporary Literature
- Gender, Nation and Muslim Identities
- Themes in Muslim Arts and Architecture in the Contemporary Period

Elective courses

- Muslims in Western Contexts
- Traditions and Change in Sub-Saharan Africa
- Globalisation, Poverty and Development

Methodologies

Methodology courses are an integral part of the MA Programme and provide students with important research skills in order that they may understand and learn methods of analysing texts, written or otherwise (i.e. painting, jewellery, artifacts, architecture, music, etc.), producing and interpreting empirical data as well as evaluating and choosing between alternative academic approaches.

Core Courses

- Research Methodology and Dissertation Planning I
- Research Methodology and Dissertation Planning II

Languages

This compulsory component seeks to familiarise students with Arabic or, in the case of Arabic-speaking students, another language spoken by Muslims (typically Persian). 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.

The Institute is currently considering whether language should be optional in the second year. Students will be informed at registration of the most up to date position.

- Arabic I-III or Persian I-III
- Arabic IV-VI or Persian IV-VI



Language Immersion Programme

During the summer of their first year, students travel to a relevant country to undertake a compulsory four-week intensive language course. 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.

“Studying Arabic in Fes was a real academic treat where we had many opportunities to immerse ourselves into Arabic language and Moroccan culture. We spoke to local people, taxi drivers, shopkeepers, children on the streets etc. and practised the language. That was the best part of the trip. It has really given a boost to my Arabic Language skills. Thanks to AKU-ISMC for managing such an inspiring educational excursion.”

Ambreen Husaini, 2016 cohort

Leadership Skills Workshop

The primary objective of this training is to start a process of integrating students' learning with employment-related skills for today's fast-paced, multi-cultural organisational requirements. The training provides practical leadership skills for communicating, influencing and motivating across cultures, managing change and deepening individual impact within society. It builds on self-awareness, awareness and openness to others' points of view

and the ability to adapt communication and leadership styles across cultural, religious and ethnic differences. The course links theoretical knowledge with practical application, allowing time for practice and feedback.

Dissertation and Fieldwork

During the second summer of the MA Programme students undertake an optional four-week field project. Students' field projects focus on an area of interest and constitute the research component of their dissertation. Faculty support and input is available for students to develop their ideas. The total length of the dissertation is 20,000 words. 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.



YEAR 1

TERM 1

Core courses

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

TERM 2

Core courses

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

YEAR 2

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

In-depth course descriptions are available online

THE FUTURE IS HERE

A new campus for 2018

In 2018 ISMC will move to a brand new, purpose-built campus in King's Cross. Part of a vibrant 67-acre development behind King's Cross and St Pancras stations, the nine-storey building will house students, staff and faculty from ISMC, the Institute for Ismaili Studies and Aga Khan Foundation. Beautifully designed, the space will feature an atrium, gardens, terrace and social spaces as well as classrooms, workspaces and administrative areas.

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

Our 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, and has 560 titles in its rare book collection.

In addition to the rare book collection, the library has also benefited from donations of personal collections and papers of prestigious scholars in the field of Islamic studies. Some of these special collections, such as the Annemarie Schimmel collection, 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

A new purpose-built hall of residence developed by the Aga Khan Development Network is now operational. Located within the King's Cross development in Central London, the hall of residence provides 198 state-of-the-art bedrooms, which are now being occupied by students from the IIS and AKU-ISMC, as well as students from third-party institutions.

Designed by award-winning London-based Stanton Williams Architects, the design and specifications of the eleven-storey building are on par with the best in the student housing market, with spacious single rooms, some of which are adapted for people with disabilities, and a small number of one bedroom apartments. Within the building there are a number of generous communal spaces, which include an onsite gym, reading room, meeting and A/V room and a lounge area.

The student housing building will also benefit from two open spaces, a courtyard and a roof terrace, inspired by the beautiful gardens of the Maghreb (Morocco) and Andalucia (Spain). Both of the open spaces have been designed by Vladimir Djurovic Landscape Architects, who are renowned for creating timeless poetic landscapes that put nature centre stage.

The richness and diversity of the students – who come from a range of countries, speak a multitude of languages, derive from various cultural and faith backgrounds, and are of all ages – reflects the cosmopolitan nature of the city of London, whilst also being reflected in the design and decor of the building and gardens.

Speaking about the move to King's Cross, students have commented:

"The way the IIS residence has been designed and built, it has an aesthetic appeal. Spacious rooms, gardens and other student-friendly facilities make the living experience unique in one of the best locations in London."

Basharat Issa, IIS student

"I believe the building of our new accommodation is not only a space, but 'space with a purpose'. Everyone can relate to it differently. For me, its architecture provides a sense of individual peace and inclusiveness."

Hinna Jessani, AKU-ISMC student



Illustration only

FACULTY AND RESEARCH

Faculty

SEVGI ADAK

Assistant Professor

Specialising in 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.

SARAH BOWEN SAVANT

Associate Professor

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

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-Aqalliyat.

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.

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.

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.

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

HADI ENAYAT

MURRAY LAST

LUAY MOHAMMAD

WAELODEH

FARID PANJWANI

ALI PAYA

FAROUK TOPAN



STUDENT LIFE

Before the start of their first academic year, students participate in an orientation programme. This programme 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, transcripts and convocation, 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, research, journalism and teaching as well as studying for PhDs in universities across the world.



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. To satisfy UK visa requirements, your English language test must meet UK Visa and Immigration (UKVI) requirements. For more information please visit: <http://takeielts.britishcouncil.org/ielts-ukvi/what-ielts-ukvi>. 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 have completed a qualification equivalent to a UK degree in: Antigua and Barbuda, Australia, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Ireland, Jamaica, New Zealand, St Kitts and Nevis, St Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, the UK or the USA. Applicants are also deemed to have met the language requirement if they are a national of Canada or any of the countries in the list above.*

If you are not sure about the equivalency of your qualifications or the English language requirement, you are encouraged to contact the Assistant Registrar, ISMC before making an application.



Admission Procedures

The application deadline is 28 February 2017 for the September 2017 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 post) 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

Further Information

For further information regarding the MA in Muslim Cultures please contact the Registrar's Office: email: ismc.registraroffice@aku.edu



SELECTION

Admission to ISMC is based on merit and 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.

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.

Tuition Fees

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

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.



NOTES

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