



**THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY**

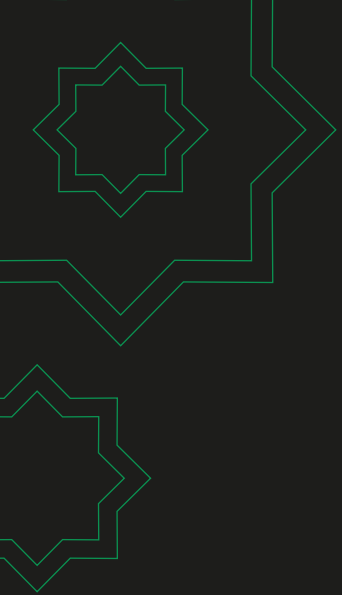
(International) in the United Kingdom

Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations



# PROSPECTUS

## 2024



# CONTENTS

About Us.....	4
Research .....	5
MA in Muslim Cultures .....	6
Dual Degree Partnership .....	8
Meet the Faculty.....	9
Aga Khan Library.....	15
Student Life.....	16
Victoria Hall, King’s Cross .....	17
Aga Khan Centre .....	18
After AKU-ISMC.....	20
Applying to AKU-ISMC .....	20
Fees and Financial Assistance .....	25
Where to Find Us .....	26



# WELCOME

It is my great pleasure to introduce this prospectus for the academic courses at Aga Khan University Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations (AKU-ISMC). We aim to combine the highest level of research into Muslim cultures in all their diversity with innovative and exciting teaching. The lynchpin of our activities is the MA in Muslim cultures, our two-year London-based programme, which allows students to examine Muslim societies in both past and present. Our external examiner recently described it as one of the leading degrees of its kind in the UK and we are proud of the range of different perspectives it offers on Muslim contexts and their changing construction of Islam, ranging from history and archaeology to anthropology, cultural studies and political economy. Our student demographic is very diverse: we welcome students from Pakistan and Iran to Tajikistan and Canada, and we feel that this diversity enlivens classroom discussion and is a real strength of our programme. In addition to our MA programme, we also offer a range of short courses, summer schools and language courses, pitched at a variety of audiences and levels. We look forward to welcoming you soon to our London campus in King's Cross

Philip Wood



# ABOUT

**AKU-ISMC is a research-focused institution driven by the belief that academic enquiry and education can enable understanding and positive social change. Informed by the wider work of AKDN, we foster vital connections with the diverse Muslim societies of the world for the benefit of many.**



As a leading institution in the study of Muslim cultures and contexts, AKU-ISMC aspires to contribute and bring rigorous thinking to public discourse; enabling both citizens and leaders to address complex challenges and to shape the world around them. To engage with AKU-ISMC is to experience deep expertise, diversity of thought and a belief in the value of critical-thinking. We are a collaborative community of independent thinkers who take pride in sharing our knowledge and perspectives. We achieve our ambition

through the delivery of world-leading research, publications, education, and outreach founded on a scholarly and plural understanding of Muslim cultures and contexts.

## 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.

We are based in London, which has a thriving arts scene and is home to an array of academic communities. London 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.





# MA IN MUSLIM CULTURES

The programme at AKU-ISMC provides expert insight and understanding of Muslim cultures and civilisations, both past and present. Our programme develops the skills to engage critically with challenges facing all societies. Our teaching is student-focused, 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. The programme takes place across two years.

## Part-Time Study

The MA in Muslim Cultures can also be studied on a part-time basis. 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.

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

Semester 1: 6 core credits+6 elective credits

Semester 2: 6 core credits + 6 elective credits

Semester 3: 3 core credits + 9 elective credits

Semester 4: 3 core credits+ 6 credits for the dissertation.



## CORE COURSES:

- Arabic or Persian Language
- Muslim Societies in a Changing World
- Research Methods and Dissertation Planning
- Dissertation

## ELECTIVE COURSES:

- Paths in Sufism
- Emperors, Prophets and Caliphs (500-850)
- Islam and Creativity
- Development Challenges in Muslim Contexts
- Art and Architecture in Muslim contexts
- Religion, Law and Society
- Gender and Sexuality in the Middle East
- International Relations: Race, Racism and Power
- Islamic History 2.0: Perspectives of the Digital Humanities

**SEMESTER 1:** 6 core credits+6 elective credits

**SEMESTER 2:** 6 core credits + 6 elective credits

**SEMESTER 3:** 3 core credits + 9 elective credits

**SEMESTER 4:** 3 core credits+ 6 credits for the dissertation

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





## DISSERTATION AND FIELDWORK

In the fourth 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. The thesis is submitted in September at the end of the second year.

These 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, posters and practical techniques, which you undertake during the first three semesters. Passing the dissertation 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.

# TEACHING AND LEARNING

At AKU-ISMC, you will cover an extensive curriculum ensuring that you leave us with an excellent knowledge of Muslim cultures, including their history, their economic situation and their different religious beliefs and practices. 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 major theories and concepts that can be deployed in studying the Muslim world. As part of the MA, you can also study development studies, economics, political science, art, architecture, history, literature, comparative religion and law within Muslim contexts.

Throughout the four 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 their own scholarship and analysing the scholarship of others. 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 transferable 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.







# 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 2-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. <https://www.mei.columbia.edu/dual-masters-degree>



# SHORT COURSES

AKU-ISMC's continuous education courses and programmes showcase a dynamic range of teaching pedagogies, harnessing the expertise of our diverse faculty. Our courses employ various instructional methods, ensuring an engaging and enriching learning experience for participants.

We offer courses on a range of topics such as transliteration, constructing a digital corpus or Islamic manuscript studies and digital codicology for those seeking to develop technical skills. These courses utilise hands-on activities, practical exercises, and interactive workshops to enhance proficiency.

The treatment of the Qur'an in different contexts is a topic of evolving interest. Our courses on this subject employ a multifaceted approach, incorporating discussions and case studies to explore the diverse perspectives and interpretations surrounding the Qur'an.

Our introductory course provides a comprehensive overview for beginners embarking on their academic journey studying Islam and Muslims. Using a combination of lectures, readings, and interactive discussions, you will gain foundational knowledge about the time of Muhammad and the early caliphs, as well as using the academic study of religion to approach the study of Islam and consider Muslim responses to modernity.

To accommodate diverse learning preferences, we offer different modes of instruction. If you thrive on face-to-face interaction, our courses are available in London and Lisbon, providing in-person discussions and networking opportunities. If you prefer an immersive residential experience, we offer residential courses and summer programmes that foster a vibrant and collaborative learning environment. Alternatively, if you value flexibility, our online courses provide a convenient platform for learning and engaging with fellow participants and faculty through virtual discussions.



# RESEARCH

**Research is at the heart of AKU-ISMC, both for faculty and students. In its strategy, AKU-ISMC identifies five priority areas of excellence which represent not only areas of existing excellence but are also pillars of the wider goals of AKDN:**

**Governance in Muslim Contexts:** 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 employs 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 research texts, objects, archaeological 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.

# FUNDRAISING



**AKU-ISMC raises money to support its diverse range of programmes and initiatives that promote the study and understanding of Muslim civilisations. As a leading academic institution, AKU-ISMC is dedicated to fostering an interdisciplinary and rigorous approach to the exploration of Muslim societies throughout history and in contemporary contexts.**

One of our primary areas of fundraising is to provide scholarships and financial aid to students pursuing education at AKU-ISMC. These scholarships enable deserving students, regardless of their financial background, to access quality education and contribute to the advancement of knowledge in the field of Islamic studies and Muslim civilisations.

Gifts from our kind donors play a vital role in sustaining our commitment to excellence in research, education, and engagement, furthering our mission of promoting mutual understanding and advancing human development through the study of Muslim civilisations.

If you would like to find out more about donations, please contact our Fundraising Manager Damon Boughen via [damon.boughen@aku.edu](mailto:damon.boughen@aku.edu).

# FACILITIES & 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 a Counselling Service free of charge.

## 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 Representatives 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 five 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:

- To provide students an opportunity to discuss matters that will strengthen the quality and breadth of student experience and student wellbeing.
- 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.
- 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 Islamic studies titles in print and electronic format. These works cover all aspects of Muslim cultures and their worldwide diasporas; and Muslim religious minorities in Muslim-majority countries, paying special attention to the Shia in general and the Ismaili in particular.

The library has built the Aga Khan Library Digital Collections to facilitate online access to part of its rare collection, which 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. Student accommodation at Victoria Hall is in walking distance of the Aga Khan Centre and many educational opportunities and entertainment options.

## 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. 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 its cultural diversity.





## EVENTS

AKU-ISMC hosts a number of events on campus. We have recently hosted several academic conferences, including the British Association of Islamic Studies (BRAIS) conference, Arabic Pasts and the International Society for Islamic Legal Studies (ISILS). We also host a range of events, including lectures as part of our Guest Scholar Programme. This recently included talks from Professor Aaron Hughes, “The Ubiquitous Muslim”, and Raquel Carneiro, “A Ramadan in Lisbon”. In addition to these, we have had a number of book launches at our campus including *Muslim Cultures of the Indian Ocean: Diversity and Pluralism, Past and Present* edited by AKU-ISMC Professors Stéphane Pradines and Farouk Topan.

## 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.

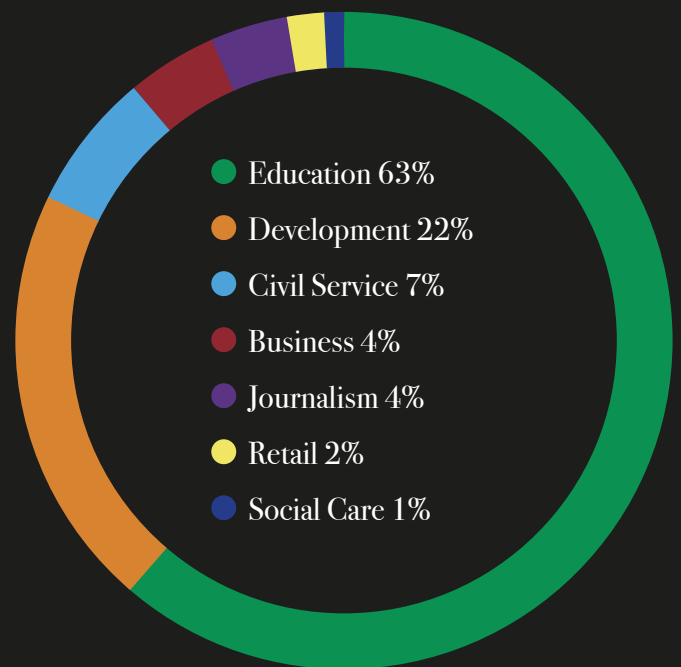
AKU-ISMC offers further social activities including days out to explore parts of the UK beyond London, and more local events. Our students often get to know each other well and remain friends long after completing their degree.

# ALUMNI & GRADUATE OPPORTUNITIES

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 undertaken PhDs at universities such as Oxford, McGill or Harvard University. Many go on to pursue an academic career, teaching in universities and continuing their own research into specific areas of expertise.





# ACCOMMODATION



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.

# 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](http://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 the 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](mailto:ismc.admissions@aku.edu).

We do not accept these as hardcopies. 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](mailto:ismc.admissions@aku.edu) before making an application.

# 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](http://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 the 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](http://www.enic.org.uk).

**Or**

**3** 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](http://pearsonpte.com/pte-academic-ukvi)).

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

# FEES & FUNDING

## Fee Structure for MA in Muslim Cultures

Particulars	Frequency	(£GBP)
Tuition Fee	Per Semester	1,800
Accommodation	Weekly	340
NHS Surcharge	Yearly	470

## FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

AKU-ISMC strives to bring students together from a variety of backgrounds. We are leaders in ensuring education is accessible to everyone. Our fees are therefore reasonable in comparison to other institutions.



# HOW TO FIND US

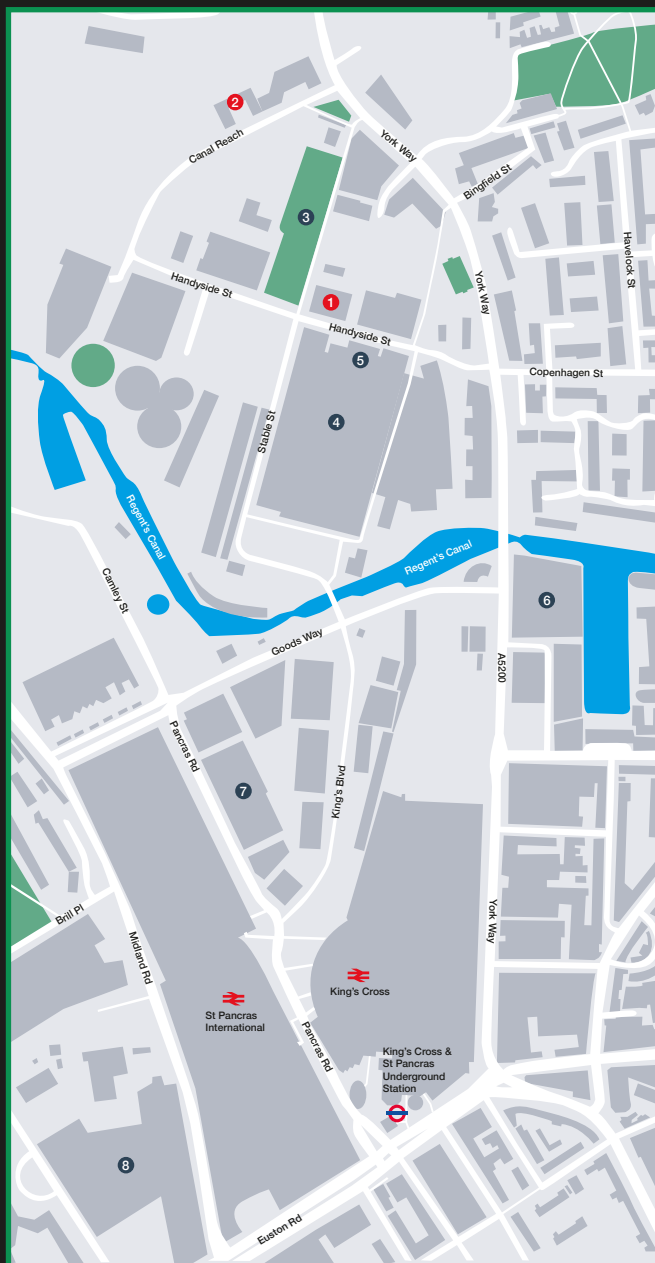


## OVERVIEW MAP

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

## 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,<br>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](http://www.aku.edu/ismc/about/Pages/sign-up-form.aspx).

 @akuismclondon

 @aku\_ismc

 @akuismc

 @AKU-ISMIC

 @AKUISMC

[www.aku.edu/ismc](http://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