



AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF MUSLIM CIVILISATIONS

AKUMA

Masters in Muslim Cultures

2010-2011

“There is no better investment that individuals, parents and the nation can make than an investment in education of the highest possible quality. Such investments are reflected and endure, in the formation of the kind of social conscience that our world so desperately needs.”

- *His Highness the Aga Khan*

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*Cover photograph: Robin Reed. Shabaan Mosque
Minaret, Darb Al-Ahmar, Cairo, renovated in 2004
by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture.*

MA IN MUSLIM CULTURES

From its London campus, the Aga Khan University Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations, offers a two-year, full-time interdisciplinary Master of Arts (MA) in Muslim Cultures. This programme combines courses from a range of disciplines within the humanities and social sciences to study Muslim civilisations in all of their geographical, linguistic, cultural and ethnic diversity.

The programme seeks to provide students with the skills to investigate and understand Muslim cultures and societies within their historical and contemporary contexts. It offers students the opportunity to learn about the cultures of Muslims – their languages, histories, arts and architecture, development processes, and legal and political thought.

APPROACHES

The MA in Muslim Cultures provides a distinctive way of approaching the cultures and societies of Muslims as they have evolved over time. The programme uses the theories and methods of the humanities and social sciences as a framework for study in order to encourage broad analytical and comparative perspectives.

The Institute's MA Programme takes account of the diversity of cultures that Muslims have been a part of, and considers the contexts of cultural and intellectual history within which religious



The two year interdisciplinary MA programme exposes students to a wide range of innovative approaches to the study of Muslim cultures, their history and societies.



A Mughal miniature (c. 1590), shows Babur supervising the construction of his gardens in Kabul, Afghanistan. This painting was used as a resource for architects in the restoration of Babur's gardens, (below) by the Aga Khan Development Network, (photograph courtesy of the British Museum).

ideas and practices have meaning. This requires that cultural manifestations such as art, poetry and architecture be examined alongside doctrine, law and religious practice.

The Institute endeavours to explore and understand Muslim civilisations as they have evolved over time, while also focusing on the complex social, cultural and historical processes that they are undergoing in the contemporary world.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Learning is both classroom and field-based. As part of the language training, students participate in a language immersion programme by travelling to a relevant country to immerse themselves in a language and culture different from their own. During their second year, students undertake a dissertation with optional field work on a theme relevant to their study. Students also participate in a range of academic excursions during the course of the programme.

The diverse student body of the MA programme is taught by an international faculty. Students benefit from the facilities and activities offered by neighbouring institutions such as the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), the London School of Economics (LSE) and the British Library. Studying in London offers the opportunity to engage with prominent international speakers and thinkers.



AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY

Chartered in 1983, the Aga Khan University is an autonomous, not-for-profit university that is committed to bringing international standards of excellence in teaching, research and service to local communities to help them improve their quality of life. Based on the principles of quality, access, impact and relevance, the University imbues the most promising leaders and thinkers of tomorrow with an ethic of service and leadership.

The University has campuses and programmes in eight countries and is one of nine agencies in the Aga Khan Development Network, a group of private development agencies.



“I have found that the excellent academic environment provided by AKU-ISMC is very similar to what I was expecting. It is a very distinctive and productive environment in terms of its approach to contemporary Islamic and modern thought.”

- Rahim Bagheri, Iran



INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF MUSLIM CIVILISATIONS

Based in London, the Aga Khan University Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations (AKU-ISMC) aims to strengthen research and teaching about the heritages of Muslim societies with specific attention to the challenges these societies face in contemporary

Al-Azhar Mosque was the centre for higher education established by the Fatimids (c. 989). The archway at the entrance of the Mosque shows exquisite details.

settings. The Institute seeks to provide a multifaceted approach to the study of Muslim cultures and societies through a framework of world cultures, the humanities and social sciences.

The Institute's research focuses on systems of moral and ethical thought, structures of governance and public life, and artistic and creative expressions of all forms in Muslim civilisations. AKU-ISMC believes it can make a distinctive contribution to the understanding of Muslim heritages and the emergence of new attitudes among Muslims and non-Muslims toward the concerns of contemporary societies.

Accredited in the United Kingdom by the British Accreditation Council for Further and Higher Education.





“The atmosphere has been warm and friendly. Meeting all these people, coming from almost the four corners of the globe, has been a very enchanting experience that holds the promise of mutual enrichment. This diversity and multicultural atmosphere will give me a chance to know more about world cultures.”

- Belkais Rouached, Tunisia

THE TWO YEAR MA PROGRAMME CONSISTS OF 23 COURSES GROUPED INTO 5 COMPONENTS

1. Introduction to the Humanities and Social Sciences

Courses in this component introduce students to theories of historiography, epistemology, anthropology, sociology, cultural studies and philosophy of language that are relevant for an understanding of current debates in the humanities and social sciences.

Core Courses

- The Relevance of the Humanities and Social Sciences
- Writing in the Humanities
- The Sacred across Cultures
- Poetics: Language, Meaning, Interpretation
- Theories of Ethics and Politics

Elective Courses

- The Ideas of Good, Beauty and Truth across Cultures
- Approaches to the Study of Religion
- Myth and the Construction of Reality
- Construction of Knowledge
- Religion, Law and Society in Muslim Contexts

2. Muslim Heritages as Part of World Cultures

Courses introduce students to the idea that Muslim heritages are an integral part of world cultures and histories. Selected aspects of world cultures that are intimately related to the formation of

Muslim religious thought and practices, Muslim scholarship, and Muslim political discourses and experiences are studied.

Core Courses

- Introduction to general Muslim History
- History of the Qur'an in Classical and Contemporary Scholarship
- Ancient World Cultures and Mythologies
- Formation of Muslim Thought: Theology and Law
- Renaissance, Enlightenment and the Advent of Modernity
- Themes in Muslim Arts and Architecture, 13th to 18th Centuries

Elective Courses

- Introduction to Scriptural Traditions
- Paths in Sufism - Past and Present
- Sira in Classical and Contemporary Scholarship
- Rethinking the "the Golden Age" and "Decline" in Muslim Cultures
- Muslim Reformers in India in the 18th and 19th Centuries
- Muslim Reformers in Egypt and Tunisia in the 19th Century
- Traditions of Learning
- The Role of non-Muslims in shaping Muslim Civilisations

3. Contemporary Muslim Contexts

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

Core Courses

- Muslim Responses to Modernity and Post-Modern Theories
- Globalisation, Poverty and Development
- Trends in Modern and Contemporary Literature
- Gender, Nation and Muslim Identities

Elective Courses

- Minorities in Muslim Contexts
- Muslims in Western Contexts
- Muslims in South East Asia Today
- Traditions and Change in Sub-Saharan Africa
- State and Religion in Turkey and Iran Today
- The State, Governance and Late Development
- Migration and Diasporas: The Case of Iran

4. Methodologies

Methodology courses form an integral part of the MA and provide students with important research skills enabling them to understand and learn methods of analysing texts, and material objects (i.e. painting, jewellery, artifacts, architecture, etc.) of producing and interpreting empirical data, and choosing between alternative academic approaches.

Core Courses

- Material Cultures as Sources of Enquiry
- Research Methodology and Dissertation Planning

Elective Courses

- Approaches to the History of Science
- Historiography of the Nation

5. Languages

This component seeks to familiarise students with some of the languages spoken in Muslim majority contexts. The emphasis on languages enables students to familiarize themselves with primary sources and also acts as a window to other material related to Muslim cultures in various parts of the world.

Courses Offered

- Arabic
- Farsi
- Turkish

LANGUAGE IMMERSION PROGRAMME

As part of the language training component, students travel to a relevant country during their first year to undertake a 4-week intensive language course and complete a language based assignment. The Language Immersion Programme helps students experience language in its social and lived dimensions. It also exposes students to new cultures, communities and ways of life, furthering their understanding of diversity and pluralism.

FIELD PROJECT

As part of their final dissertation, students may undertake research in the field enabling them to apply classroom learning to field realities.

DISSERTATION

Students devote the final term of their second year to writing a dissertation maximum of 20,000 words.

In the past, students have completed dissertations on some of the following topics:

- Freedom: Construction of a Concept: A Critical Assessment of the Emergence and Evolution of a Modern Concept of Freedom in Iran during the Constitutional Revolution (1323-29/1905-11).
- Kiryar in Khorog: Exploring the Experiences of Community through Social Capital Theory
- Modern Islamic Reformers and the Qur'an: A discussion of the critical approaches of Amina Wadud and Irshad Manji
- Shifting Identities: A case study of the Black Sufis of Gujarat.
- Microfinance through women, not for women: A case study of men's perceptions of women's empowerment in Lahore, Pakistan
- Qas (â'id-khânî:) A ritual music performance in Wakhân

ADMISSION

Candidates are required to complete a formal application form, including a personal statement, stating their reasons for wishing to enrol in the programme and send it with transcripts. Please note that referees should submit references directly to the Registrar's Office to arrive no later than 1 March 2010. Shortlisted candidates will be asked to participate in an interview.

APPLICATION DEADLINE

1 March 2010
Start of Programme
September 2010

DURATION OF DEGREE

2 years (full-time) divided into 6 terms of 12 weeks each and 2 summer terms of 4 weeks each

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

1. Applicants must hold an undergraduate degree or equivalent qualification from an accredited university (preferably in the humanities or social sciences).

Typically, applicants must have achieved an Honours equivalent (British system) or a cumulative minimum GPA of 3.0 out of 4.0.

2. Applicants must have proof of English language proficiency (TOEFL: 600 paper-based test, IELTS: 7.0 band score or equivalent).

If documented evidence of English proficiency cannot be provided, applicants will be required to take an English language proficiency test administered by AKU-ISMC. Applicants must pass this test in order to qualify for the programme.

TUITION

Tuition fee for the 2-year programme is £10,165 per annum. Fees are payable in four installments.

- 15 September 2010
- 3 January 2011
- 4 April 2011
- 4 July 2011

FINANCIAL AID

Financial assistance, in the form of limited scholarships and loans, is available and will be granted on the basis of need and merit.

For further information please contact:

The Registrar's Office

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Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations**

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Download the Application Form

www.aku.edu/ismc/ma.shtml

www.aku.edu/ismc

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