



---

# ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION PLAN

---

*Office for Students*



DECEMBER 27, 2018  
THE ISLAMIC COLLEGE  
133, High Road Willesden London NW10 2SW

Contents

Introduction ..... 2

Our Strategy ..... 3

Vision..... 4

Mission Statement..... 4

Our Student Body ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Student Recruitment ..... 5

Admissions data and student recruitment/ enrolment profiles ..... 5

Growth in Student Numbers ..... 5

Improvement in Our Rate of Retention ..... 5

Task of Retention of Students..... 5

Employability / Leavers survey statistics..... 6

Our Ambitions ..... 6

Delivering the Strategy ..... 7

Our Partners ..... 7

Our Activity..... 8

**Access and Outreach** ..... 8

**Success and Progression**..... 8

**Students’ Financial and Wellbeing Support** ..... 11

Our Achievements ..... 11

Community Engagement ..... 11

Increase College visibility in the community ..... 12

Quality Assurance Agency ..... 12

Review of this statement ..... 12

## **Introduction**

The Islamic College was established in 1998 to promote a sound understanding of Islam. Now in our third decade, we look to shape the future by empowering our students and associates through offering academic excellence, opportunities for Islamic cultural engagement, and opportunities for personal enrichment. To that end, we aim to ensure that our current vision, values, and goals will continue to build on that foundation and beyond. The College provides a suitable environment for those who wish to continue their studies in a reputable institution and an Islamic environment. We fulfil the needs of both Muslims and non-Muslims who are interested in understanding various aspects of Islam.

We will maintain what we have offered by promoting the Islamic Studies (undergraduate and postgraduate) and Islamic Law (postgraduate) programmes, placing equal emphasis on both research and teaching by supporting and establishing our reputation for practice-led engagement to generate the greatest impact. We will continue to seek out intellectually able students from a wide variety of backgrounds whilst embracing new thinking, new technology, and new practices which enhance our institution. We shall strive for excellence in all that we do, foster a passion for creating and applying knowledge, and be proactive in engaging all who can benefit. We are pragmatic about what motivates the modern student and will offer an innovative and distinctive academic curriculum that reflects employer expectations.

The Islamic College is dedicated to helping students fulfil their potential and engage in authentic research on Islam and related topics based on primary sources.

In keeping with our standards and philosophy of service, the institution has been structured to provide students with the highest degree of functionality and satisfaction. We hope to produce a holistic picture of the Islamic heritage, and offer both intellectual rigor and practical applications. It is delivered by a professional team that includes recognised scholars in the field, many of whom who also serve the religious community.

The Islamic College also disseminates Islamic knowledge in an environment that accords with Islamic values and thus tries to integrate the Islamic worldview and values in which that intellectual heritage matured, was nurtured, and developed. The College provides an excellent opportunity for students who want a deeper understanding of Islam, its philosophy, in context, and the dynamics of Muslim thought.

The higher education sector has been experiencing unprecedentedly rapid change, and that will continue to be challenging in the future. These concerns are addressed and lead to success with the Islamic College's clear strategy and credible plans to which everyone is committed. The College further maintains the qualities that have delivered our success to date: flexibility, adaptability, speed of response, credibility, a culture which embraces change and innovation, strong leadership and management, and high performing, dedicated academic and professional service staff, while maintaining our moral foundation. Quality Assurance Agency's inspections and monitoring review also provide that recognition and support to the college to face the challenges. Additionally, this means that the college endeavours assist in managing uncertainty, navigating through complexity, and taking managed risks to ensure we are effective, sustainable and competitive.

We have widening participation, increased access, retention and achievement of students at the heart of our mission.

We value the wealth of experience, skills and knowledge that students from diverse backgrounds bring to the experience of other students and staff of the College. We will continue our work to raise aspirations, awareness, progression and success amongst the community where participation in higher education is low. Success in this work depends on continuation of our successful partnerships and collaboration with schools, colleges, local community centres and charitable organisations.

## **Our Strategy**

This third decade of Islamic College's efforts in academia will further bring teaching of Islamic Studies to higher levels of excellence as demonstrated by other universities providing this provision. QAA's Higher Education Review confirms this (alternative Providers) in its report of November 2017 by stating in its judgment expressed in the key finding the following:

“The QAA review team formed the following judgement about the higher education provision:

- The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of the degree-awarding body meets UK expectations.
- The quality of student learning opportunities is meets UK expectations
- The quality of the information about learning opportunities is meets UK expectations.
- The enhancement of student learning opportunities is meet UK expectation.”

The Islamic College will focus on key priorities, which will assist in the full delivery of learning experiences articulated in light of the success of the previous plan. This is supported by the good practices highlighted in QAA's November 2017 report.

“The QAA review team identified the following good practices

- The creation of inclusive and supportive learning environment that is embedded throughout the College to support the College mission and values (Expectation B2).
- The collaborative and personalised approach to student learning and achievement that enables students to develop their personal potential (Expectation B4).
- The College's extensive range of approaches to student engagement that promotes confidence and a learning partnership (Expectation B6).
- The combination of College and community outreach initiatives that enhance the student learning opportunities (Enhancement).

The plan identified priorities which The Islamic College will continue to try to realize robustly through the academic programmes by professionally managing and delivering them with the assistance of faculty and experts in the field of Islamic Studies.

It is anticipated that the planned priorities will be achieved because the Strategic Plan for 2017-2022 sets the future agenda for the development of teaching Islamic Studies within an academic framework. The bridge built over the last two decades in the community and the academia will continue. In doing so, it will provide The College with the opportunity to deliver quality education provisions.

This strategic plan will become an active management tool to aid us in continuing to scan the horizon and make adjustments as needed. It also provides a commitment on behalf of the Islamic College to monitor and evaluate the impact of its widening participation activities on the access, success and progression of students from backgrounds that are under-represented in higher education. The Strategic Plan for 2017-2022 enables the Islamic College to evidence its commitments to ensuring fairness of access and participation in higher education in the future.

### **Vision**

The Islamic College is dedicated to help students fulfil their potential and to promote academic knowledge based on authentic original Islamic sources. In keeping with our standards and philosophy of service, the institution has been structured to provide the students with the highest degree of functionality and satisfaction. It is aimed to produce a wholesome picture of Islamic knowledge and programmes designed to be a fusion of practical application and intellectual rigor and is delivered by a professional team that includes recognized scholars in the field who are also practitioners.

### **Mission Statement**

Our mission is to provide the highest quality learning, skills and training to meet individual educational needs and employment demands; all based on Islamic moral values.

## **Student Recruitment**

In 2014, enrolment for undergraduate students was capped to 50 students by the HEFCE. There is no capping of enrollment of postgraduate students. This means that while there are facilities for students greater than the capped figures, the capping enables The Islamic College to regulate and coordinate the overall demand made on the College in the studies of the various branches of Islamic Studies.

## **Admissions data and student recruitment/ enrolment profiles**

Recruitment targets were met for Postgraduate level, but not at undergraduate level. There is a greater capacity for enrollment.

Applications: The levels of applications / enrolment is comparable to University levels in the field. The number of applications and enrolment has increased compared to the last academic year. There is no significant trend, except for the increase at postgraduate level. The outcomes and objectives of relevant policies with regard to enrolment profiles are fully met.

Cohort Profile: Islamic College is proud to have a proven equality of opportunity for students and applicants. There are no significant differences with trends noted for the profile of past cohorts. The Islamic College absorb a greater number applicant whose knowledge of Arabic is limited. Islamic College keeps a close eye on recruitment figures. The EE reports supports a good enrolment profile for the learning, teaching and assessment activity, as well as the support being offered to students.

## **Growth in Student Numbers**

The Islamic College is trying to increase its student enrolment from all sources, including undergraduate and postgraduate degree students. When it is realised that there will be a greater intake, The Islamic College will request HEFCE to increase its capped figure.

## **Improvement in Our Rate of Retention**

There is a strong trend in the Islamic College towards increasing its levels of retention. It strives to attract the students with a high likelihood of success by developing policies and strategies to maximise student performance, their satisfaction with teaching, and with student services and the quality of student life at the College in order to attract them to the Islamic College's postgraduate programmes.

## **Task of Retention of Students**

The Islamic College recruits' students from all walks of life, and our alumni are to be found in all corners of the globe. Attracting an increasing and diverse cohort of students who strengthen our agenda for excellence and retaining students that enrol with us through to successful completion is the Islamic College's high priorities. We remain committed to our goals of widening participation, promoting social mobility, equity and fair access and will continue in our efforts to make the Islamic College attractive and accessible.

We will:

- Ensure that our academic offering and transformative integrated student experience appeal to prospective applicants
- Enhance our marketing, recruitment, application and admissions processes and structures.
- Provide prospective applicants with the information they need to make an informed choice about their studies, and
- Engage our alumni across the world in recruiting, mentoring, and giving career advice to current students.

## **Employability / Leavers survey statistics**

The career destination data compare with previous years' levels is similar, and there is no significant trend. Most undergraduate students continue to feed into postgraduate programmes, some offered at Islamic College.

Postgraduate students quite often start a research doctorate at other Universities. Islamic College has moved to set up a PhD link with the University of Glasgow. There has been particular recruitment of our students by Islamic and cultural Centres for a range of positions such as education and teaching, Imam and Prayer leaders, translation and editing, culture and religious consultation.

## **Our Ambitions**

We aspire to be a college that by 2022

- Continue to provide an education in Islamic Studies at the highest possible level of quality
- Encourage research across a whole range of subjects about Islam
- Provide an integrated and interdisciplinary approach to those interested in acquiring a critical, constructive, and comprehensive understanding of issues and topics about Islam
- Help students become more articulate, independent, and flexible learners
- Enable students to pursue their Islamic understanding at the highest academic level
- Provide an inclusive environment for both Muslims and non-Muslims from different cultures and backgrounds
- Foster a culture where all staff are fully engaged in achieving the success of our single shared vision
- Establish more partnerships and increase both the number of international students (DE) at the College and UK/EU students
- Increase the student population while maintaining an attractive and affordable staff-student ratio without reducing quality.
- Achieve an overall graduate employability level in the upper level of UK educational institutions.
- Continue to strive for even higher levels of effectiveness and efficiency

- Raises aspirations of those from groups currently under-represented in higher education
- Breaks down any barriers that might discourage people from taking up courses at the College
- Recruits students from a wide range of groups including those currently under-represented in higher education
- Nurture and support students through to successful course completion
- Promote high levels of achievement
- Promote high levels of employability and skills in enterprise
- Encourage re-engagement and lifelong learning

We have a target to foster stronger recruitment from groups currently under-represented in higher education by working to raise aspirations and break down barriers to participation such as those created by culture, geography, social and economic factors.

We also aim to continue our progress in retaining students from under-represented groups, remaining above benchmarks and narrowing gaps as appropriate.

## **Delivering the Strategy**

Strategic Plan (2017–2022) articulates our mission and vision and sets out a clear strategic intent with institutional priorities.

In delivering this strategy, we will:

- Track our progress towards achieving our strategic objectives on a continuous basis, and monitor our performance, benchmarking externally against peers and sector norms as well as internal metrics, and communicate these to external and internal stakeholders.
- Develop an enhanced set of institutional Key Performance Indicators to monitor our performance regarding student enrolment, student achievement and the student experience, teaching quality, research and enterprise, staff empowerment and sustainability. We will also monitor a set of financial and environmental metrics.
- Produce annual implementation plans on institutional, faculty and departmental levels, detailing specific actions and outcomes.
- Ensure that staff are empowered to contribute to the institutional objectives by aligning their personal objectives with those set out in this plan.
- Contribute to and implement higher education policy imperatives

## **Our Partners**

The Islamic College will continue to solidify its relationship with partner institutions who have assisted in the College's progression over the years. Our local and national partners were addressed and their greater involvement for the betterment of the college will be acquired and enhanced throughout the period applicable. In addition to benefitting our staff and students, we remain committed to extending and deepening our partnerships with the community which we serve and the schools and colleges in our region.

We create an environment for our staff and students to further develop civic engagement and professional partnerships, and continue to develop pathways into higher education for students from low participation neighbourhoods.

The College continues to work in partnership with a range of agencies and organisations to achieve its widening participation goals, including (but not exclusively):

- Brent Council
- Local and national religious centers and institutions
- Local schools
- Students' Representative Council as the students' body at the College

We consider our students as key partners in our activity to widen access and participation. Student engagement is a priority in the institutional strategy to ensure innovation in the educational experience and we consult with students through feedbacks, Students' Council and an annual students' submission for QAA monitoring.

We value the benefits of working collaboratively and are proud to be associated with the following groups and networks:

- Middlesex University
- Department of Education

## **Our Activity**

### **Access and Outreach**

We will continue to:

- Deliver high quality widening participation outreach, building on our successful record through our impartial 'UWIN Aspire' programme targeting local and national religious institutions to gain marketing access to younger members of the communities.
- Developing and delivering targeted and bespoke community courses of several weeks at a time to attract a wider range of recipients who could be attracted to other courses and programs offered by the Islamic College.
- Deliver access and outreach activities, including taster days and residential visits for young people from various local and national community centers
- Encourage applications from students from under-represented groups through our with local and national institute and centers.
- Work with our partners, both locally and nationally, to support the educational progression of young people from under-represented backgrounds.

### **Success and Progression**

We will:

- Continue to work towards providing a fully inclusive facilities where all students and staff are able to flourish
- Review and develop the college's learning environment, learning curriculum and learning technology to be more inclusive and accessible.
- Develop initiatives that support under-represented students to engage in college life and develop 'a sense of belonging', thus increasing their potential to achieve and progress.
- Increase and develop community courses so that they become activities which would assist in increasing recruitment to the BA and MA programs
- Improve and expand the Distance Learning program so that the courses offered and be taken up by students from a wider range of learners
- Provide employability and progression opportunities for students from under-represented backgrounds with an emphasis on supporting students to access volunteering, work experience, driving lessons and mentoring schemes.
- Develop further the research abilities of the students so that they can progress to Postgraduate and doctorate programs

## **Undergraduate Programmes**

The Islamic College has been delivering the BA (Hons) Islamic Studies for over a decade and likewise the BA (Hons) Hawza studies, and the Quranic Arabic programmes since successfully 2012. The recent revalidation of the programmes included a few essential improvements in our strive for excellence, fulfilment of potential and achievement of our students. Our undergraduate programmes have always provided a wide range of study modules aiming to develop the student's knowledge and understanding of the subjects, something that is recognized by all external examiners (EE Reports 2016-17 as well as 2017-18). Additionally, we have provided students with an environment within which the pursuit of scholarly achievement can be carried out in a manner, which harmonises with the subjects of study (BoS minutes 2016-17 as well as 2017-18). We see ourselves as a caring, friendly but serious and well-disciplined institution. We encourage warm and close relations between our well-qualified staff and the students. Indeed, The Islamic College welcomes staff and students from different backgrounds, cultures, faiths, religions, sects, and gender.

The BA (Hons) programme for Islamic Studies provides a wide-range of study modules including Qur'ān and Sunna, Islamic law, Islamic philosophy, theology and mysticism, history of Islam as well as a strong learning focus on the Arabic language, ideal for applicants seeking to learn the language. Whereas the BA (Hons) programme for Hawza Studies provides a unique platform of learning beneficial to for theological studies; offering students the opportunity to gain classical, authoritative knowledge about their faith within a modern framework of study that leads to the award of a recognised degree. As such, it has become possible to allow Hawza students to be taught theological subjects in a language, style and environment that they are accustomed to in the west, developing a reputable and authoritative programme of Shi'a learning and spiritual nurturing. So much so that, we felt that the language problems faced in the West by second and third generation Muslims needed to be addressed; this subsequently affects their use of primary sources. We are therefore pleased that the external examiner's comments where it is highlighted that the

programme is ‘structured to meet the needs British Muslim students hoping to develop leadership capabilities’ (EE Islamic Studies 2017-18) and the curriculum ‘fully in accord with its aims’ (EE Hawza Studies 2017-18).

The learning delivered is based on our belief that the students also need help in ‘balancing faith commitments and academic cultures of learning. To fulfil this, we aim to get students to ‘engage with current literature’ and such reading can ‘enhance faith’ as well as provide ‘opportunities for engagement with beliefs’. Nevertheless, our efforts in disseminating to students the skills necessary to formulate the ‘balanced and informed views of their tradition’ in their assignments has been recognized (Academic Board Minutes 2017-18, External Examiner Islamic Law 2017-18, Board of Studies Minutes 2017-18).

The Quranic Arabic programme is developed through consultation with students and feedback obtained through the Board of Studies in experiencing the difficulties in learning the Arabic language, the primary language of Islam. This addresses this important issue of essential language building skills to those who desperately lack them through no fault of their own, but at the right level.

The Arabic course is offered as a Certificate of Higher Education (Cert HE) in Qur’anic Arabic based on four core modules of the Arabic language: Morphology and Syntax, Analytical Grammar, and Listening and Speaking for a total of 80 credits. Students will be required to select two optional modules adding to 40 credits that are offered in either semester. These include, Reading and Writing, Research Methodology (shared Module), Recitation of the Qur’an, Qur’anic Sciences and Approaches to Exegesis (shared Module). Students must complete all the 120 credits to qualify for a Certificate of Higher Education.

Candidates are not required to have any prior knowledge of Arabic for the Cert HE in Qur’anic Arabic.

As there is an increasing demand for qualified Islamic scholars with a good understanding of Arabic, the Cert HE Quranic Arabic programme will provide an excellent platform for students wishing to develop a career in Arabic related field, and also assist students to meet our requirement for the BA (Hons) Hawza Studies graduate programme, it can feed into it accordingly.

## **Postgraduate Programmes**

Both the MA Islamic Studies and the MA Islamic Law programmes are delivered by the Islamic College in both in-house or Distance Education (DE) modes. Our target for student intake were fully met and continuous to remain high at postgraduate level. The Islamic College is currently among the most popular DE institutes in the field of Islamic Studies worldwide. The success of our postgraduate programme in meeting ‘the threshold academic standards set for a masters in Islamic studies’ leading to ‘a wide range of marks’ which as pointed out is ‘always a sign of a good and healthy marking curve’ (EE Islamic Studies 2017-18). It ‘reflects standards and assessment methods in PGT programmes across the sector’ continuing to provide a ‘combination of tradition, faith-based approaches’ alongside ‘the critical intellectual apparatus of academic work’ (EE Islamic Law 2017-18).

Our programmes are wide-ranging and yet integrated, giving students an opportunity to increase their knowledge and critical analysis, to develop academic and communication skills and pursue of self-development. All subjects and modules are inter-related; this is because our programmes are aimed at producing a wholesome picture of Islamic Studies and Islamic law. The overarching aim thus remains the promotion and development of knowledge and skills in relation to today's Islam. We are particularly happy with the student satisfaction of our Master programmes (BoS Minutes 2017-18), it is this focus that has produced quality research with some of the dissertations being very good. Our strong student research ethos is reflected by our dedicated Islamic Writings student journal and as recognized by the QAA report.

## **Students' Financial and Wellbeing Support**

We will:

- Provide an effective package of financial support to students from who want to progress to the Islamic College's postgraduate program
- Provide students with a safeguarding and wellbeing structure that assists all students to have an environment of studies which provides protection and comfort
- With a Safeguarding Office and assistance, the Islamic College has put in to place a process which addresses problems and complaints at all levels of the college
- The College is also associated to the Office for Independent Adjudication which enables students to take any complaints to an independent service to adjudicate when and if they feel that their concerns are not being addressed fairly or appropriately

## **Our Achievements**

Since the inception of the Islamic College, it has acquired respect amongst the academia in its field.

A report written about Islamic Studies provision in the UK by the Higher Education Academy refers to the Islamic college in relations to the modules Islamic Studies courses offer. It rank the Islamic College 6<sup>th</sup> in the number of modules it offered in it Islamic Studies course. It was behind SOAS (88 modules), University of Oxford (82 modules), University of Birmingham (77 modules), University of Exeter (71 modules), University of Manchester (48 modules) and the Islamic College (41 m1 modules).

Since 2014 Islamic College has be inspected and reviewed by QAA and has managed to satisfied and fulfilled QAA criterion.

## **Community Engagement**

The Islamic College's enrolment enhanced by a positive relationship with the community. The visibility factor is essential in strategies throughout the priorities drawn up in this plan. Engaging the community at all levels has been vital to the Islamic College's. To maintain this success, we look to developing our visibility locally and nationally. The College's visibility internationally is mainly useful for the Distance Learning programme at the postgraduate level.

## **Increase College visibility in the community**

We will transform our vision into a reality by getting the College recognised for its work in the community. This will be undertaken by inviting the community more to the college and representatives of the College going to them.

## **Quality Assurance Agency**

Having gone through the QAA inspection and also a recent review, a process by which staff can more effectively understand and apply the principles of the QAA Framework for HE was embedded in the design and delivery of programmes. Moreover, IC formalised a process of editorial oversight that secures the accuracy of information across all platforms, particularly with Middlesex University.

## **Review of this statement**

We review this Access and Participation statement annually as part of our regular review of policies. We will update and re-publish this policy annually as required by condition A2 of the Office for Students Regulatory Framework. This version of the Access and Participation Statement was published on 7th January 2019.

## **The Islamic College - Access and Participation Plan 2018-2019**