



INTERNATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY

# INSIGHTS

MAGAZINE

Development  
of the **Islamic** Public  
Administration

From Molecular  
Biology to  
Islamic Studies:  
**IOU Student's  
Journey**

**How to excel  
in studies:**  
Tips from IOU  
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Educational  
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from Prophet  
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The Transformative  
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## EDITOR'S DESK

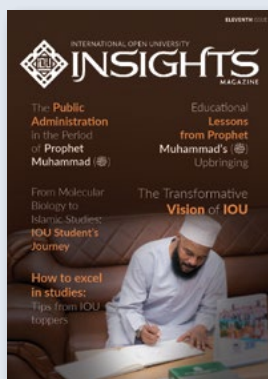
Every student of knowledge should strive to attain certain qualities. Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal said, "The foundation of knowledge is fear of Allah." Therefore, a student of knowledge should adhere to fearing Allah openly and in secret. However, their knowledge should help them understand that fear of Allah should be balanced with hope.

A believer must always think positively of Allah, as the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said just three days before he passed away, "None of you should die except [in a state of] having positive thoughts about Allah" (Sahih Muslim). Consequently, students of knowledge should always strive to live between these two states.

Other qualities that shape a seeker of knowledge are upstanding etiquette and a beautiful character. Students of knowledge are known for their forbearance, patience, and humility; they are gentle and kind.

Students of knowledge should avoid affairs that could tarnish their honor, whether in their nature, speech, or actions. Their knowledge should prevent them from indulging in degrading acts and evil habits, virtually or physically, and socializing with questionable groups and gatherings.

They should be easily recognized by the way they carry themselves, and should fill their hearts with love for Allah, moistening their tongue with His



### MEET THE TEAM

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Editor-in-Chief	: Dr. Bilal Philips
Managing Editor	: Veronika Matulova
Marketing Director	: Yousuf Philips
Designs & Layout	: Fathima Bint AbooBacker
Editors	: Abdur Rahman Fayyaz Farzana Hussain Hafsa Dean Thompson Mubeena Thaslim Neda Shams Samiya Andrabi Siddiqah Philips Sumayyah Meehan Veronika Matulova Umm AbduRahman

### YOUR VIEWS

We would love to you hear from you. Please let us know what you liked or would like to see in the magazine. If you have a particular piece or feel you can make a valuable contribution to IOU Insights please email: [info@iou-insights.com](mailto:info@iou-insights.com)

remembrance. They should live a lifestyle of moderation, filled with contentment and trust in the promises of Allah, and the guidance of His Messenger (ﷺ).

“Don’t judge a book by its cover” is a popular saying when it comes to identifying one’s personality. However, for the Muslim who is also a student of Islam, their external appearance should reflect what is within. This means that the knowledge they have gained should soften their hearts, and by extension, have a positive effect on their character. Therefore, the external appearance of the student of knowledge should indicate the nobility of what they carry of religious knowledge.

Renowned Islamic scholar, Shaykh Bakr Abu Zayd (may Allah have mercy on him) advised students of knowledge to increase their zeal, turn to Allah in supplication, seek refuge with Him, and abase themselves before Him in humility.

Students of knowledge should adorn themselves with lofty aspirations, as aspirations have the potential of magnifying both the negative and positive aspects of one’s personality, they guide one’s actions, and

attract Allah’s bounty without measure.

High aspirations motivate the desire to attain perfection, increase learning, and act upon what was learned. At the same time, they eliminate trivial hopes and actions. High aspirations fill the hearts of students of knowledge with steadfastness, a clear vision of the akhirah (afterlife), and the resolve not to compromise their religion.

However, high aspirations should not be confused with pride, as the former is the adornment of the inheritors of prophets, while the latter is a sickness that is not found except in the hearts of tyrants and the arrogant.

I conclude with one of the frequent supplications made by Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah, “O Teacher of Adam and Ibraheem, teach me! O You who made Sulaymaan understand, make me understand!”

Based on the book “The Etiquette of Seeking Knowledge”, by Shaykh Bakr Abu Zayd.

*Veronika Matulova*  
Managing Editor



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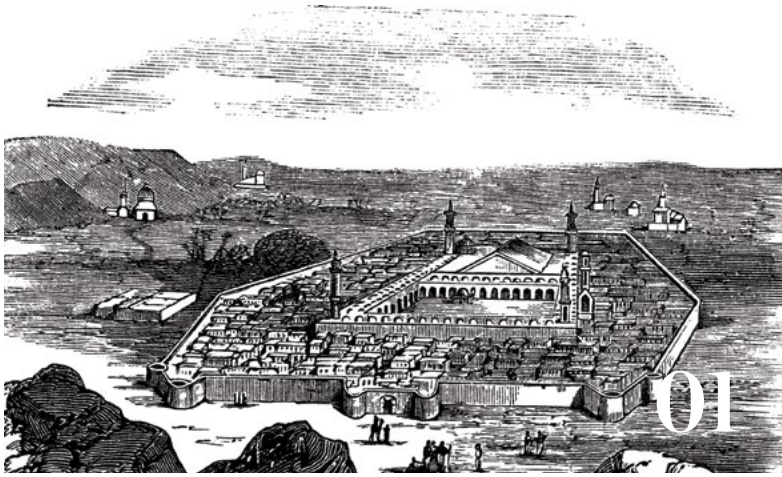


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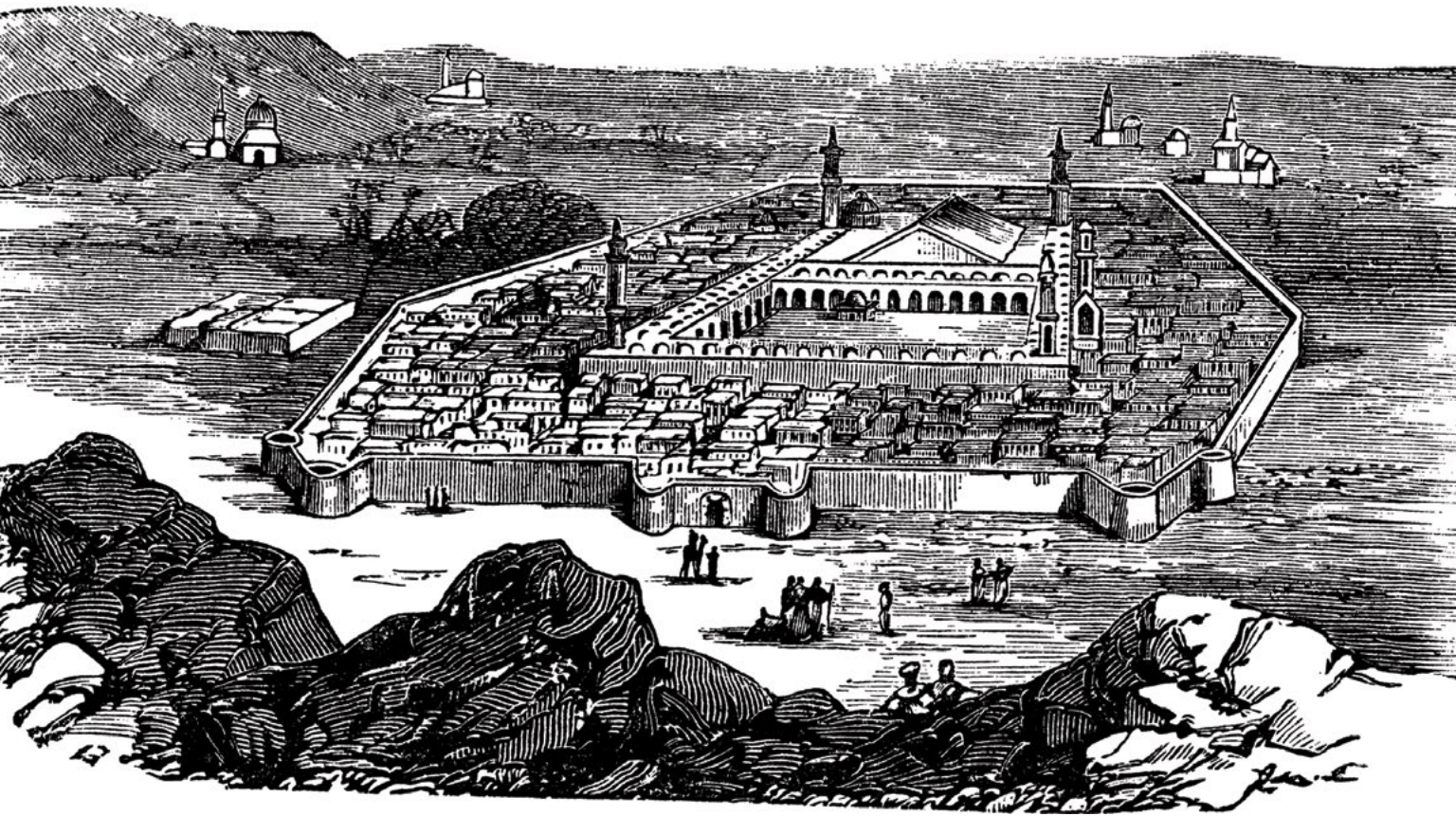
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# Development of the **Islamic** Public Administration

## The First Public Administration System Developed in Madinah

The hijrah (migration) of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ from Makkah to Madinah marked one of the most important milestones in Islam. The people of Madinah (formerly known as Yathrib) began to embrace Islam and pledge their allegiance to the Prophet ﷺ, which gave Muslims who were being persecuted in Makkah the opportunity to migrate to a place where they would have security and freedom to worship Allah freely. Thus, Madinah became the new home of the Muslims.

Prophet Muhammad ﷺ established Madinah as the cradle of Islamic civilization, the first

Islamic state. Its economy was based on agriculture, which was entirely different from the trading system of Makkah.

History records that due to the outstanding administration and well-planned utilization of manpower, the state made such great economic progress in the short span of ten years that the government never needed to import grain. Rather, up to two times, their own surplus yield was exported.

### The administration in Madinah had four outstanding features:

1. Organization
2. Education and Research
3. Consolidation of Landholdings
4. Cooperation and Self-service



1

## Organization

It is reported in Sahih Al-Bukhari and Muslim that having reached Madinah, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ conducted a population census in the first year and ordered that a separate list be made of those Muslims who could work. The number of people enlisted was sixteen hundred (1600). Then to supervise these volunteers, he ﷺ organized the entire state (Muslim and non-Muslim) and divided the administration into four levels:

1. Naqabat (Local Council)
2. Arafat (Tahsil Council)
3. Nazarat (Divisional Council)
4. Amalat (State Council)

### Naqabat (Local Council)

The local council comprised eight tribes whose leader was called the 'Naqeeb' and was elected from among them. He was accountable to the government for regional affairs. Qadhi Abu Ya'la discussed this thoroughly in his remarkable book, 'Al-Ahkam-al-Sultania.' The six authentic books of hadith (Al-Sihah Al-Sitta) also shed light on this.

### Arafat (Tahsil Council)

The Tahsil council consisted of twelve local councils and ninety-six tribes. The council leader was called the 'Areef' and was elected as the public representative. Ahadith show that the responsibility of the Tahsil council was to supervise government affairs like the Baitul-Mal (the National Bank), which is reported in Sahih Al-Bukhari in detail.

### Nazarat (Divisional Council)

During this era, the Islamic empire was not divided into districts. Instead, a divisional council existed, which comprised twenty-four (24) Tahsil councils. Its leader was called a 'Nazir' who held a government post equal to the Commissioner of the present age.

### Amalat (State Council)

All divisional councils constituted the state council, and every state consisted of more than three divisions. Madinah consisted of twenty-four (24) divisions while Yemen had only four. Its leader was called an 'Aamil,' who was just like the State Governor of the modern era, formally appointed by the central government.

It should be noted that the administration of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ held such a strong and deep-rooted influence that it continued even after the end of the Rashidun caliphate (the first of the four major caliphates after the death of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ), as well as when the Islamic system of governance turned into kingdom rule. The methodology and influence of his ﷺ administration only came to an end after the fall of Baghdad.



2

## Education and Research

The six authentic books of hadith (Al-Sihah Al-Sitta) narrated the entire education system of the Prophet ﷺ in detail. Along with the propagation of Islam, he ﷺ established different faculties of education such as:

- Faculty of Foreign Languages
- Military Education
- Business Education
- Craft Education
- Agricultural Education and Research

A separate curriculum was developed for every subject; however, some subjects like Calligraphy, Accountancy, and Religion were common to all. In addition, specialization was done in the most critical subjects. 'Sunnat Qa'imah' was a term used in Hadith literature and later on in contemporary literature for

specialization.

Three types of classes were held as per the requirement of the subject:

- Daily
- Weekly
- Seasonal

Lectures and debates were conducted regularly particularly on the practical aspects of agriculture, wherein the participants benefited from each other's experiences and observations.

3



## Consolidation of Landholdings

Who does not know the importance of the consolidation of landholdings in this

new age of materialism? Centuries ago, when Prophet Muhammad ﷺ migrated from Makkah to Madinah, he instituted ties of brotherhood between each Emigrant (Muhajir) with a Helper (Ansar) of Madinah for the management of agriculture and issued detailed guidelines for the consolidation of land. Thus, not only did agriculture develop and crop yields increase, but irrigation and other land resources began to be used in agriculture. Indeed, the system was established on such a strong basis that in the period of the Rashidun Caliphate, when the Islamic empire expanded to the continents of Asia and Africa far and wide, the whole empire continued to follow the same system.

4



## Cooperation and Self-Service

It is generally assumed that the concept of 'cooperation' was propounded in the modern age in the city of Rochdale, England in 1844 by twenty-eight (28) working men. However, many centuries earlier, it was among the ideal principles of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ for the



formation of Islamic society in Madinah.

Similarly, the concept of 'self-service' was set by Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, and his Companions followed it. It was the most

important among the ideals on which he ﷺ organized the Muslim nation. It is true that without this principle it would have been almost impossible to run the system smoothly.

## The Administration in the Age of Rashidun Caliphate

As stated earlier, upon the establishment of the first Islamic state, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ conducted a population census and constituted its administration on four pillars:

- Naqabat (Local Council)
- Arafat (Tahsil Council)
- Nazarat (Divisional Council)
- Amalat (State Council)

For the welfare and proper management, all significant decisions were taken in consultation with people at every administrative level.

When Prophet Muhammad ﷺ passed away, the administration came under the Rashidun Caliphate. It followed the same organizational ideals and welfare activities. However, the tenure of the first Caliph Abu Bakr was very short, and during the period of Caliphs Uthman and Ali most of the time was invested in fighting internal strife. For this reason, most of the development and administrative tasks were carried out in the period of Caliph Umar – may Allah be pleased with them all.

During the Caliphate, the scope of victories expanded speedily, the more regions came under the Islamic state, the more the population grew. As such, intensive efforts were spent on its administration, leaving no stone unturned concerning public welfare. The Caliphate was divided into eight states:

1. Makkah
2. Madinah
3. Syria
4. Jazeera

5. Basrah
6. Kufah
7. Egypt
8. Palestine

The new faculties were introduced to administer these federal units systematically. As mentioned earlier, the Chief Executive Officer of the state was called 'Aamil' and he had great authority over all the state departments. He was appointed by the federal government, much like the governor of the present age. He was elected by the exclusive meeting of the consultative assembly held in Madinah, the capital of the federal government, along with mutual consultation and sometimes advice from the public of the concerned state. The appointment letter handed to the 'Aamil was read out to the public too. In the letter, his jurisdiction and duties were written in detail, and he had to take a formal oath.

During the time of the Hajj pilgrimage, government affairs were discussed thoroughly in an annual meeting of all the governors. Even if an ordinary citizen had a complaint against any governor, he could express it freely and legislative action would be taken against the guilty party immediately. However, if there was any complicated issue, a special commission was set up for further investigation, it would submit its report and appropriate action was taken accordingly.

The judiciary system was formally established during the Rashidun period. Its top authority held an independent position who could, without discrimination, summon any officer

***Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) established Madinah as the cradle of Islamic civilization, the first Islamic state, with its economy based on agriculture.***

just like an ordinary person. Impartial and immediate justice was meted out by the separation of the department from the administration. The standard for the post of Chief Justice was very tough and high, which is why only a great scholar or an eminently pious and just personality could be appointed to the post.

In modern times, no department exists to make people aware of the laws of the country. However, during that time, a department of Ifta was established for this purpose whose officers were appointed with the utmost care.

The officer of the revenue department called 'Sahib-ul-Kharaj' was so dynamic that he measured the total area of Iraq. According to his statistics, the agricultural land was 1, 80,00,000 acres. While collecting tax, the financial status of people and land productivity were kept in mind, and advice was sought from Muslims and non-Muslims alike.

The finance department was under Sahib-Baitul-Mal, and caliphs and common people had the same right over it.

The police system was also formally set up to maintain peace and security, and for the first time, prisons were built in Arabia for criminals. Its chief officer was called the 'Ahdas' and had the same rank as the Inspector General of police in the present age.

A separate department was established to monitor public situations and the administration secretly and highly pious and honest people were appointed to it. Thanks to this system, the caliphs were aware of the internal condition of the public and government. If any officer was involved in oppression, violence, or bribery, the action was taken immediately.

The department of public works is also assumed to be an innovation of the modern age, whereas in the Caliphate period, this department went by the name of 'Nazarat Nafia' and was functional in a systematic way. It played a vital role in constructing offices, government buildings, roads, bridges, digging canals, and settlements of cities. Under it, check posts and inns were built from Makkah to Madinah.

It is very interesting to note that during his term as the governor of Egypt, the Companion 'Amr bin Al-'Aas presented a report of a proposed canal to connect the Mediterranean Sea to the Red Sea to the Caliph Umar. However, it was not executed for fear of a naval attack from Greece because the Muslim naval force was less in number. Different canals were dug and water was supplied to other regions with 120,000 workers in Egypt employed with this work. The masterpiece of this department was the canal of Amir-ul-Mu'mineen that connected the Nile to the Red Sea. Through it, great ships from Fustat across the Red Sea (ten miles away from Cairo, a city settled by Caliph Umar) would reach Jeddah port. Surprisingly, this sixty-nine-mile-long canal was completed only in six months.

History bears witness that an exemplary system of education was established in this era. Along with religious education, many contemporary and art education departments were established as the faculties of foreign language, business, medicine, craft, and agriculture. The curriculum for every field was developed separately. Moreover, in every

department, specialization was pursued after primary education. As mentioned previously, three types of classes were conducted: daily, weekly, and seasonal, wherein along with scholarly lectures, training was also given.

The best part of this era was that the government paid full attention to farmers and ordinary people. The government paid great heed that if anyone cultivated barren land, it was allotted to him. Besides, if any farmer became disabled or faced any natural disaster, he was fully supported. Due to this, agriculture made significant development bringing prosperity to people's lives. The principles of cooperation and consolidation of landholdings set up by Prophet Mohammad ﷺ were also followed greatly, which turned barren lands into green fields. Caliph Ali paid particular attention to the development of forests.

It would be unjust to overlook the fact that in this period, special arrangements were made for the urban population as well. Along with providing facilities, many new cities were settled to address the complicated issues

of population density, among which Kufah, Mosul, Basra, and Fustat are very famous. Books by Al-Maqrizi and other books like Futuhul Buldan and Mu'jamul Buldan discuss this in detail. When planning these cities, all sociological and financial aspects were kept in mind, and different tribes were settled in separate areas of the city. Kufah was settled in 17 A.H., and initially, houses were built for (40,000) forty thousand inhabitants. However, it developed at such speed that according to statistics in 64 A. H., its population reached (80,000) eighty thousand homes.

Statistics were collected with the help of different departments. The best example was the population census conducted in 15 A.H. throughout the Islamic state. Once the census of all tribes was completed, separate registers were prepared. According to these statistics, when the Arabs suffered from drought in 18 A.H., relief was sent to different areas. Moreover, horses, camels, and other cattle were counted and even the details of the cattle sent for charity were written.



### By Dr. Muhammad Ahsan

Dr. Muhammad Ahsan is the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academics of IOU. Having graduated from four countries (Pakistan, Japan, Holland, and the UK) and worked in two continents (Asia and Europe), Dr. Ahsan is a distinguished research scholar and published author of several books, reports, and research papers.



### And Shaykh Moulana Mukhtar

Shaykh Moulana Mukhtar is the coordinator of the Urdu department of the Diploma and Certificate programs in Islamic studies Urdu. He obtained a Fazil degree in Islamic Theology and a Master's degree in Urdu literature.

# The Transformative IOU Vision: Eyes on the Ultimate Prize

My message to the students graduating from the International Open University (IOU) is a reminder that they are products of this University and must strive to be representative of its values. The purpose of the International Open University is not merely to train students to memorize and regurgitate knowledge when the time requires it. On the contrary, the underlying intention of the IOU programs is to transform the lives of students for the better in every way, and we pray that we have succeeded in achieving that to some degree, if not completely.

It is hoped that the IOU students will be different from other university graduates whose main goals are largely materialistic and corporeal. A vast majority of university students around the world embark on undergraduate and graduate studies to monetize, provide for themselves, live comfortable lives, avail of all that benefits them even if it harms others, without any regard for social welfare or obligations.

Instead, the IOU student is expected to be a Muslim first; not merely a student who simply happens to be a Muslim. The IOU student thinks differently, out of the generic student box. The IOU student thinks in terms of their relationship with Allah; he/ she has a higher purpose behind acquiring

knowledge and utilizing it for the greater good and does not follow the same avaricious aspirations as many other university graduates. This is what ultimately determines whether the acquired knowledge is beneficial or not.

Perhaps you may benefit from your studies in many ways in this life, but the ultimate benefit is when the knowledge you acquire is added to your scale of good deeds. This is only possible if the knowledge you gained was acquired in a permissible way, meaning you were an honest student with good intentions, you tried to understand your subjects properly, turned in your assignments on time and did not use dishonest means in exams. The most important long-term goals of your study were, ultimately, to worship Allah through working to benefit society and yourself.

This is what the IOU vision embodies: work-worship, worshipping while working with no separation between the two. We worship Allah at every moment, in every place; in everything we do. This is the message the IOU wants to convey to all its students throughout their study - every subject can become a means for worshipping Allah.

The IOU vision for its students is to completely transform them to make them ambassadors for Islam. Today,



this is the need of the hour. We need upstanding people who will stand up and change the world and live up to ideals that are shown to us through Divine revelation.

I urge our graduating students to be the best examples of Islam. Islam is sometimes falsely portrayed as a violent, terroristic religion, and Muslims are misrepresented as bloodthirsty, killing in the name of Allah. We need to transform that image into the true image of Islam, one of a religion of peace that seeks peace for the individual and society. This is only possible with the implementation of what you have learned in the virtual halls of the International Open University. It is only through sound Islamic teachings that peace in society can be attained.

In today's times, the overriding concern for most people is running after this world, being preoccupied with worldly affairs, and gaining worldly benefits. We were warned against becoming like this by the Prophet ﷺ who called such a person, "a worshipper of money, 'abd ud-dinar.'" We need to have a solid intention to go beyond that. Without this higher purpose and intention behind this period of studies, this graduation will mean nothing in the life to come, which is our greater existence and our true goal.

**By Dr. Bilal Philips**

7th Online  
**CONVOCATION  
CEREMONY**



**O**n a happy and joyous afternoon of January 2021, the International Open University held its 7th online Convocation Ceremony. In this spectacular event, over 330 graduates from more than 50 countries worldwide were honored.

The event began with a brief and dynamic address from the Founder and Chancellor of the institution, Dr. Bilal Philips, who stood in front of a vibrant banner of the International Open University, and warmly shared his message to the Fall 2019 and Spring 2020 graduating batches. He especially mentioned the disabled students who strived harder than the other students and congratulated them on their outstanding achievement of completing their four-year Bachelor's degrees. Dr. Bilal encouraged the graduates to join the IOU Alumni Association and to continue to be part of the IOU family.

Next, a motivational address from the Guest of Honor, Dr. Sajid Umar, added a special charm to the ceremony. With his eloquent words and welcoming address, Dr. Sajid's speech filled the graduates and the guests at the ceremony with great inspiration.

Dr. Jamila Jones, Head of the Department of Education at

the IOU, spoke on behalf of the University's Academic Faculty. In her beautiful message to the graduates, she spoke about resilience, in accordance with the theme of the 7th convocation ceremony.

In a brief address, Associate Registrar, Syeda Madeeha Bokhari, expressed gratitude and appreciation for the faculty and administration of the IOU, whose hard work has been a critical aspect in running the Institution, providing the best learning experience for the students over the years.

In the most awaited part of the ceremony, the Vice-Chancellor/ President of IOU, Dr. Cherno Omar Barry, and Associate Registrar, Syeda Madeeha Bokhari, conferred 335 degrees. Shortly after that, the graduates celebrated with their comments in the live chat during the ceremony. The graduates' families and friends happily shared their warm congratulatory messages on the live platform, creating a beautiful festive environment online.

The nasheed "I want to go to Jannah," by the renowned nasheed artist Zain Bhikha playing in the background during the degree conferment added a charisma that had the graduates and guests at the ceremony

captivated.

The graduates' testimonials were the next awaited part of the ceremony. Recent graduates shared their reflections on the journey of seeking knowledge that they had undertaken over the past few years. From Ghana to the Gambia, the United States to India, Pakistan to the Philippines, graduates from all over the world participated in this wonderful and memorable part of the ceremony.

Sr. Nida Ashraf Mulani, who hailed from Mumbai, India, and now residing in Muscat, Oman, then delivered the valedictorian speech of the 7th Convocation Ceremony of IOU. Her beautiful address moved hearts and gave the audience a glimpse of the fascinating journey of seeking knowledge that she has experienced at the University.

The ceremony ended with a jubilant declaration of gifts for the top students of all the Bachelor's and Master's degree programs, as well as the Bridge diploma to the MAIS program and a vote of thanks by the host.

Congratulatory messages, best wishes, and greetings of "salaam" filled the live chat of the ceremony online, as the graduates and guests exited the session feeling elated, gratified, and a sense of accomplishment. Alhamdulillah.



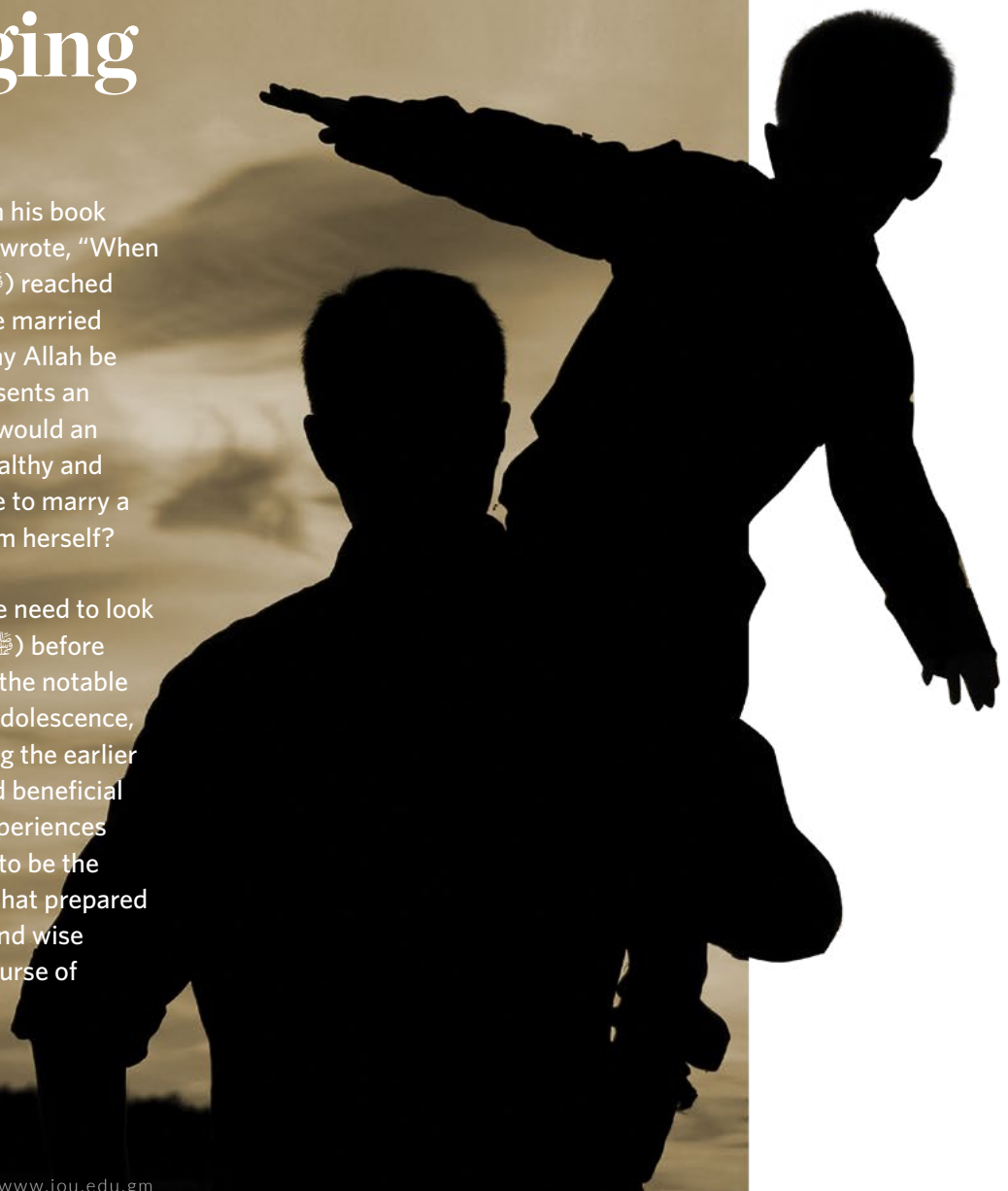
### By Syeda Madeeha Bokhari

Sr. Madeeha is the Registrar of IOU. She has a B.Sc. in Computer Engineering, B.A. and M.A. in Islamic Studies from IOU, and she has completed graduate studies in Quality Assurance in Tertiary Education and a Master of Tertiary Education Management from the University of Melbourne.

# Educational Lessons from Prophet Muhammad's (ﷺ) Upbringing

Abd al-Malik bin Hisham in his book "The Prophet's Biography" wrote, "When the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) reached twenty-five years of age, he married Khadija bint Khuwaylid, may Allah be pleased with her." This presents an interesting question. Why would an intelligent, determined, wealthy and honorable Arab lady, desire to marry a young man so different from herself?

To answer this question, we need to look at the life of the Prophet (ﷺ) before the age of 25, and observe the notable features of his childhood, adolescence, and early youth. By studying the earlier years of his life, we can find beneficial lessons and memorable experiences that were later considered to be the foundational components that prepared him to be an outstanding and wise leader who changed the course of human history.





One of the most critical observations was that his life lessons were not restricted to city life. The Prophet (ﷺ) learned much from the desert environment during his early years with the Bedouin tribe of Banu Sa'd, where he stayed with a wet nurse and her family. Life in the desert taught him vigilance, patience, and the purest form of Arabic. He learned how to ride a camel, how to swim, and how to fly a kite.

After that, he learned from the companionship of both his grandfather and his uncle. He attended and witnessed many meetings of the Arab chiefs when they discussed major issues. We know that lessons learnt from personal events and experiences have a more profound impact on a person's intellect and outlook on life. More than merely having it described to them in a classroom or Islamic environment.

As a toddler, the Prophet (ﷺ) lived with the tribe of Banu Sa'd. According to Muhammad Al Ghazali in his book "Fiqh Us Seerah," The upbringing of children in the desert, where they can play in the pastures of nature and enjoy its pure air, is best for the development.

The Arabs used to send their children to wet nurses outside the city. By doing so, they intended for their children to learn the pure Arabic language, simple living, and how to develop an honorable character. Imagine the simple way of living and playfulness, he (ﷺ) would have engaged in with the other children. The milking

and pasturing of the sheep and goats while speaking with the pure Arabic tongue. He (ﷺ) would have woken up to see the beautiful sunrise on desert mornings, and worked and played until the sunset. What a natural life it would have been!

Compare that to the city living of our children today. Unfortunately, their upbringing is based on the overuse of television, mobile phones, and computers. They remain indoors at home most of the day and leave home only for short periods of time to run errands or go to the shops. Their diet is increasingly filled with unhealthy fatty foods and they get inadequate exercise.

During the Prophet's (ﷺ) childhood in the desert, his mother died, followed closely by his grandfather, who was his guardian after her. So when he was only 8 years old, he was suddenly thrown into a life of hardship and found his means for survival as a herdsman for livestock.

The Prophet (ﷺ) mentions this, "Allah has not sent a prophet except that he was a herdsman." He was asked: "And you, O Messenger of Allah?" He (ﷺ) replied, "Yes, I used to raise them for some Qararit (old Makkah currency) for the people of Makkah." (Bukhari).

It must be remembered that at this stage, the Prophet (ﷺ) was similar in age to a child at the elementary school level, yet he was given the responsibility of raising livestock.

## *Lessons learned from personal events and experiences have a more profound impact on a person's intellect and outlook on life.*

It is necessary for us not to simply skim over this stage of the Prophet's young life. Let us contemplate on some of the skills a person requires to be a herdsman.

The Prophet (ﷺ) was in charge of tending to the animals. If they were sick or injured, he needed to understand the logistical and operational aspects of a good herdsman. Where do the animals eat? Where do they drink? Where to rest the animals in the evening to sleep and to keep them safe? The Prophet (ﷺ) learned the characteristics of patience and forbearance. He also learned the importance of being responsible: responsible for himself and for others.

Ibn Jawzi mentions that when the Prophet (ﷺ) reached 12 years of age, he sometimes accompanied his uncle, Abu Talib, for business. So in this instance, we understand that the Prophet (ﷺ) was exposed to business and trade skills. For example, a good business person would require basic accounting,

***The Prophet (ﷺ) was similar in age to a child at the elementary school level, yet he was given the responsibility of raising livestock.***

negotiating, and business planning skills, and how to deal with different personalities in different situations. We need to remember that this was a 12-year-old boy learning business skills through practical observation and experience. It is no wonder that he became such an experienced and successful businessman by the time he was only 25 years old!

Ibn Hisham mentions that when the Prophet (ﷺ) reached 15 years of age, he participated in the battle of Fijar. Imagine witnessing war at the age of 15! We know from many modern-day stories and personal accounts that witnessing and participating in battle completely changes a person's life and makes them mature quickly.

Imagine, the Prophet (ﷺ) witnessing the death of his uncles. How did this change his perspective on life and responsibility? At the same

time, the circumstances exposed the Prophet (ﷺ) to the art of planning a battle. It also taught him critical survival skills to preserve his life from danger and avoid risks on the battlefield.

The Prophet (ﷺ) was exposed to these experiences from a practical perspective during his adolescent years.

After the battle of Fijar, Muhammad (ﷺ) attended the peace treaty between the tribes. Again, his (ﷺ) exposure to these events increased his knowledge and skills concerning politics and negotiations between nations. He learned how different nations met for political aims and purposes to achieve beneficial outcomes for all parties.

In this way, Muhammad (ﷺ) continued his diverse participation in the Meccan community. He perfected the art of business, and when he was 25 years old, he was hired to conduct business on behalf of Khadeejah bint Khuwaylid (may Allah be pleased with her.)

Any student reading his biography should not gloss over this critical stage of the Prophet's life. We must not think that the Prophet (ﷺ) simply rode on a single camel into the desert until he reached his destination to trade. Instead, these trade caravans were filled with an entire seasons' goods and assets, ready to be bought and sold in the markets of faraway lands.

The travel itself was an intensively difficult operation. The Prophet (ﷺ) needed to plan

his route carefully. He needed to consider questions such as where to eat, where to rest, how much food to take on his journey to have enough for him, and those accompanying him. What were the safest routes to take, and how to preserve the safety of his entire caravan from highway robbers.

When he finally reached his destination, he needed to set up in the marketplace and negotiate and deal with traders, who were sometimes many years his senior. He needed to answer questions about his products, and complaints about his products. Despite all this he succeeded, and made the profits of previous traders that worked for Khadeejah multiple times over. He made the arduous return journey back to Makkah.

When the Prophet (ﷺ) returned to Makkah, Khadeejah was amazed, despite her own lengthy trade and business experience. She was amazed at the abnormally high rate of return on her business that this young man had achieved. But more importantly, learning about his honesty and truthfulness (he was known as al-Ameen) in business. This resulted in her marriage proposal to the Prophet (ﷺ), which was against the usual custom, where a man was expected to ask a woman in marriage, and not the other way around! So we return to where we began—the Prophet (ﷺ) marrying Khadeejah when he was 25 years old.

When I seriously reflect upon the circumstances of Prophet Muhammad's (ﷺ) education before his marriage to Khadeejah, I would like to think that there are four outstanding themes which, when implemented, can enhance our children's education.

## 1) Responsibility



The Prophet (ﷺ) was taught responsibility at a very young age. By the time he was 8 years old, he was employed as a herdsman, tasked with looking after animals. He was taught sharing in the responsibilities of his tribe and family, and by the time he became a teenager, he was already familiar with the duties of trade and politics.

It is important to teach our children to be responsible people from a young age, and not shield them from responsibility. Rather, as parents, we need to help our children identify tasks that they can easily undertake to teach them slowly and carefully many skills that will help them develop good character.

## 2) Positive Role Models



There are numerous examples for us from the lives of the companions, male and female, to teach our children high qualities and noble character. No matter how great wives and mothers are, and without taking anything at all from their amazing roles, we still require men in the lives of our children to give them a role model of a true Muslim man. The ummah needs men to teach boys to become men and teach our girls who are good men.

he learned the art of trade, and participated in war and politics.

Even when we look at the parent-child conversations and relationships that are narrated in the Qur'an, we will find many examples of conversations between a father and a son. Such as the conversation between Ibraheem and Ismaeel (37:102), Luqman and his son (31:13-20), Nuh and his son (11:42), and Yacob with Yusuf (12: 4-5), peace be upon them all. Perhaps, Allah is reminding us of the important role of the father and the importance he plays in the upbringing of children. And Allah knows best.

After the death of the Prophet's grandfather, we find that he spent the rest of his youth with his uncle Abu Talib, who was entrusted with his care. Under his guidance,

## 3) Enriching experiences



Different environments teach people different lessons. From living life in the desert and looking after animals, participating in a battle, and engaging in trade, the young Prophet (ﷺ) gained many physical and practical experiences.

in a child's life will positively shape and impact their character and skills forever.

Memorable, beneficial, and enriching experiences that consistently occur

The 21<sup>st</sup> century has ushered in the vast world of the Internet, making it easier for parents to give children media devices to keep them quiet for long periods of time. This can have a detrimental impact on the raising of

children around the world.

We, as parents, need to ensure our children play and explore the good outdoors. In this way, they will gain positive experiences that will help shape their character and values.

This includes their Islamic training. Giving a child enriching experiences

in life does not have to be limited to teaching them Islamic studies within the confines of the four walls of a classroom. Instead, teach them Islam through the dynamic interaction of the world around them. Such experiences will have a much more substantial impact on the positive development of our children.



## 4) Gradual progression

Our children's activities and experiences should be age-appropriate. Whether we are parents or guardians, we should know the level of each one of our youth and the developmental stage each child has reached. Utmost caution should be taken not to expose our children to the many forms of evil in this world unnecessarily. We don't need to burden them with more responsibilities than they can

undertake. Our children should have activities that are age-appropriate for them. If we are unfamiliar with a child's development, then we should educate ourselves by reading the abundance of material available nowadays. We need to apply the knowledge acquired from our studies, so we can be better teachers and educators to achieve the desired outcomes (with Allah's help).

Finally, every parent can attest to the fact that parenting is a very difficult task. We strive continually to match what we say (our knowledge) to what we do (our behavior). It presents a constant challenge to implement the best educational methods and practices to raise our children and be consistent at the same time. Human effort is inconsistent at best. But if we take gradual steps toward our noble goal constantly looking carefully to extract ways to inform ourselves as teachers, always asking Allah for His help, we can implement some of the practices present in the successful upbringing of Muhammad (ﷺ) who later became the last prophet.

And Allah knows best.



### By Yusuf Tang

Brother Yusuf has more than 15 years of corporate work experience, teaching, and da'wah. His qualifications include a B.A. Islamic Studies (Fiqh and Usool Al-Fiqh), B. Commerce (Accounting and Finance), Masters in Business Administration (MBA). He is currently pursuing a Masters in Fiqh while being the Resident Shariah Board Member of Islamic Cooperative Finance Australia Ltd. (ICFAL), where he was also previously the General Manager having led the organizational efforts in Shariah and local regulatory compliance along with his other responsibilities.



# IOU IN MOZAMBIQUE



Dr. Barry meeting with IOU Mozambique students.



Dr. Barry meeting with Mozambique's Higher Education administration.

The history of IOU in Mozambique began with the enrollment of the first Mozambican student in 2014. In 2020, Dr Bilal personally established the first IOU learning center at the request of the first Mozambican graduate of IOU..

Today, IOU students in Mozambique are enrolled in Education, IT, Psychology, Islamic Studies, and Business Administration.

The efforts to gain registration and accreditation of the IOU in the country are ongoing. The Vice-Chancellor of the IOU, Dr. Barry, met with senior officials from the Ministry of Science, Technology, and Higher Education to gather information about possible registration and accreditation. He also met with government officials from the location where the learning center is located and then with students in Angoche, Mozambique.



**By Br. Lobos José Tomé**

Br. Lobos is a teacher by profession with a B.A. degree in Islamic Studies from IOU.

# Atheists as a Fringe Group in Human History

**I**n the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

Although atheism is nothing new and has always existed throughout human history, it has never been as widespread as today. History shows only small groups of people sporadically embracing atheism (complete denial of the existence of a Supreme, Divine Creator of the Universe). This tells us that human beings' natural disposition is the belief in God as opposed to disbelief.

Regarding this matter, Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah [d. 728 AH / 1328 CE] said:

***“Denial of the Creator was never a predominant religion prevalent over any nation. Rather, the religion of the disbelievers who opposed the Divine Message was that of shirk. Only a few people denied the existence of the***

***Creator. These were scholars from among the Mushrik Sabian philosophers who used to worship temples, planets, and idols. The reports that have been narrated concerning their news and biographies are proof of that.”***

Further proof of this is that although Allah (Glorified and Exalted) narrated many stories of past nations in detail in the Qur'an, not one story of atheism being spread amongst a society was ever mentioned. Instead, He warned about the common phenomenon of shirk (directing one's worship to others besides Allah) that existed among all nations:

Allah says in surah Yusuf:

***“And most of them do not believe in Allah without associating others with Him [in worship].”***

Therefore, what was common



***The belief in the existence of a Supreme Divine Being, who created this world, is the natural human disposition always upheld throughout history.***

among people in the past was their mutual understanding of the existence of a Supreme Divine being—a Creator of everything that exists. This included the Mushrikoon (the polytheists, who believed in Allah's existence as the Creator, Provider, and Controller of the Universe. Allah says in surah Al-Ankabut:

***“If you ask them, ‘Who created the heavens and the earth and subjected the sun and the moon?’ They will certainly say, ‘Allah!’ How can they then be deluded?”***

Consequently, the prophets and messengers (peace be upon them) were not sent to prove God's existence since no one denied this accepted fact. Surah Ibraheem relates the messengers' recurring response when their people expressed doubt in what they were inviting them to:

***“Their messengers said, ‘Is there any doubt about Allah, Creator of the heavens and earth?’”***

Hence, they did not have to prove the existence of God. Instead, God sent them to invite the people to return to Tawheed, the Oneness of Allah, and that He alone deserves to be worshipped without any partners. Every time a nation deviated from the natural belief in the Oneness of the Creator, a new messenger was sent, calling the straying nation back to the belief in and worship of

the one true God.

The Andalusian Islamic scholar, Imam al-Shatibi [d. 790 AH / 1388 CE] in Al-'tisam states:

***“The origin of this dispute is in Tawhid and worshipping The One, The Truly Almighty. In general, the people did not differ in that they have One Divine Being who controls them and brought them into existence, but they differed in specifying who He is according to different views. Some said that the deity is two or five, nature, time, or the planets, and some said it is humans, trees, stones, and what they carve out of their hands. Some of them affirmed the necessary existence (of God). Yet, according to different views, it was not until God sent the prophets to clarify to their nations the truth and falsehood of what they disputed over.”***

So from the beginning, we can see that the point of contention was never about God's existence, but instead identifying who God is and whether He is alone, without a spouse, without sons or daughters or partners. This is why Allah sent the prophets and messengers to clarify His Oneness and His exclusive right to be worshipped.

Allah says in surah Al-Anbiya':

***“We never sent a messenger before you except that We revealed to him that, ‘There is***

*no god [worthy of worship] except Me, so worship Me [alone].”*

Imam al-Shahrastani [d. 548 AH / 1158 CE] states:

*“As for stripping the world of a Creator who is All-Knowing, Powerful, and Wise, I do not see that it is the view of anyone, nor do I know of anyone who holds such a view. This is why there is no mention [in Islamic sources] of the obligation to know the existence of the Creator. Instead, there is mention [of the obligation] to know Tawhid and negate shirk: “That is because, when Allah was called upon alone, you disbelieved; but when others were associated with Him [in worship], you believed.”*

Based on the above statements, it can be easily concluded that the belief in the existence of a Supreme Divine being, who created this world, is the natural

human disposition always upheld. Furthermore, it can be concluded that the denial of such a Creator is a very unnatural human belief that may have been adopted, in rare individual cases throughout history, for various reasons and motives not necessarily linked to the ‘absence of evidence’ [of God].

However, there have surfaced objections to this natural belief in God’s existence in today’s world, and atheism is spreading its devilish tentacles. Therefore, it has become incumbent to present solid evidence proving His existence to counter the theory of atheism in their attempts to disprove God’s existence or undermine the substantial evidence.

Ibn Taymiyyah says in this regard:

*“Affirmation of a Creator and His perfection is innate and necessary with respect to one whose fitrah (innate disposition) remains intact, even though there is much evidence that can be used to prove it. However, many people may require such evidence when the fitrah is altered, and circumstances affect it.”*

So the fact that we present logical arguments and factual evidence proving God’s existence does not diminish the self-evident nature of this belief, not requiring proof at all for those who understand. That is because humans are naturally predisposed to believe in a supreme divine being. It is an integral part of human nature and not merely something learned or acquired from society.

All success is from Allah, and Allah knows best.



### By Shaykh Mohamed Kamil Ahmad

Shaykh Ahmad holds a Master of Aqeedah and Islamic Thoughts from Qassim University, Saudi Arabia. Over the last decade, he has lectured in various countries and appeared on several satellite channels, including Peace TV and Huda TV. Besides being the IOU MAIS Assistant Lecturer, Shaykh Ahmad currently works as a teacher and religious adviser at Abu Huraira Center, Toronto, Canada.

**The best words that any human being can speak are words of guidance inviting people to the purpose of the creation — the worship of God.**





# IOU Student Representative: Ghana

**M**y name is Samudeen Yusif. I am a Ghanaian, a husband, and a father. I hold a degree in Bachelors of Education (Management) from the University of Cape Coast, Masters of Business Administration (Marketing) from the University of Ghana Business School, Certificate in Project Management, an Affiliate Membership of Chartered Institute of Marketing, UK.

Before joining IOU as the Country Representative in 2014, I worked in different capacities as Marketing & Sales officer, an Administrative Assistant, Administrator, and Project Coordinator with many local and international governmental and non-governmental organizations, including the United Nations Food and Agriculture Regional Office for Africa, Huawei Technologies Co. Ltd, Ghana, among others.

I also double as the Lead of the 1 Million Scholarship Project for Africa (1mas) in addition to my current portfolio with IOU. This project seeks "to end poverty by providing Leadership, Research, and Employable Skills to 1 million youths in Africa by 2030." I supervise the project's implementation by coordinating efforts and providing support to the country representatives working on the project.

## Brief Information About Ghana and Its Muslim Community

Ghana is a beautiful and peaceful country located in West Africa, bordering the Gulf of Guinea, between Cote d'Ivoire and Togo. Formerly called the Gold Coast, Ghana is blessed with many natural resources such as gold, timber, industrial diamonds, bauxite, manganese, fish, rubber, hydropower, petroleum, silver,

salt, limestone. The population of Ghana is over 29,767,108 (World Bank) and consists of Christians 71.2% (Pentecostal/Charismatic 28.3%, Protestant 18.4%, Catholic 13.1%, other 11.4%), Muslims 17.6%, traditional 5.2%, other 0.8%, none 5.2% (Index Mudi).

Like any other, the Muslim community has some challenges, and I feel, as an Ummah, we are working on overcoming them. Some challenges directly affecting our youth include the internal migration of young Muslim females from the North to the southern cities for "kayaye" (Head porter), external migration of the males through a risky path to Europe in search of greener pastures, and a growing number of Muslim youth actively engaging in sports betting, gambling, among other, as a result of unemployment and other socio-economic related problems.



Vice-Chancellor Meeting with the Minister in Charge of Higher Education



Dr. Bilal Meeting National Chief Imam



Dr. Bilal Meeting National Imam Ahlissuna Waljamaa



Dr. Bilal Meeting IOU Students of Ghana



Dr. Bilal Speaking at the Association of African Universities



IOU Learning Center in Ghana

I believe these challenges are rising due to several factors, including the Ummah not having a proper welfare system in place to address the problem of poverty and employment among the youth, women, and children in Muslim communities in Ghana. With the IOU 1 million Scholarship Project's launching, more youth in Ghana and Africa will have the opportunity to learn and be informed and, God willing, Muslim communities will overcome their challenges.

### **IOU Ghana Achievements**

When I took over as the Representative, there were a little over 700 registered students in Ghana. Although not much has been achieved, we have more than 5000 registered students in Ghana studying in the various certificate, diploma, and degree programs offered by International Open University. This has not been an individual effort but a team effort from the IOU staff and students and the Muslim leadership in Ghana.

With Allah's help, we have come this far through hard work and coordinated teamwork from the students' body and Muslim

leadership in promoting IOU in Ghana and beyond through various channels, including but not limited to building stronger relationships with students. Our daily tasks include direct phone calls and emails to follow upon dormant and potential students.

I have traveled the length and breadth of Ghana, meeting students and community leaders, organizing several activities and events that will create awareness about IOU and its programs. Visits of the Chancellor and the Vice-chancellor of IOU to Ghana, which I have coordinated, gave us a much bigger platform to promote IOU to Ghanaians and top officials in the country. In the course of these visits, I facilitated the organization of high-profile meetings with key partners in the government and non-governmental institutions to discuss means of supporting the youth of Ghana and Africa at large who must access quality but affordable tertiary education to contribute to the changing of their nations through education successfully.

### **Achievements of Imas**

As the Leader of the 1 million Scholarship Project for Africa, I

had the opportunity to travel to Uganda, Sierra Leone, to work with other IOU representatives in Africa to promote and also lay the foundation for the offtake of the 1mas project. I was directly involved in setting up Learning and Examination Centers in Uganda, Ghana and Sierra Leone, and indirectly supporting other African Reps with the implementation of the 1mas project in the IOU Country office in Africa.

### **Advice to Representatives and Student Committees**

Representing the IOU brand is a trust and a greater responsibility that requires commitment, tenacity, self-motivation, creativity, and innovativeness. Promoting IOU is promoting a paradigm shift from the traditional system of education and ways of doing things. This comes with various challenges and obstacles. It is the responsibility of IOU representatives to be creative and innovative in dealing with the challenges that come our way.



### **By Samudeen Yusif**

Br. Samudeen is the IOU Ghana Representative. He holds a Master of Business Administration (Marketing) from the Ghana Business School, B.Ed. (Management Option) from the University of Cape Coast and a Certificate in Project Management, Accra, Ghana.

# IOU Vice-Chancellor Tours Southeast African Countries to Promote IOU

The IOU Vice-Chancellor Dr. Cherno Omar Barry undertook an official trip to several countries in Southeast Africa to promote IOU and foster ties between IOU students, representatives, and university officials in these countries.



## Tanzania

His first stop was Tanzania where he was welcomed by the secretary of the Chief Mufti of Tanzania, Sheikh Musa bin Jamal, and his team. Among the topics discussed at the high-level meeting were facilitating the enrollments of prospective local students in IOU programs and the establishment of IOU learning centers in various cities. He also met His Eminence the Chief Mufti of Tanzania, Sheikh Aboubakary Zubeiry. The subject of their talks was the facilitation of the enrollments of prospective local students in IOU programs and the establishment of IOU learning centers in various cities in Tanzania.

The translation of IOU curricula from English to the Swahili language was also discussed followed by a presentation on the 1MAS project and a proposition of other possible steps for further strengthening partnerships with the IOU. The line-up of issues to be discussed in this trip included the establishment of a strong, long-lasting partnership between the International Open University (IOU) and Bakwata Online Academy (Future: Bakwata University) and seeking accreditation of the IOU courses in Tanzania so that IOU degrees will be recognized for Tanzanian graduates.



## Mozambique

The IOU Vice-Chancellor started his visit in Mozambique by a meeting at the Ministry of Science, Technology and Higher Education to present the IOU to the senior officials and seek guidance from the ministry on the registration and accreditation of the IOU in the country. The meeting was very successful, and Dr. Barry left with a copy of the higher education law and recommendations for accreditation.

Dr. Cherno Omar Barry also met with a delegation from the Islamic Council Mozambique CISLAMO (Conselho Islamico de Mocambique), owner of facilities provided to the IOU free of charge, to strengthen mutual cooperation further.

One of the aims of the visit to Mozambique was to establish ties and cooperation between the IOU and potential collaborators in the process of accreditation of the IOU in Mozambique.



## Malawi

Dr. Barry met with the IOU Malawi local board, the Advisory Committee of the IOU Malawi Campus, and the Principal of the International College of Business and Management (ICBM), with whom he discussed many issues concerning the existing educational relationship between IOU and ICBM.

He also met with the CEO of the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) to follow up on accreditation efforts.

A meeting aimed at reviving the scholarship opportunities for IOU needy students was held with the Director of the Islamic Zakat Fund (IZF).

Before concluding his visit, Dr. Barry met the Senior Supervisor of Mai Aisha Children's home to discuss sharing project ideas and cooperation between the IOU and Mai Aisha Trust.



## Kenya

The visit to Kenya included a discussion on the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), between the IOU and the Umma University represented by the newly appointed Umma Vice-Chancellor Dr. Halima.



Dr. Barry met the Manager of the Jamia Training Institute, which is to be the first IOU exam center with the assistance of the Arabic language on-ground for IOU students.

Another meeting with the Muslim Education Council (MEC) and the members of Maahda Daawa Organization, as well as the Chairman of Sir Ali Muslim Club, was very productive. The MEC offered to the IOU an office and study center at the new college in Park Road.

The Muslim Education and Welfare Association (MEWA) offered their computers to any IOU student that needs it.



## Zambia

After meeting with the media at the Islamic Supreme Council headquarters in Lusakaat, the IOU Vice-Chancellor addressed a group of women from the Muslim Sisters United International. These sisters, champions in local dawah and the promotion of female education, were recently granted an office to be used as the IOU center.

During his visit, Dr. Barry delivered condolences to the family of the late IOU Zambia Representative, Sheikh Siddique Kaputula, who died from Covid 19 last year.

He further visited the IOU's nominee examination center based at Bulangililo's Mosque within Kitwe, where he met with current and prospective students.



## Rwanda

Dr. Barry met the management of the University of Tourism and Business Studies (UTB) in Rwanda to discuss the implementation of the MoU between both institutions. During his visit to the UTB Campus in Rubavu, Dr. Barry held a press conference highlighting the future partnership with UTB and IOU activities in Rwanda and all over the world.

Dr. Barry also met with the management of the Rwanda Muslim Community (RMC) and the Islamic Cultural Center Kigali, and presented himself to the National Examination and School Inspection Authority (NESA).

While in Rwanda, the IOU Vice-Chancellor met IOU students and officials.

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# How to excel in online studies: Tips from IOU toppers



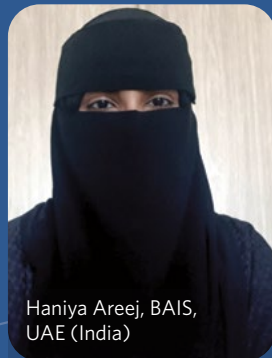
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BMAIS, Indonesia



Farah Abdul Gaffar, ABA,  
USA (India)



Abdulrazaq Busari, B.Sc.  
IBE, Nigeria



Haniya Areej, BAIS,  
UAE (India)



Kanza Mohammad, B.Sc.  
PSY & BSc.IT, Saudi Arabia



Muhammed Sonko, B.Sc.  
IBE, The Gambia,

**My name is Aji Wahyudi.** I am from Java, Indonesia. I have enrolled in the Bachelors of Information Technology. Alhamdulillah.

Before December 2018, I studied without a laptop. I used to use a smartphone to complete 80-90% of my work, including exams and assignments.

It was challenging and tiring. I am grateful that I was able to complete it successfully. Alhamdulillah.

I would like to share with you some of the things that helped me in my studies:

The most important thing I can suggest for any study is—pray to Allah.

Secondly, take good notes after listening to lessons or elaborate on the existing ones while reading. Also, some applications that I found beneficial are Note, PDF Reader, Document Maker, and dictionary.

Thirdly, if you are using a phone, make sure your notifications are limited by restricting the background or something similar (i.e., when we attempt the tests or enter the study). Too many apps running in the background may drain the battery life of your device very quickly. Try to prolong it by minimizing usage. It would be better if more than one device is available.

The most significant advantage of studying at IOU is getting some Sharia lessons even though I am an IT student.

It is sporadic to see the inculcation of Tafseer or Fiqh courses in detail within the Information Technology Faculty. Although all Sharia courses are included as basic knowledge, including the Islamic content helps keep up the spirit.

The most beneficial thing about studying online is its flexible schedule, i.e., we can access the course almost anytime and anywhere. Thus, we can focus our energy on



studies; for example, we do not need to arrange our time for transportation, etc.

**My name is Khulood Naji Al-Gumaei.** I am Yemeni by nationality, but I was born and raised in Saudi Arabia. I enrolled in the Master's program at IOU.

I heard about IOU through the "Bil Qur'aani Ihtadayt" programan episode which presented how Dr. Bilal Philips converted to Islam. I immediately rushed and searched and registered in it as I saw it as an irreplaceable opportunity. I was pleased to know that I could study for a Master's in Islamic Studies even though my Bachelor's studies were not in the same field (Islamic studies). Additionally, studying online is beneficial for those who have a job because it facilitates the combination of work and study.

What I appreciate most about IOU is how it genuinely represents Islamic morals in the way they deal, care, and master their work, even in the email communication they send to students.

I like to share with my Sisters and Brothers the three most important things that helped my studies after seeking help and success from Allah:

First: The Arabic language. Although I am not good enough in English, my knowledge of Arabic supported me strongly because the origin of the Islamic sciences is the Arabic language.

Second: Reading books and materials from external sources other than the University's course books. If I come across brief information, I look for it extensively.

Third: Reviewing the material several times before the test makes the information thorough.

I hope everyone gets high marks in this world and the hereafter.

**My name is Farah Abdul Gaffar.** I am pursuing an Associate of Business Administration from IOU. I am originally from India but reside in the suburbs of Chicago, United States. I was introduced to IOU by my husband after marriage as I wanted to study further.

Initially, it was new for me because I had never studied anything online, but once I got used to the online platform, it felt easy. The best thing I felt about IOU was that it not only provides the option to study Duniya but also provides knowledge about Deen.

Another benefit of IOU is that the courses are online and self-paced. I don't have to worry about the commute or class timings. I usually study from 11 AM to 4 PM during the semester. I do not study on weekends as I do my household stuff and give time to my family. I feel blessed and honored to be a part of IOU, and I am thrilled that the knowledge I am gaining will help me in this life and hereafter.

**My name is Kifaayah Olokun.** I'm a Nigerian living in the United Arab Emirates with my husband and kids. I'm studying for Bachelor in Arabic Language and Linguistics. No doubt having to complete the module tests coupled with other responsibilities can be challenging, but some of the human efforts I put in which I've found beneficial include:

- 1) Complete a minimum of one module per day or two modules if I miss out on some days; this allows me to stay on track and ensure completion of my module tests before the exams.
- 2) Make sure to watch all videos and study all the attached slides while taking notes for better understanding. When I have doubts, I correspond with the lecturer or the assistant lecturer, and alhamdulillah; they are usually of great help.
- 3) Ensure to revise the slides, notes, and the module tests one final time before

attempting the exams (midterm and finals).

I'm delighted to be studying at IOU, and for me, the most significant advantage is gaining access to lecturers who are authorities in the respective courses for a modest fee.

Studying online is an easy and convenient medium that, by Allah's Mercy, enables me to continue my search for true Islamic knowledge while fulfilling my obligations as a wife and mother, alhamdulillah.

**I am Kanza Mohammad** from Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. I am studying dual-stream in B.Sc Psychology and BSc.IT at IOU, along with other courses here in Jeddah, alhamdulillah.

Completing school and not pursuing my dreams made me feel hopeless and confused, mainly because my school preferred materialistic settings with no concept of balancing both worldly education and Islamic knowledge. I never saw anything like IOU, where Islam is taught with such love and kindness, encouraging us to become better people.

Balancing between the dual-stream at IOU, along with a job and some other responsibilities and pressures, is indeed difficult. With the help of Allah, I get up every day and tell myself, "I can do this!"

I try my best to study IOU courses not just to pass but also to understand the material and contemplate on what I have read. I prefer printing notes out and watching videos when I am free, even if I am not at home. I suggest everyone makes their studies their best friends and treats them accordingly—IOU is my best friend.

IOU is one of the best things that ever happened to me. It gave me new dreams and hopes. It gave me the confidence to question things and pursue independent research. It guided me on so many

occasions where I truly struggled with my identity and thoughts.

Alhamdulillah, my love for psychology and my IT profession are both taken care of by IOU. It taught me that the best path is not always where everyone else is going, but the one that makes us feel peaceful, happy, and proud of ourselves. Allah indeed has the best plans for all of us.

**My name is Haniya Areej Syed Nusrat Ullah.** I am an Indian national currently residing in UAE. I am enrolled in IOU as a BAIS student.

My typical day of study starts after Fajr, as this is when my brain focuses the most! I begin by skimming through the lessons (reading assignments) provided for the module to get an idea of what the lesson is about. I then listen to the recorded lecture while making notes. Next, I read the book and the notes I made aloud, which helps me remember. Afterward, I attempt the test. I also ensure that I take regular breaks in between, as it helps concentration.

Something that also helps me understand what I study is teaching it to someone, be it my parents, a friend, or back to my own self. Remaining consistent on this pattern is relatively easy since the education is online, and the primary advantage of studying online is the flexibility it provides.

When I started my studies at IOU, I was introduced to a vast amount of authentic and genuine information, which was one of the greatest benefits I obtained. Among the things I learned was the teaching of the Prophet (saw) when he said, "Indeed Allah has decreed ihsan (excellence) in everything" (Muslim).

This saying motivated me to learn in the best way possible and make the most out of being a part of this fantastic University.

### **My name is Opeyemi Kazeem Olofintuyi.**

My place of residence is the city of Ibadan in Oyo state (South-West Nigeria). My first degree is in Veterinary medicine from the prestigious University of Ibadan (Nigeria) and an MSc degree in Veterinary Microbiology from the same institution. I enrolled in the Certificate in Business Administration program at IOU to enhance my administrative and managerial skills, which are essential qualities of a 'modern veterinarian.'

As an unsteady private veterinary practitioner, I have a flexible and quite unpredictable schedule. A good part of my free hours are devoted to my IOU studies. The lecture videos are a no-go area for me since data subscription is relatively expensive in Nigeria. So I usually listen to the audio lectures and read PDF files/ PowerPoint slides during my somewhat free hours.

These are some of the practices I have adopted in my studies:

Critically examine the nature of each course and devise the most suitable study approach.

For me, there is no rule of thumb when it comes to studying. I try to identify the peculiarities of each course and the style of the instructor(s). Then I come up with my study plan and approach for each course based on the identified peculiarities.

Setting realistic weekly targets in each course.

At the beginning of the week, I set targets to be achieved in various courses. On Friday evenings, I assess how many of my targets have been met, and I also map out strategies to catch up over the weekends if I realize that I am lagging behind.

Making my lecture materials handy and easily accessible.

My practice is to have copies of my course materials on my phones which I can listen to or go through anywhere I wish (even while in transit). Within the house, I connect my devices to external Bluetooth speakers, which allows me to listen to lectures while performing other tasks.

Studying at IOU is a rare opportunity to acquire secular knowledge in the light of Islam. The excesses and shortcomings of the secular concepts are checked by Islamic principles at IOU. The most amazing attribute of online study is that it allows me to learn at my own pace and convenience.

**My name is Muhammed Sonko**, and I am from the Gambia, a country located in West Africa. Alhamdulillah, I have completed the Degree program in Islamic Economics, Banking and Finance.

As an IOU student, over the years, I have realized that time management is the most crucial factor determining the success or failure of most IOU students. During my first and second semesters, I did very poorly as a result of poor time management. In response, I devised a strategy and tasked myself to complete two modules each day.

I attempt the first module in the morning and the second module in the evening.

While studying, I will always take notes to help me memorize critical points. Using this technique, I was able to meet all deadlines and had very successful semesters.

The most significant advantage of studying with IOU is gaining knowledge from Islamic and conventional perspectives.

Furthermore, studying online helped me to achieve two degrees within five years. Presently, I am working as a Research Assistant with a statistical firm called A&T Consulting Services.

**My name is Suhendra Ahmad**, and my kunya is Abu Zaid. I studied in Ma'had in Bandung, Indonesia. Previously, I had studied under an Ustadz who had graduated from Yemen. Under him, I studied Sahih Muslim, Sahih al-Bukhari, Bulug ul-Maram, and Umdah al-Ahkaam. I work as a Software Architect in a company based in Jakarta from Monday to Friday.

My Ustadz motivated me to pursue more knowledge and suggested that I go to Yemen to learn from the scholars there, but the war began. So, I went to Malaysia and had no luck finding an Ahlus Sunnah school until I stumbled upon IOU on the Internet. Alhamdulillah.

Usually, after shurooq, I start with the first module, then I go to the office. Once I get back from the office, I do another module from 'Asr to Maghrib. After Maghrib, I teach Tahsin in the Mosque until Isha prayer. After Isha, I continue with other modules as much as I can. Sometimes, I can finish two lessons, but more often only one. This is alongside my own personal study like memorizing the Quran, learning anything related to my work, and teaching my kids. Alhamdulillah, Allah still gives me time to do all of this.

There are some tips that one needs to adhere to when starting online studies.

Firstly, intention and motivation. You always have to have a pure intention while seeking knowledge and also motivation in your heart. My greatest inspiration was to use my knowledge to benefit the people by doing dawah, inshaAllah. We ask Allah for firmness to overcome laziness. Ameen.

Secondly, set a long-term goal, for example, when do you want to finish all the courses in a semester, and set the calendar, so you will not forget.

Thirdly, set smaller goals, like how many courses you can finish daily. Do whatever

it takes to remove distractions so you can focus on your courses alone when listening/watching. As for me, I only watch the lessons once with full focus. I need to focus on every lesson because I don't have enough time to replay everything twice. But, if one has more time, replaying the lesson is better.

The greatest benefit for me studying with IOU is that the lecturers are of Ahlus Sunnah Wal Jamaah. The books being taught are also from notable scholars like Sheikh Salih al-Fawzan, Sheikh Muhammad Ibn Abdil Wahhab, etc.

Another significant benefit for me to study online is setting my own schedule and goals. I can divide my time according to my needs but still follow a very good schedule. Discipline is essential here because, without discipline, one cannot reach their goal.

**My name is Zainab Fahm-Mustapha**. I recently completed a Certificate course in Computer Information Technology, CIT.

I hold the second position amongst my three siblings and I am the only female. I am married and have been blessed with three amazing children. I am a Nigerian but currently reside in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia with my family.

My usual study day begins after dropping off my kids at school and completing basic chores in the house in the morning. I always make sure that I do not follow heavy chores with studying without rest because I believe that the whole body should be in harmony to achieve a fulfilled study period. However, my best study time is at night, after my kids' bedtime.

I always like to pray before my study time. For example, before I begin studying in the morning, I pray salat-ul-duha. Likewise, I follow up studying with qiyaamul-layl. Alhamdulillah. It helps me to achieve

tranquility of the heart and concentration before studying.

In addition, I carefully choose the immediate environment that I study in by ensuring that it is distraction-free. Also, I carefully select my study time to achieve a quality study period. These three tips have worked effectively for me and still work, alhamdulillah.

The biggest advantage I had studying at IOU

was the improvement of my knowledge of the Deen. I will never forget that, and I will always be grateful to Allah then to IOU for that, inshaAllah. My experience at was all-encompassing!

I am genuinely grateful for being able to acquire knowledge at my convenience maximally. Yes, I love every bit of that. Alhamdulillah. I am thankful for this opportunity. Thank you very much. Long live IOU!



Amro Ibrahim, BMAIS,  
Canada (Egypt)

**My name is Amro Ibrahim**, an Egyptian residing in Canada. While a father of three children and a full-time employee, I have completed the BMAIS program.

In IOU, I found an organized, condensed, and comprehensive program to suit my pace and passion for Islamic knowledge.

The following are my three most important tips for adequate studies.

Firstly, I found time management to play the most significant role, and it is always the first excuse for those who give up

early. Sometimes, time spent scrolling the Facebook or Twitter feed is enough to read an entire book!

Secondly, learning Arabic, which opens a boundless treasure of resources, is necessary. The resources available in English do not exceed 1% of the published Arabic material.

And lastly, taking notes and summarizing textbooks, discussing topics with other students of knowledge, or teaching what you learned, all of that restructures and fixes the acquired knowledge in one's mind.

# Toward Holistic Education

## Aim of Education and Importance of Islamization

“Education is not preparation for life; education is life itself.” John Dewey

Education and learning are essential to gain knowledge that transforms a person, his thoughts, and his perspective. It also helps to think logically and learn the values and skills needed to function in society. This, in turn, impacts the progress of society as a whole.

But secular education is consistent with secular philosophies and has no link with Islamic concepts. There is more emphasis on status and materialism, and those who have money and position are

proclaimed as the successful ones. This is why solutions provided by the education system to many issues do not have long-term answers or proper explanations. How are you to bring about the needed change in a society when the knowledge acquired and implemented is not free from corruption and selfish pursuits?

This is why the Islamization of education is important. It will help guide this secular knowledge to its proper use in a way appropriate for human benefit and society. We should not only be equipped with knowledge but with wisdom too. As far as the Muslim

ummah is concerned, gaining only secular education keeps us from investing in a healthy spiritual connection, which can cause harm in developing our personality from the Islamic perspective. It will also result in a materialistic approach and produce an individual who will look at religion as something separate and not connected to the discipline he is pursuing.

### SIGNIFICANCE OF INSTILLING MORAL PRINCIPLES IN EDUCATION

“When educating the minds of our youth, we must not forget to educate their hearts.” Dalai Lama

Why is the Islamization of education necessary? As discussed, it is to develop a spiritual connection in terms of education to be applied in terms of wisdom. As said, education helps to reform society. But how much does our education system focus on integrity, morality, and a sense of social responsibility? Or even if it does, is knowledge imparted and implemented correctly? Human experimentation has its limitations and cannot restrict what is beneficial or harmful to us. What is right may not always be common; likewise, what is common may not always be correct. Secular education has its own definition of moral responsibility based on society's contemporary perception of right or wrong. It is not based on fixed principles and changes with time, society, and culture. Many theories, like relativism, egoism, utilitarianism, etc., have been developed to tackle the issue of morality and ethics.

But from various researches, it has been understood that most of these theories have led to failure in establishing ethically correct attitudes or decisions. In Islam, however, ethics and morality are based on established Islamic principles derived from the Qur'an and Sunnah.

Islamic principles are based on the foundations of khayr (goodness), haqq (truth), birr (righteousness), 'adl (justice), halal (permissible), haram (forbidden), etc.

When these principles, along with knowledge of God-consciousness, are instilled in the curriculum, they help achieve success both at the individual and community level. For example, best leadership lessons can be derived from the seerah of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) and numerous exemplary stories mentioned in the Qur'an, such as the story of Dhul Qarnayn, the historical account of the people of the cave, etc. Even the best of man-made theories fall flat in front of the lessons we learn from these great men.

### DOES EDUCATION AFFECT HAPPINESS AND MENTAL WELL-BEING?

"Happiness and moral duty are inseparably connected." George Washington

Even though education was found to be directly associated with a good income, high social status, etc., the total positive effects of education have not affected society despite increased knowledge and communication.

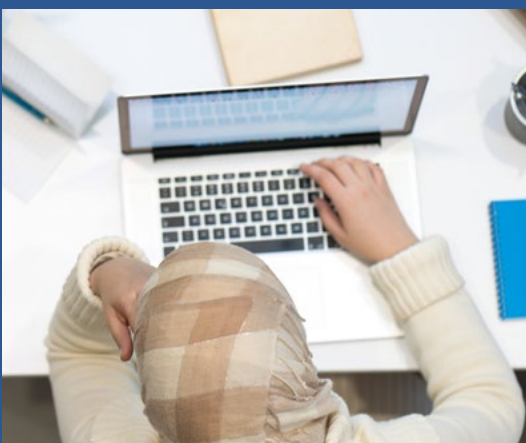
There are various areas in which education has failed, and the cause of this remains vague. It does not provide happiness or a sense of well-being in most cases. Strangely, sometimes people with low education and low to moderate socio-economic status value themselves more and are happy with their life, which contributes to their overall happiness and satisfaction. This makes it quite clear that it's not just the level of qualification and education that provides inner satisfaction, but it's what you do with it.

Our education system should be remodeled so that apart from teaching proficiency in respective disciplines, students should also be well equipped to deal with personal or social issues from the proper perspective, i.e., the Islamic perspective. One of the most intriguing questions which lingers in a human mind is the purpose of our creation, and one of the goals of education in Islam is to understand the objective of human creation. After spending 15-20 years in gaining an education, a Muslim should know his goal or purpose of life. So it is through Islamization that a Muslim can be a productive member of society.



### By Mubeena Ifthikaruddin

Sr. Mubeena is a Lecturer in the Education Department at the IOU and a Course Facilitator for the IOU Diploma section. She has worked as an Educator at the Faculty of Science and was an active volunteer for various Islamic programs.



# New at IOU: Doctoral Degree (Ph.D.) in Islamic Sciences

Research degrees such as doctorates in various disciplines are the highest level of qualifications awarded by universities around the world. We are pleased to commence this program at IOU this Spring 2021 semester—another milestone in the University's development.

This step has further strengthened the IOU spectrum to prepare a new generation of young intellectuals in achieving our objective: "changing the nation through education."

The overarching objective of the program is to produce scholars and researchers who can serve the global Muslim community, especially in spreading Islamic knowledge, with the aim of addressing contemporary challenges faced by the Muslim world. The program aims to:

1. Develop competence and proficiency in the area of research in each candidate.
2. Produce original contributions to the body of Islamic and contemporary research and literature.
3. Provide candidates with opportunities to explore contemporary challenges and research questions via the lens of Islamic Studies.

Therefore, the scholars produced by the University will not only help in the development of Muslim communities around the world, but they will also help promote global peace, prosperity, and co-existence.

This program is purely based on research, and candidates will complete an independent research



project under the supervision of highly experienced professors. The Doctorate program may be concluded over a minimum period of three years of full-time study.

IOU has a dedicated team of highly-qualified and experienced professors that will provide a high level of supervision to candidates. Completing specialized courses in Research Methodology, coupled with a doctoral thesis writing and oral defense, is required.

Candidates may pursue their Ph.D. in pure Islamic Studies, with a concentration in either Qur'anic Exegesis, Hadeeth, or Fiqh, or Interdisciplinary Studies that center around core issues/topics of Islamic Studies. Interdisciplinary Studies may include, but is not limited to, exploring issues of:

- Pure science
- Applied sciences
- Humanities
- Social sciences from the perspectives of the Quran and Hadeeth (sources of Islamic jurisprudence).

A doctoral thesis must demonstrate genuine scholarship that contributes to the existing body of knowledge. The content has to reflect comprehensive understanding and control of the subject and show proficiency in the ability to amass and consolidate evidence to come to logical conclusions. The eligible criteria for admission in Ph.D. are that candidates must hold:

1. Master's degree in Islamic Studies, completed in English; or,
2. Master's degree in other fields of study, such

as Law, Religious Studies, or Theology.

3. Master's degree in any discipline of humanities, social sciences, pure or applied sciences. However, the holders of these degrees must have sound Islamic knowledge. The candidates who do not have strong Islamic backgrounds are required to send their transcripts to the University. Such applicants, however, might be required to study deficiency course(s) to be determined by the Higher Degrees Committee on a case-by-case basis.

Regarding the language competency, applicants must demonstrate proficiency in English (academic and scientific), in addition to basic comprehension of Arabic. In exceptional cases, the thesis may be allowed to be conducted in Arabic if the University's respective authority approves it.

In the first semester, students will complete two research methodologies courses and prepare a research proposal for the thesis. By the end of the first semester, based on the requirements of their research topics, supervisors will be allocated to them. From the beginning of semester two and onward, students will work on their thesis. They will also produce at least two research papers to be published in reputed refereed academic journals. In the final semester, with their respective supervisors and the advanced study committee's approval, they will submit the final drafts of their theses for external evaluation. Based on satisfactory reports of external examiners and the thesis's successful public defense, the candidate will be awarded the Ph.D. degree.



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# IOU Ijazah Program: How the student became a teacher



**My name is Muhammad Yusuf**, and I'm from Nepal. I'm a former student of the IOU's Global Quran Memorization Center (GQMC) and now one of its teachers.

It was always my passion to memorize the entire Qur'an. When, by the grace of Allah, I completed memorizing it,

I found that GQMC has the Ijazah program for the huffaz. In my country, this type of Ijazah course isn't offered in the local Quranic schools. I was eager to join the GQMC and obtain my Ijazah (certification).

Alhamdulillah, I have benefited from enrolling in the Ijazah program. I was able to refine my tajweed, gain deeper insight into its rules, correct my mistakes, and improve my recitation skills. My teacher, Sheikh Mustafa Raslan, really helped me a lot in achieving my goals. May Allah reward him.

Thanks to GQMC, I have gained confidence in my recitation while

implementing all tajweed rules.

After graduation, I felt a sense of increased responsibility to teach what I have learned and gained from GQMC. I'm very blessed to now be teaching at the same institution where I received so much support.

I sincerely advise students who are considering joining the GQMC's Ijazah program to come and join the program. It will help you tremendously in perfecting your recitation by applying the tajweed rules and, practically, by adhering to the message of the Quran.



**My name is Usman Yahya Yola**, and I'm from Nigeria.

I choose to join the GQMC's Ijazah program not only to obtain the Sanad (certification) but also to

have the authority to teach the Quran.

During my time as a student of the Ijazah program, I had some of the best and happiest moments I've ever experienced. Reciting the entire Quran from the comfort of my home, made me feel that every verse I recited to my Sheikh was a blessing.

After graduation, I felt very happy, more so than when I memorized Quran. Now, having Sanad, I felt like my memorization was

complete and wholesome. Alhamdulillah, I am now among the transmitters of the Quran, and I vow to teach it until my last breath. InshaAllah

I strongly advise everyone who memorized the Quran and wishes to obtain a Sanad to join the GQMC Ijazah program and bear any hardship he/she may encounter for the sake of Allah. It is absolutely worth the effort.



**The GQMC Ijazah program** has three classes per week (60 minutes each). In the first two sessions, a student recites from memory to his or her teacher five pages of the Quran. After listening to the recitation, the teacher evaluates it, corrects any tajweed mistakes, and gives the student tips on improving the recitation. In the third session, the student will study a poem.

Upon successfully completing the program, the student will receive an Ijazah (certification) in Quranic memorization and a certificate for two poems upon memorizing: Tuhfat ul-Atfal and Al-Jazariyyah.

The estimated duration to complete the program is one or two years, depending on the recitation skills of the student.

The classes are one-on-one (not in a group) with male teachers for Brothers and female teachers for Sisters.

The minimum requirements for admission

into the Ijazah program are:

1. Having already memorized the whole Al-Quran Al-Kareem OR a minimum of 15 juz (chapters) with a condition to complete the memorization with a teacher in the same IOU Ijazah program. The new 15 chapters will then be reviewed repeatedly until fully memorized usually over one or two semesters according to the student's ability
2. Reciting to the teacher with eyes covered.
3. Ability to recite the Quran with tajweed.
4. Since this certificate (Ijazah) is the same as the one held by the senior professors, students who wish to gain this honor will have to recite from memory the majority of the Quranic chapters to confirm that they have reached the level of "perfection of memorization", and the correct application of tajweed rules.

# The Prophet (ﷺ) as an Exemplary Teacher

Muslims must aim to revive the teaching methodology and the role of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) as a teacher in our educational institutions and everyday lives. This is particularly relevant in today's developing world, where teaching is looked down upon as it is the lowest-paid profession. The consequence of this negative view is that there is an acute shortage of Muslim teachers for "modern secular subjects" in schools all over the Muslim world. I have visited the best Islamic schools in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, home to over 50 million Muslims, and in virtually all of them, Muslim teachers were outnumbered by others. Likewise, when

I was setting up an Islamic school in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India, home to over 200 million Muslims, it was difficult to find suitable Muslim teachers for the so-called "secular" subjects.

However, the Islamic reality is that Allah described Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) primarily as an educator, saying:

"It is He who sent from among the unlettered a Messenger reciting His verses to them, purifying them and teaching them the Book and the Wisdom..." (Surah al-Jumu'ah, 62:2)

The Prophet (ﷺ) himself reiterated this fact in a

hadeeth narrated by Jaabir:

"Allah did not send me as an inflexible troublemaker, but rather He sent me as a teacher and a facilitator." [1]

## Value of Teachers

The Prophet (ﷺ) elevated the role of the teacher to a level that every Muslim should strive to reach. In a hadeeth narrated by Abu Hurayrah, he said:

"The world and its contents are cursed except for the remembrance of Allah and what helps to do it, the scholar/teacher and the student." [2]

Furthermore, the Prophet



(ﷺ) praised those who learned and taught the Qur'an as being the best among Muslims saying, as quoted by 'Uthmaan:

"The best of you are those who learn the Qur'an and teach it to others." [3]

In the West, teachers are highly valued and highly paid. Primary and secondary educational institutions understand full well that the higher the quality of teachers, the better the standard of the graduates, according to the IT principle of "Garbage in, garbage out."

Consequently, we need to encourage our intelligent and motivated youth, beginning with our own children, to study education as their first choice and not as their last career option if they cannot get admission into colleges of medicine, law, and engineering.

We need to revise our teaching methodology from rote learning to developing understanding, from teacher-centered to student-centered as the West has done since the 60's. They discovered the "Inquiry Method" of teaching and revamped their educational institutions, while most of the developing Muslim world remains stuck with the rote method of learning, a methodology which they inherited from the schools of their erstwhile colonial masters. It is a little-known fact that the



rote learning method has its origins in the Catholic catechisms (Q&A's of Faith) of the Late Middle Ages (15th Century CE).

Sadly, Muslims have neglected the Prophetic method of teaching, which was the original Inquiry Model and began with asking a question.

For example, during the Farewell Hajj on the 10th of Thul-Hijjah, the Prophet (ﷺ) asked all those present, "Do you know that day this is?" They replied, "Allah and His Messenger know best." The Prophet (ﷺ) remained silent until the Companions thought he was going to rename it, i.e., call it by another name. Then he (ﷺ) asked, "Is this not the Day of Sacrifice?" and the crowd answered, "Yes indeed!" Then he (ﷺ) went on to inform them of the message he wanted to convey, saying: "Indeed, your blood and your wealth are as sacred as this day of yours, in this month of yours, in this land of yours, until you meet your Lord..." [4]

Abu Hurayrah reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) asked the

Companions: "Do you know who is bankrupt?" They replied, "The bankrupt among us is the one without money or goods." The Prophet (ﷺ) then told them who is truly bankrupt. He said: "Indeed, the bankrupt of my nation are those who come before Allah on the Day of Resurrection with prayers, fasting, and charity, but also with insults, slander, consuming the wealth of others, shedding blood, and beating others. The oppressed will be given from their good deeds until, if they run out before justice is fulfilled, the sins of the oppressed will be cast on their scale of evil deeds, and they will be thrown into the Hellfire." [4]

On another occasion, Ibn Mas'ood reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) asked them, "Who among you considers the wealth of his heirs dearer to him than his own wealth?" They replied, "Every one of us loves his own wealth more." At this, he (ﷺ) said, "His wealth is whatever he spends during his life. The wealth of his heirs is whatever he leaves behind after his death." [5]

There are numerous other narrations that confirm that the most popular teaching method used by the Prophet (ﷺ) was the "Inquiry Model."

For example, the Prophet (ﷺ) used to frequently ask the Companions: "Do you know what backbiting is?", "Do you know the rights of

## The Prophet's teaching methodology with his Companions was pioneering, effective, and learner-centered rather than a teacher-centered learning method

the neighbor?", "Do you know who is stingy?"

In fact, the well-known Hadeeth of Gabriel, which teaches us the pillars of Islam began with the Prophet (ﷺ) requesting the Companions to ask him questions. When they remained silent out of shyness, Angel Gabriel came and asked him what Islam, Eemaan, and Ihsaan are. [6]

Undoubtedly there were times when the Prophet (ﷺ) gave the Companions factual statements, but many times even these straightforward statements contained attention-catching phrases or words which created mental questions in the minds of the listeners. Like the previous hadeeth in which he (ﷺ) said that "The whole world and its contents are cursed!" The statement would have made all those who heard it curious.

Or the Prophet's (ﷺ) statement to his Companions

on one occasion, "Support your brother whether he is the oppressor or the oppressed." [7]

With this, he challenged their understanding of tribalism by apparently instructing them to follow a common tribalist slogan. They immediately questioned him: "O Messenger of Allah! We understand helping our brother if he is oppressed, but how can we help him when he is the oppressor?" He (ﷺ) replied: "Stop him from oppression." Or his (ﷺ) statement on another occasion, "The next person to enter the mosque will be among the people of Paradise." [8] This caused them to research in order to find out what righteous deeds the man was doing, which made him so special.

Or his (ﷺ) admonishment to a man who entered the mosque and prayed two units of prayer and sat down in his circle, "Go back and pray because you have not prayed." [9] This caused the man to ask the Prophet (ﷺ) to teach him how to pray.

Sometimes the Prophet (ﷺ) carried out thought-provoking actions, like the occasion when he walked up the steps of the minbar (pulpit) inside the mosque and began to

pray a voluntary prayer there. [10] He gave a demonstration of the proper way to pray after he caught the attention of everyone in the mosque. These were all memorable teaching moments.

Inquiry-based instruction (teaching and learning) promotes active learning that starts by posing questions, problems, or scenarios and develops Critical Thinking Skills, as opposed to merely memorizing information from instructional materials. The Prophet's teaching methodology with his Companions was pioneering, effective, and learner-centered rather than a teacher-centered learning method which we have been introduced to without fully appreciating its value in education. It is time we revive this neglected Sunnah as 'Amr ibn 'Awf reported: "The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said, "Know that whoever revives a tradition from my Sunnah if it has died out after me, he will have a reward like those who act upon it without diminishing any of their rewards."

**By: Dr. Bilal Philips**

Chancellor of IOU

[1] Sahih al-Jaami as-Sahih, and also in Sahih Muslim

[2] Sunan Ibn Majah and Sunan at-Tirmidhi

[3] Sahih al-Bukhari, Abu Dawud & at-Tirmidhi

[4] Sahih al-Bukhari

[5] Sahih Muslim

[6] Sahih al-Bukhari

[7] Sahih al-Bukhari

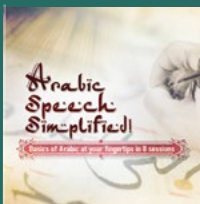
[8] Musnad Ahmad

[9] Sahih Bukhari and Sahih Muslim

# Arabic Language Courses at IOU GDIS

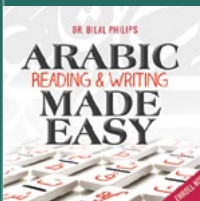
As its main priority, IOU offers several Arabic Language Courses in its Diploma Section. The courses are designed for English speakers who have no or little knowledge of the Arabic language and its linguistics.

The following Arabic courses are available at the Diploma Section (<https://diploma.iou.edu.gm/>)



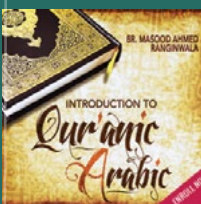
## Arabic Speech Simplified! (ARS 100):

A practical course specifically designed for English speakers with no or minimal background knowledge of Arabic.



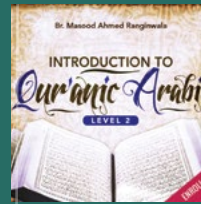
## Arabic Reading and Writing Made Easy (ARB 011):

An ideal course for adults and older youths as it develops the reading and writing skills gradually and logically compared to the traditional methods of al-Qaa'idah al-Baghdaadeeyah.



## Introduction to Qur'anic Arabic - Level 1 (ARB 031):

The goal of the course is to teach the student the fundamentals of Qur'anic Arabic and its grammar to understand the Lofty language of Allah.



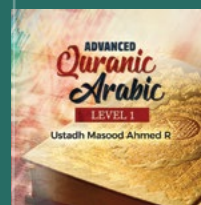
## Introduction to Qur'anic Arabic - Level 2 (ARB 032):

This course focuses on verbs, verbal sentences, and verb families.



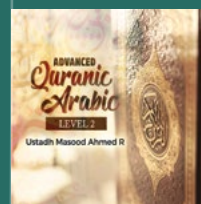
## Introduction to Qur'anic Arabic - Level 3 (ARB 033):

This last level of this series on Introductory Qur'anic Arabic Level 3 focuses on the higher verb families alongside fundamental grammatical analysis.



## Advanced Qur'anic Arabic - Level 1 (ARB 034):

This course is based on Volume 2 of "Essentials of Quranic Arabic," the first few chapters, and covers the essential sarf/morphology concepts and grammar of irregular verbs.



## Advanced Qur'anic Arabic - Level 2 (ARB035):

This continuation of the study of important principles from morphology is based on the middle chapters of "Essentials of Quranic Arabic."

## Coming Soon

**Advanced Qur'anic Arabic - Level 3 (ARB036):** This course will cover the last chapters of "Essentials of Quranic Arabic." It will look at the essential principles of balagha along with some aspects of i'jaz al-Qur'an.

# From Molecular Biology to Islamic Studies: IOU Student's Journey





**G**rowth in any area of life requires perseverance, patience, effort, and most of all, time!

I have always had a great passion for knowledge, and I know that all the qualities listed above are essential for progressing toward any goal in life. Along our life journey, we sometimes find that when one door is coming to a close, another is always waiting to be opened, but choosing which path to take is crucial to your success.

After almost ten years of studies and research on a university campus here in Australia, graduating with a Ph.D. in Science (Molecular Biology), I thought I would carry out a career for which I had a great amount of passion for. With perseverance and patience, it was a journey that would prepare me for what would really come later in my life and would ultimately be my overriding passion. In the last three years of my studies as a Ph.D. candidate, Allah quickly grew my family with three children under two years, which meant I had to juggle studies and prioritize looking after my family. Having a strong mentality and a “finish what

you started” attitude to life, I was able to complete my thesis by the will of Allah. When I finally graduated, my life took another turn.

During the last six months of my tenure, I could no longer envision carrying on with a highly demanding academic (scientific researcher) position while fulfilling my rights to my children and family all at once. At the same time, I knew I was selling myself short in my role as a mother. I wanted to be their first teacher in everything this life has to offer, especially when it came to teaching my children Islam, the fundamentals of the religion, Quranic studies, and so much more. But unfortunately, I didn't have the knowledge to do so. I grew up in a Muslim family home, but my primary and secondary education was limited to the basics a public non-Islamic school could provide. Therefore, going out now to seek authentic Islamic knowledge while having three toddlers in my care full-time with little support was going to be challenging. This was the point where I knew I had to put the effort in to make it work, not just for them but also for myself and my akhirah (afterlife).

After much thought and consideration, I had no choice but to resort to online studies. Something I had

never considered before. Therefore, after several months of researching, scoping, planning, googling, emailing, you name it, I came across the Islamic Online University (which is what it was called at the time). From over ten other opportunities that I came across, I kept coming back to THIS university, and alhamdulillah; I have no regrets.

## Why did I choose to study with IOU?

At first, I did not have a clue what I was doing. Eventually, what made IOU stand out from the many inquiries made all over the world was that the support and outreach team were quick, professional, and sufficient in getting back to me with my concerns, questions, or quires I had about studying online. This was extremely important because I was so used to being on a university campus. If I had any questions, I could promptly address them by taking a short stroll to the administration or visiting my lecture down the hall. For me, receiving excellent support from the IOU team within a short amount of time from a country on the other side world was a definite decider!

## What did I choose to study?

Another big positive was that they offered me exactly what I was looking for. For someone who didn't acquire any formal education in Islamic studies, I was looking for something that not only taught me the basics but then provided me with the ability to go a little bit deeper. It was also important that the duration of the course to complete was not too long. I was advised to do the Bridging program to Master's in Islamic studies (BMAIS) because prior to enrolling, I had already gained a bachelor in another field (it could be in any field of study), which meant I didn't have to take the Bachelors in Islamic studies course.

What was my first experience after signing up for my first semester?

I was very nervous with zero expectations, although after I had gone through a short registration process, I instantly became a student; wow! What a difference it was to the conventional system of taking out a whole day to spend on campus, roaming the grounds becoming familiar with the buildings, and spending hours in a queue to have your photo ID taken, just to get ready for your first day. I felt more comfortable after this and started to browse

the home page and watched the orientation video.

## Navigating through the courses

After becoming a student, IOU's website home page was organized and set out with everything you needed to know about the course to take, the units you have signed up for, all the way through to the processes required for graduation, simple and clear.

Once you go into your course, for me, it was BMAIS; your units are outlined, giving explicit instruction of what lecture to watch, what reading to do, what quiz to take, where to chat with your teacher, print resources, assignment question, and instructions on how to take mid and end semester exams. That's it, every semester has the same structure for the entire course (this structure may differ if taking other courses at IOU), but after spending some time becoming acquainted with the material, I was feeling a lot more comfortable.

## The negatives about studying online

After being accustomed to life on campus and

studying along with other students for ten years prior, seeing my teacher's, lecturer's, and professor's face to face, sharing ideas, having conversations with like-minded students; while simply being in the environment and an atmosphere where the site of a multi-story library, filled with the smell of paperback books and a hint of coffee wafting through the air, brings immense inspiration and adventure to any studious mind; doing it all on your own is lonely, I must say. After the first couple of weeks, I was feeling overwhelmed. I had little sense of direction as I knew of no one studying online at the time, and just bouncing ideas with others on a subject matter would have made my experience a little more different. But this is the reality of online studies, so becoming familiar with study circles or keeping a WhatsApp group with other IOU students in your state or country helps keep the motivation.

## Negatives turned into positives

Although there are some drawbacks to online studies, my enthusiasm was driven by my situation at the time. My days were filled with baby talk, paintings, storytime, nappy changes (a lot of nappy changes for three bottoms), and



being a mum. My nights transformed into the researcher I once was, reading material, watching lectures of my teacher going through the Seerah of our Prophet (saw), while eagerly waiting for the following evening anticipating the lecture of what happened during the battle of Uhud. Every unit that I covered was extremely rewarding and was an essential building block in creating a solid foundation that, by the will of Allah, continues to grow and grow on this journey.

## My overall experience

Since I am a stay-at-home mum, I have absolutely no

time to venture out into the working world. I grabbed this opportunity to use the time I had to upskill and benefit myself and my family and making the most of my situation by doing an online Islamic program with IOU (which now stands for International Open University).

Today, I have finished studying with IOU. The greatest benefit was that it touched on all of the predominant Islamic study units such as Tafsir, Fiqh, Hadith, Arabic grammar, Sirah, etc., that will otherwise be taught at a conventional Islamic institute. This made me realize my overriding passion

for learning the foundations of Islam, which has now paved the way for my next journey in the study of Uloom al-Quran.

I have 100% more confidence in answering questions and teaching Islam to my children and others. I have given several seminars in my local area, university, masjid, and study circles using the authentic knowledge I gained while studying with IOU, alhamdulillah. I am very enthusiastic about my journey and where it will take me, inshaAllah. I am so grateful that it all started with IOU.



### By Dr. Dalal Haouchar

Dr. Dalal holds a Ph.D. in Molecular Biology. She completed the B.M.A.I.S. stream.

# WHY MUSLIMS NEED EDUCATION

1

It is a  
command  
of Allah

2

It broadens  
the mental  
horizons

3

It helps in  
personal  
development



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