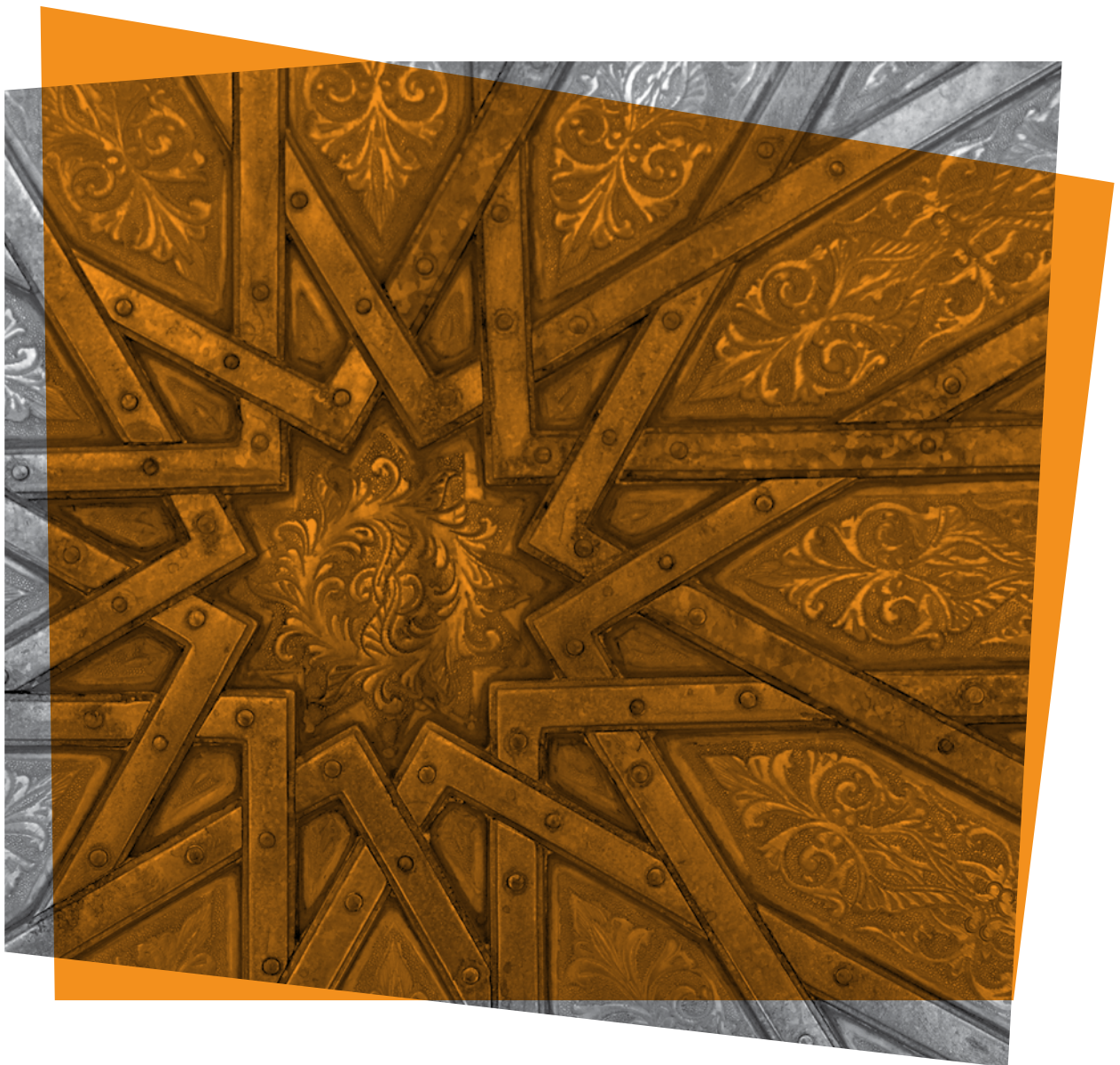


Perspectives
Teaching Islamic Studies
in higher education

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Perspectives is the magazine of the Higher Education Academy's Islamic Studies Network. The Islamic Studies Network brings together those working in Islamic Studies from a wide range of disciplines to enhance teaching and learning in higher education by: hosting events and workshops; providing grants to develop teaching and learning; and encouraging the sharing of resources and good practice. For information on all our activities, visit www.islamicstudiesnetwork.ac.uk.

Perspectives is a forum for those involved in teaching Islamic Studies in higher education to share practice and resources. As well as updates on Islamic Studies Network activity, Perspectives publishes articles on a wide range of topics related to Islamic Studies in higher education. If you would like to submit an article, highlight a set of teaching resources you have used or developed, or write a review of a book, film or other media, please contact us at islamicstudies@heacademy.ac.uk.

Perspectives is distributed free of charge to members of the Islamic Studies Network and is available online at www.islamicstudiesnetwork.ac.uk. To join the network, please visit our website.

Perspectives

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Welcome



Lisa Bernasek
Academic Co-ordinator
Islamic Studies Network

Welcome to the second issue of *Perspectives: Teaching Islamic Studies in higher education*.

Along with updates on Islamic Studies Network activity, this issue contains a number of articles from colleagues in the sector reflecting on issues related to teaching Islamic Studies, particularly in the context of the changing state of higher education in the UK. Robert Gleave opens with a reflection on how to approach the teaching of Islam in general, with some interesting insights on the structure of introductory modules found in departments across the UK. Sariya Contractor and Alison Scott-Baumann continue the conversation on women and gender in Islamic Studies started by Haleh Afshar in the first issue of this magazine. They provide examples drawn from recent research of how to bring out women's voices when approaching teaching and research on Islam. Writing from Australia, Jan A. Ali provides a valuable insight into recent developments in the teaching of Islamic Studies overseas, with a particular focus on the economic and cultural forces driving the expansion of Islamic Studies provision.

Ali's article will have resonance for many in the UK, particularly his experience of teaching Islamic Studies to Muslim students. Two further articles focus on Muslim students: Aftab Dean and Steve Probert provide an analysis of Muslim students' experience of higher education based on the National Student Survey results; and Mark Van Hoorebeek discusses the issue of how rising student fees may impact the Muslim

student population. Dean and Probert's analysis, particularly their suggestions about why Muslim students score their higher education experience lower than many other groups, will have relevance for all those working with Muslim students. Van Hoorebeek's analysis of many Muslim students' preferences in regard to interest-bearing loans also makes for important reading as universities consider their approaches to the new fees regime.

In the resources section Deirdre Burke provides an introduction to HumBox, an online repository for sharing teaching resources, and John Canning and Erika Corradini call your attention to an online database of Islamic Studies modules. Both these resources will be of interest to colleagues across the sector looking for inspiration as they develop or refresh their modules for next year. Also of relevance will be the books reviewed by Gary R. Bunt, which provide valuable overviews of various topics relevant for student seminars or personal research.

As many readers will know, the Higher Education Academy is changing its organisational structure and will no longer be providing grant funding to universities to support subject centres. However, supporting the disciplines remains at the heart of the HEA, and the Islamic Studies Network will continue its discipline-specific activities throughout the next academic year. During the transition to the new structure we will sadly have to say goodbye to some members of the project team who have devoted significant time and enthusiasm to the project over the past two years. Their efforts have gone into every aspect of the Network's work, including the pages of this magazine, and we would like to thank them for their contribution.

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News from the Islamic Studies Network

Recent activity

Our new website (www.islamicstudiesnetwork.ac.uk) was launched in March. It includes a substantial section for teaching and research resources, as well as information about the teaching and learning projects funded by the Network, and events organised by the Network and the wider sector. If you are organising an event that you would like to publicise via the website please contact us at islamicstudies@heacademy.ac.uk. Colleagues can also join the Network via the website; there are now over 400 people on our mailing list.

Our Ning online networking site (<http://islamicstudiesnetwork.ning.com>) now has over 100 members. Members can share teaching and research interests via their profiles, post blog entries, contribute to discussions and join subgroups for specific areas of interest.

Twenty-five PhD students participated in our residential PhD workshop on 16-17 February 2011 in Birmingham. The programme included presentations from the students about their research as well as sessions on PhD progression, career development, developing teaching practice and academic publishing. As reflected in the feedback received, attendees especially appreciated the opportunity to network with each other and with the presenters, and have taken away concrete ideas about how to develop their careers and pursue publishing opportunities.

The second of our regional workshops for colleagues teaching Islamic Studies was held in Oxford in December 2010, which 21 people attended. Participants had the opportunity to share teaching and research practice and contribute to a panel discussion on cross-disciplinary collaboration in Islamic Studies. The final two regional workshops were held in Cardiff and Leeds in May 2011.

We funded 12 learning and teaching projects in our second funding call, which are running until January 2012. Topics include: an exploration of the viability of partnerships between *dār al-ʿulūm* and higher education institutions; guidelines for the study of a local Muslim community; developing resources for teaching contemporary Islamic thinking; and creating materials about end-of-life issues in Islam and Judaism. Full details of all funded projects and associated resources are available on our website.

Forthcoming activity

The Network will again organise four regional workshops in 2011–12. These workshops will be opportunities for networking and sharing practice, and will focus on specific themes related to Islamic Studies in higher education. We will also hold another workshop for PhD students in Islamic Studies across disciplines, building on the success of this year's event.

Discipline-specific activity will also continue in 2011–12, and plans are being made for workshops and resource development in various areas.

Please consult our website for further information as plans develop.

News from the subject centres

Colleagues from the subject centres have been co-ordinating a range of discipline-specific activities for the Islamic Studies Network as well as contributing to cross-disciplinary network activity. Some of the highlights are detailed below – for further information, please consult the Islamic Studies Network website: www.islamicstudiesnetwork.ac.uk.

In addition to the five subject centres below, the History Subject Centre (www.historysubjectcentre.ac.uk) is supporting the network and will contribute to specific activities as appropriate.

Business, Management, Accountancy and Finance Network (BMAF)

Twenty-five people participated in the first meeting of BMAF's Islamic Studies Think Tank on 2–3 March 2011 at the University of Northampton. Paul Temporal from the Saïd Business School at the University of Oxford gave a presentation on Islamic branding and marketing, and Cristina Irving from Emerald Group Publishing ran a session on publishing opportunities focusing on Islamic communities. Participants also had the opportunity to discuss Islamic business-related curricula and how to overcome the barriers to course development.

BMAF and UKCLE will hold a joint workshop on 'Sharing and building bibliographic capacity in Islamic Studies: law and finance' on 15 June 2011 at the University of Warwick. Please visit the UKCLE website (see below) to register.

www.heacademy.ac.uk/business

Subject Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies (LLAS)

Following a call for project funding, LLAS is funding three projects relating to Islamic Studies in Languages and Area Studies. The titles of the projects are: 'A Web-as-Corpus approach to populating Wikiversity for teaching about Islam and Muslims in language, linguistics and area studies'; 'Arabic language and Islamic Studies: who studies Arabic and how can these skills be used at university and beyond?'; and 'A model for collaboration between HE and non-HE institutions in developing an Islamic Studies module (Qur'anic Arabic)'. Further information can be found on the LLAS website.

Colleagues at LLAS have also been developing the Islamic Studies modules database, which is now publicly available through the Network website. Further information about the database can be found on page 27.

www.llas.ac.uk

Subject Centre for Philosophical and Religious Studies (PRS)

PRS is producing a handbook for undergraduate and postgraduate students in Islamic Studies. The handbook will cover topics such as study skills development, dealing with controversial subjects and potential careers for graduates. The outline for the book was discussed at the Network's PhD workshop in February, and participants were asked for their input in shaping its development.

A proposal for an edited volume on 'Teaching Islamic Studies in Religious Studies' has been submitted. This volume will include 12 essays on teaching Islam in the UK in higher education from colleagues across the sector; the intention is for the volume to be published in 2012–13.

www.prs.heacademy.ac.uk

Subject Network for Sociology, Anthropology and Politics (C-SAP)

C-SAP has been carrying out a rolling call for case studies about how issues relating to Islam are taught in Sociology, Anthropology, Criminology or Politics courses. A report will be produced pulling out the implications of these case studies for teaching, learning and curriculum development. These case studies and the ten case studies published in September 2010 will be showcased at the 'Teaching about Islam in the Social Sciences' workshop on 24 June 2011 in Birmingham. This event will also give lecturers, practitioners and postgraduate students an opportunity to share practice in their areas of interest and to discuss issues and potential developments in teaching Islam in the social sciences more broadly. To register for the event, please visit the C-SAP website.

www.c-sap.bham.ac.uk

UK Centre for Legal Education (UKCLE)

The first meeting of the Islamic Law Special Interest Group, held on 10 November 2010, was attended by 20 colleagues from a range of institutions. Nick Foster, Senior Lecturer in Commercial law at the School of Oriental and African Studies, gave a presentation on 'The dangers of kryptonite: living with imperfection in the teaching of Islamic law'. Colleagues shared their ideas, experiences and suggestions on Islamic law resources and curriculum development, and considered the theme of pedagogy in Islamic law and the means by which perceived limitations may be overcome. An event report summarising discussions is available on the Islamic Studies Network website (www.islamicstudiesnetwork.ac.uk).

A second meeting of the Islamic Law Special Interest Group will take place on 6 July 2011. As noted above, BMAF and UKCLE will also hold a joint workshop on 'Sharing and building bibliographic capacity in Islamic Studies: law and finance' on 15 June 2011 at the University of Warwick. To register for either of these events, please visit the UKCLE website.

www.ukcle.ac.uk

Should we teach Islam as a religion or as a civilisation?



Professor Robert Gleave
University of Exeter and Chair
of the Islamic Studies Network
Advisory Board

Montgomery Watt's 1974 work *The Majesty that Was Islam* has an unfortunate title, to say the least. There is no majesty left in modern Islam, and the greatness of past Muslim civilisations is lost forever. This nostalgia for a previous period is not unusual of course, and is not a specifically orientalist concern. Revivalist discourse in religious traditions is, by definition, nostalgic in this sense. But Watt's approach as found in this work proposes that Islam was, but no longer is, one of the 'Great Civilizations' (that was the name of the series in which the publishers, Sidgwick and Jackson, published the book). Interestingly, there is no work entitled *The Majesty that Was Christianity, or Judaism, Buddhism, or Hinduism*. Indeed, there is no other volume in the series that might have this dual identity as religion and civilisation. The asserted uniqueness of Islam's position within this schema is instructive.

Linked to this, I propose, is the oft-heard statement that "Islam is not just a religion but a way of life". In a modern context, it functions for many Muslims as a statement of self-definition and of difference; the claim to be a 'way of life' supposedly distinguishes Islam from other traditions of belief, most specifically Christianity. The popularity of the phrase is, I do not doubt, linked to a particular analysis of 'secular Western society' generally, and British society in particular. For those who hold to this analysis, religion in British society has been marginalised; people may be individually religious, and the majority may still identify themselves as Christian, but their belief does not impinge on their daily life. Even the more devout, it is supposed, may go to church on a Sunday but they consider this the dispensation of their religious duties, and are not outwardly religious for the rest of the week. An explanatory linkage between these suppositions and the Protestant emphasis on the balance between belief and works could be put forward. These, it is supposed, are the constituent parts of a 'religion' in modern Western society – and Islam is to be distinguished from this.

On purely personal anecdotal evidence, this conception is probably quite widely held in UK Islam given the number of times I have heard this statement from British Muslims. Most current research (for example, the 2006 NOP Poll of British Muslims available here: <http://ukpollingreport.co.uk/blog/>

archives/291), though, indicates that Islam is, under these criteria, 'just a religion'. Observance of the daily ritual of prayer or attendance at Friday prayers are often mentioned as the indicator of Islam being a 'way of life', but observance within British Muslims is not so much higher than church attendance among those who self-identify as Christians. The marginally higher level of observance among Muslims can, it is argued, be explained not by the nature of Islam itself, but is a frequent identity marker of a minority, particularly one which perceives itself as marginalised from the so-called wider society. Observance levels among Christian minorities in Muslim majority contexts, for example, are similarly higher than those among the Muslim majority. In the same way, the belief that Islam provides a blueprint for the ideal political system (another marker of Islam as a 'way of life') is not, for most Muslims, entirely credible. Support for political Islam has never been the majority belief that the 'clash of civilisation' theorists would have us believe. Current events in the Middle East are a superficial, but nonetheless important, indicator of this fallacy.

Nevertheless, the presumption that Islam is a more 'totalised' subject of study than, say, Christianity or Buddhism has led to a recognition that a proper understanding of 'Islam' can only be gained through a cross-disciplinary approach. The assumed interdisciplinarity of Islamic Studies is, I suggest, a natural academic expression of the supposition that 'Islam' is a phenomenon that cannot be adequately understood through the established category of 'religion'. This is the prevailing notion that underpins, to an extent, the Islamic Studies Network itself. I very much doubt whether a Christian or Buddhist Studies network would aim to cast its net so widely. Ironically, the attempt to give Islam its proper due and avoid forcing it into the strictures of existing academic disciplines leads to a form of Islamic 'exceptionalism'. Islam is 'different', in that it requires a multidisciplinary approach; other traditions can be captured within the current mono-disciplinary framework: Islam cannot. Treating Islam as different (and hence in need of taming) is, of course, one of the elements of Edward Said's critique of the Western academic study of Islam (Said 1997). All religions claim to be unique and exceptional; in the case of Islam, this claim has impacted on the academic structures in which Islamic Studies is located. I do not think this is due to any oversensitivity to Muslim concerns about their self-definition, but rather springs from a need to categorise and control a tradition viewed as inherently alien in Western academia.

In institutional terms, Islamic Studies has historically been located either in a Middle Eastern Studies (formerly Oriental Studies) framework, or in a Religious Studies department. To an extent, these reflect conceptions of Islam as a civilisation (in which language, literature, culture, politics, economics and society are taught in an integrated Area Studies curriculum) on the one hand and as a religion (with an emphasis on ideas and beliefs) on the other. The rise of the Religious Studies perspective (the famous and productive ‘Lancaster’ model of modern Religious Studies) has challenged the hegemony of Area Studies in the teaching of Islamic Studies. There are now more Islamicists employed in UK Religious Studies departments than in the old centres of Middle Eastern Studies. Furthermore, the connection between language learning (specifically Arabic) and Islam has been broken, reflecting the fact that most Muslims have little knowledge of Arabic beyond its ritual use. This development over the past half century is well documented by others, and I do not wish to catalogue it here. However, even within the UK Middle Eastern Studies framework, there is a tendency for Islam to move away from being taught as a ‘civilisation’ in the sense employed by Watt, and more towards it being understood as a ‘religion’.

A brief comparison of introductory modules on Islam at institutions across the country demonstrates that there is a standard module in relation to composition and formulation. Increasingly this model operates whether Islam is taught within an Area Studies or a Religious Studies environment. The common structure is basically chronological, and reflects, to an extent, the structure of the vast majority of introductory textbooks on Islam (e.g. Rippin 1990; Esposito 1991; Brown 2009), since promoting a module without a textbook has become increasingly heretical in modern higher education. Modularisation is, I suggest, primarily responsible for this trend. As Islamic Studies has become increasingly in demand, modules on Islam have had to appeal to as wide a range of students as possible, and the dominance of the Religious Studies approach has led to a certain commonality of module format. Modules begin with pre-Islamic Arabia, move on to individual sessions on the Prophet and the Qur’an, followed by sections on the Five Pillars, Theology, Law, Shi’ism and Sufism, and end with sessions on Islam in the modern world (which might cover gender, human rights, political Islam and Islam in the UK). This structure has become remarkably uniform, and breaking away from it is quite a challenge. Whether it remains the best way to introduce Islam to undergraduate students is debatable.

I suspect that we would serve our students better with a more methodologically nuanced set of module structures, in which the category of religion is questioned, and Islam is seen as a potential case study of the inadequacy of this category. The relationship between belief and practice, the nature of Muslim identity and the syncretic nature of the interconnection between Muslim and other communities all tend to be marginalised or moved to more advanced modules, as if students cannot cope with these things early on. The structure of such introductory modules also, inadvertently, promotes presumptions such as the existence of an orthodox Islam with various heterodox movements in its wake (as if the former existed prior to the latter), or that there is a radical break between Classical and Modern Islam (with the former being superior to the latter), or that there is a simple way of distinguishing between culture and the Islamic religion (with the latter being a pure belief system unsullied by popular practice). Such assumptions have long been challenged within the research literature of both Religious Studies generally and Islamic Studies in particular. I think it is time that our students got the chance to question them as well.

To return to our question: should we teach Islam as a civilisation or a religion? With all the connotations of superiority and urbanised elitism associated with the notion of ‘civilisation’, it would seem too problematic to employ this term as our watchword when designing Islamic Studies teaching. ‘Religion’ also has its problems, but let us not be too strict in how we conceive of it. We should not accept any artificial division between religion and other elements of the life, belief and practice of those who call themselves Muslims (even when some Muslims call us to do so). The whole phenomenon of Muslim identity and its constituent elements, in history and in the present, should become the focus of both our research and our teaching.

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Enhancing the visibility of Muslim women in Islamic Studies



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There is some precedent in the Islamic Studies Network of discussion around the invisibility or rather insufficient visibility of Muslim women in the Islamic Studies genre. According to Baroness Haleh Afshar half the Muslim population (the females) are relegated to footnotes (2010). In the literature, Nadwi (2007), Bewley (2004) and others write about Muslim women personalities as historical, religious and contemporary role models. However, in Islamic Studies often the woman's voice is not heard and her story remains either untold or incompletely told. In popular rhetoric, Muslim women seem to be relegated to the issues of contention between Islam and the West. Debates and discussions about women tend to centre around the hijab, the niqab or women's rights in Islam and their presumed incompatibility with 'modern' society.

We seek to argue otherwise. In the lives of Western Muslim women, there are possibilities to explore and establish opportunities for inter-community dialogue and understanding. By exploring these women's voices, their stories and inspirations, Islamic Studies students may be able to see and recognise commonalities across different life contexts, thus providing an opportunity to see in the other a reflection of oneself. Thus, enhancing the visibility of Muslim women not only initiates greater knowledge about these women and their faith, but may also facilitate community cohesion. Here we hope to discuss some of these opportunities.

During the Islamic Studies Network's inaugural event in May 2010 and in the first issue of this magazine, its commitments to gender issues were made clear through the words and research of Baroness Haleh Afshar (2010). This paper seeks to advance this discussion about enhancing the visibility of Muslim women in the Islamic Studies genre and suggests possibilities for the future.

This is a double-sided exercise, which on the one hand will suggest ways through which the needs of Muslim women studying Islamic Studies may be met and, on the other, ways to encourage greater awareness about the roles and contributions of Muslim women in Islamic Studies scholarship. In her article, Baroness Afshar speaks about interdisciplinarity as a necessary aspect of research that is about and for Muslim women. She also writes about their feminisms. We propose to continue this discussion and to move it forward by describing current research and suggesting ways to incorporate the voices of Muslim women into existing research and teaching frameworks. This will illustrate the intellectual, philosophical and practical gains that may be garnered through such an exercise.

We need a philosophical approach that allows us to theorise and then also to apply our theorising to real-life issues. It seems to be a characteristic of humans to think in opposites, or binary pairs. Derrida (2002, 41) argues that we often privilege one over the other; for example, man/woman is a pair in which the term 'man' describes male persons and can also be used to describe the whole human race thus giving it more authority than the idea of woman. Ricoeur's work suggests that we often choose to see such pairs of terms as mutually exclusive, which can make it easy to fail to empathise with others. We can see how those who create binary systems to explain the world have now to accept that communism and capitalism no longer provide a useful polarisation, and they have selected the pairing of Islam versus the West. It seems rational and potentially very useful to actively incorporate this binary way of thinking into curriculum content, to facilitate the challenging and moderation of such artificially polarising structures.

Paul Ricoeur was a devoutly religious thinker, who was also active in the European cultural and political milieu. His work provides a useful framework by analysing humanity through seeking similarities; he advocates a faith-based attempt at effective conciliatory social action, while also thinking in secular ways. We need a working definition of secularism in order to proceed. In his essay 'Urbanization and Secularization', Ricoeur sees secularism as having two main characteristics: the transfer of power from the religious leader to the civil servant, and the "erasing of the distinction between the spheres of the sacred and the profane" (Ricoeur 1974).

Ricoeur asserts that the only way to understand ourselves is through understanding others: in his masterful *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia* (1987) and in *Oneself as Another* (1992) he presents the imperative that we learn about ourselves critically, through learning about others, in order to seek to explain clearly our motives for thought and action and to act affirmatively towards others. As demonstrated by Contractor (2010), this approach can inspire the use of Muslim women's narratives to better understand the diversity of pluralist British society and facilitate the understanding of complementarity in situations that are often seen as incompatible (Ricoeur 1998, Chapter 7; Scott-Baumann 2009, 140).

Muslim women's voices in the literature

Nadwi (2007), Bewley (2004) and others write about historical Muslim women personalities as role models with very visible social roles. Historically, there were many successful Muslim women who held positions of authority during the Prophet's (pbuh)¹ lifetime. Later Muslim women were scholars, poets, rulers, businesswomen and had various social roles. Then there seems to be a gap when Muslim women disappeared or rather became quiet so that not much was heard *from* them. As their voices were less heard, their roles and the ways in which they were perceived also changed; from being seen as socially active and influential they became quiet, subjugated and innately oppressed (Kahf 1999).

More recently, however, a revival of scholarship *by* and *for* Muslim women seems to be underway. Such a reclamation of Muslim women's stories is leading to a new genre of scholarship including exegetical studies of Muslim religious scripture (Bakhtiar 2007; Barlas 2002; Wadud 1999); pedagogies to empower Muslim women (Barazangi 2004); explorations of religious and historical roles of Muslim women (Bewley 2004); sociological studies of Muslim women (Bullock 2003; Ahmad 2001); female Muslim geographies (Falah and Nagel 2005) and the feminisms of Muslim women (Badran 2002, 2005, 2008; Moghissi 1999; Al Farūqi 1991).



¹ *Peace be upon him.*

A vital question is whether this literature contributes to Islamic Studies teaching and research outside of modules or projects that focus on gender. The answer to this question requires a detailed exploration that is beyond the remit of this paper. However, what we can do is suggest a paradigm shift in the way in which texts and research *about, for and by* Muslim women are treated, not only as resources for specialist gender studies but as contributing different perspectives, *Muslim women's perspectives*, to Islamic Studies as a whole. We hope that this will facilitate a process whereby Muslim women's voices can be heard on a range of issues including politics, social structures, bio-ethics and beyond, and incorporated into scholarly processes beyond gender studies.

The need for Muslim women's voices

Between the historical Muslim women about whom Nadwi (2007) and Bewley (2004) write and the contemporary scholars whom we mention in the previous section, there seems to be a gap in history during which Muslim women, like their sisters from other backgrounds, seem to have dropped out of public view or, perhaps, to have been dropped. Bewley, for example, notes how the number of women in her biographical dictionary goes down in more recent times (2004, v). She suggests many reasons for this, including colonialism, patriarchy in Muslim communities and patriarchy in wider society.

In Muslim communities this meant that Muslim women were marginalised by what many writers describe as patriarchal interpretations of Islam. As Islam is usually understood as *dīn* (a complete way of life) this dominance of the patriarchal voice is translated into almost all aspects of social life. In wider society, as Le Doeuff (2003) describes, all women were subject to a historical process as a result of which they were marginalised from institutions of knowledge that then became hegemonies of male scholarship and authority. Furthermore, in contemporary Western societies it can be said that Muslim women are doubly marginalised: firstly, by patriarchy in some Muslim societies, which denies them the rights that they believe are divinely ordained for them within Islam, and secondly by pluralist society in which they are caught in the Islam versus West dichotomy (Contractor 2010). A Muslim woman may be marginalised within Muslim communities because she is a woman, and she may also be

marginalised in pluralist society because she is visible as a Muslim woman.

However, this visibility creates an opportunity: when Muslim women are identifiable as Muslim women and also as Western women they create within themselves a space in which both sides of the Islam versus West dichotomy can coexist. The dichotomy is not real for these women nor for the people who know and understand them as Western Muslim women. Thus, by facilitating forums through education and through dialogue interventions, this potential of Muslim women's stories to develop understanding may be utilised.

This is what underpins our work with Muslim women and also our suggestions for the future. Muslim women living in the West have distinct needs (in relation to higher education (HE) and other contexts) as well as distinct viewpoints. By addressing these needs and listening to these viewpoints it may become possible to facilitate a paradigm shift in Islamic Studies that incorporates Muslim women's views not just in Gender Studies but across all subject matter. So, for example, such a process could begin by asking Muslim women what they would like to achieve out of a study of Islamic jurisprudence and then in addition to the usual literary sources also examine the work of Muslim female scholars. This could achieve a more nuanced retelling of the Muslim woman's story and also, more pragmatically, attract Muslim women to Islamic Studies HE courses.

We suggest that Muslim women are tired of being the subject of analysis and critique, to whom motives are often ascribed without their opinion being sought. Scott-Baumann demonstrates that this often constitutes a form of what Achcar calls "Orientalism in reverse", whereby it is prevalent in media and other forms of public discourse to believe that Muslims seek solutions that are alien to those of the secular West; thus the hijab is seen as a sign of repression and as a form of identification with extremism (Scott-Baumann 2011). British Muslim women contest this view and seek to be heard: instead of being those on whom research is done, they want work to be done *with, by and for* them (Contractor 2010).

So, for example, when asked, many Muslim women in Britain talk about the hijab as empowering and as positioning them as ambassadors of their faith in pluralist British communities (Contractor 2011). The headscarf, which is the subject of much popular rhetoric, also makes them visible flag-bearers of their faith (Tarlo 2010) and their standpoints.

Simultaneously, these same Muslim women also play diverse ‘secular’ roles – as students, professionals, social workers – they are also ‘Western’ women. Thus through visible practice of both their Islamic and Western selves and their syncretic Western Muslim or British Muslim identities (Dwyer 1997), these women and their life stories can facilitate an as yet underutilised opportunity to discuss difficult questions such as cohesion, identity, pluralism and diversity.

We believe that, as reflected in Ricoeur’s work on faith and secularism, research with Muslim women must reflect the duality, or rather the complexities, of their existences as both Western and Muslim. This must also include Muslim women who do not wear the hijab or the niqab, of course. In order to adequately reflect their diversity, interdisciplinary stances may be used. Research methods derived from both Islamic Sciences and Theology and sociological methods (including feminist methodologies, which support the unvoiced) need to form an integral part of such an approach to Islamic Studies. We present here two case studies to demonstrate our work in this area.

Case study 1: Muslim women’s voices in research

Department for Communities and Local Government: Review of Muslim Faith Leader Training (Mukadam et al. 2010)

This research review was commissioned by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and was initially envisaged by the Government as a review of imam training. However, we argued successfully that this would not allow for women’s voices to be heard during the course of the research. By changing the title to Muslim faith leader training it became possible to acknowledge the contributions of Muslim women faith leaders in Britain who undertake a variety of roles. With regard to women as faith leaders our findings are as follows:

- Muslim women in Britain exercise faith leadership in a wide range of settings;
- most of the training and development needs of women are the same as those of men;
- women do also have distinctive concerns, as women;
- Islam has a rich tradition of gender equality and protection of rights;

- Muslim women study Islamic theology for a range of reasons;
- many Muslim women, including highly qualified *‘ālimahs*, have found ways to balance successfully their Islamic faith with a variety of social and professional roles. (Mukadam *et al.* 2010, 22.21–22.29).

Hearing these voices in the course of this research also created a space in which to discuss their hopes for future educational possibilities, and it became clear that many of our interviewees wished to have access to high quality higher education that would enable them to study as women of faith, to learn about the rich heritage of Muslim women in history and also to understand modern psychology, counselling, pastoral care and research methodologies in order to combine the best of different traditions.

Case study 2: Muslim women’s voices in teaching

Islamic Studies Network: Encouraging Muslim women into higher education through partnerships and collaborative pathways

Our current research, funded by the HEA Islamic Studies Network, builds upon the work that we did for the review of Muslim faith leader training described in the above case study. The clear need to hear the opinions of Muslim women with regard to HE opportunities was articulated in the previous research, and we have tried to achieve this through a second project aiming to encourage Muslim women into HE through collaborative pathways and linkages. Throughout the process we felt it was important to hear the voices of Muslim women. Our methodology included consultations with Muslim women students and with female scholars whose opinions we sought through an expert women’s seminar².

Our interim findings suggest greater need to

2 *The ‘expert delegates’ for the seminar were: Dr Fauzia Ahmad, Farah Ahmed, Shiban Akbar, Dr Fozia Bora, Dr Lisa Bernasek, Alyaa Ebbiary, Amina Inloes, Hilary Kalmbach, Humera Khan, Dr Arzina Lalani, Dr Mohammad Mesbahi, Dr Shuruq Naguib, Robin Richardson and Professor Francis Robinson.*

involve Muslim women in academic research and teaching³. We also propose draft modules that may be bridges between traditional, faith-based Islamic Sciences taught in Muslim institutions and more secular Islamic Studies in UK universities. We will report fully on the Network-funded project when the research is over: as a result of our interim research findings we find clear evidence that Islamic Studies curricula will benefit from a root and branch review of the writings of Muslim women. These texts, reaching back through the ages, need to be recovered and included in Islamic Studies curricula, which is not happening on any significant scale at present. Similarly feminist research is often not seen as relevant; yet its inclusion in the debate will, we believe, contribute considerably and indeed will add a uniquely important voice.

Conclusion: the benefits of facilitating visibility

The mystery of woman was ‘solved’ by the controversial psychoanalyst Lacan, for whom “The truth of Woman is that she does not exist, except as the other of a discourse grounded in her radical exclusion” (Cornell and Thurschwell 1987, 143). Such exclusion usually entails categorisation within certain parameters that may not always be of the woman’s choosing. This can apply in equally powerful ways across different cultures: the woman may be seen as having ‘problems’ that must be resolved by legal rulings (Islam) or by being ‘the same as men’ and therefore having equal rights to her male counterparts (Western secularism). If Lacan were correct, woman would have the remarkable freedom to invent herself as a strong force, because if she is excluded from much debate she is therefore free to establish her own capacity to speak as a woman. Such an attitude may be construed as disrespectful to the masculine patriarchy that is evident in many cultural settings; we also suggest that patriarchal support may indeed be as necessary as the woman’s voice is. Yet, the difference is that the two should be compatible.

Three questions constitute the core of our

ongoing work:

- How can we facilitate participation of British Muslim women in Islamic Studies courses at British universities?
- How can we interest British universities in developing curricula that facilitate debate between, for example, fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence) and social science research methodologies (which have in common their own versions of inductive, deductive and analogical reasoning) and, as another example, different forms of feminist thought?
- How can we facilitate the active involvement of Muslim women educators in teaching such courses?

By attempting to address Muslim women’s needs and hearing their voices in both case studies discussed we believe we will contribute to the creation of more nuanced and multifaceted discourses on Muslim women and also on intercommunity dialogue, pedagogy, social structures and feminist philosophy. Our research demonstrates that there are many areas for intercultural and interfaith debate. Phillips (2010) shows in her analysis of multiculturalism and gender how such issues should be discussed safely within the structure of academic study: we hope this may lead to development of educational provision that meets the aspirations of those British Muslim women who seek a higher education curriculum that provides both theological and secular debate and brings the two together for comparison and contrast; for those who are already change agents a new Islamic Studies curriculum for women will provide a platform for sharing their successes and becoming role models.

3 *The interim and final reports will be posted on the Islamic Studies Network website: <http://tinyurl.com/6cwgbpc>.*

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The HumBox project: Islamic Studies collection



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What is HumBox?

The HumBox website states it is: “a new way of storing, managing and publishing your Humanities teaching resources on the web. Share handouts, exercises, podcasts, videos and anything else you can imagine!” (HumBox 2011).

HumBox was developed as part of a project funded by JISC (Joint Information Systems Committee) and the Higher Education Academy to encourage lecturers to publish and share their resources. The success of free-to-use open education resources in the school sector has shown that teachers and lecturers can see the value of joining a repository and sharing their work with subject colleagues. The HumBox project involved humanities subject centres, and subject staff from 11 UK universities.

The project sought to make the uploading and sharing of resources suitable for the higher education environment. This involved investigation into lecturer attitudes to sharing their work, not just polished research, but materials for subject teaching, with colleagues. Peer review was a key aspect of this approach to allow for feedback on views of your resources: essentially positive comments on the way materials were used in other subject situations, with suggestions for linking to other resources, or examples of how the materials had been adapted.


The objectives of the HumBox project were as follows:

- to discover, review and revise digital resources from a range of Humanities disciplines and to share them as open content...;
- to provide a trusted and sustainable community repository ... ;
- to create an expanding national community of peers committed to sharing and reviewing online resources from a range of subject areas in their own disciplinary context which have a global reach;
- to embed the culture of shared, open educational resources across the Humanities community fostering an increased awareness of and commitment to sharing Humanities resources;
- to meet the need for a light touch process of peer review and quality enhancement in the delivery of shared learning resources;
- to provide solutions to practical obstacles inhibiting the sharing of resources across the Humanities. Particular attention will be focused on metadata, licensing, copyright and intellectual property rights;
- to create a robust model to sustain the further development of HumBox in the future.
(Dickens et al. 2010, 10)

Browsing HumBox

On the technological side HumBox provides a digital repository, essentially a ‘box’ that contains a range of resources. Just type ‘Islam’ or ‘Islamic Studies’ in the search box to access resources related to Islamic Studies.

Your first use of HumBox is likely to be as a browser looking for resources. You can do this by going to <http://humbox.ac.uk>, clicking on Browse, then selecting from the available categories. ‘Languages’ provides the language in which resources are available; there are some in Arabic, for example, mostly for teachers of Arabic. Secondly, ‘Keywords/Tags’ offers a wide range of resources, searchable via an alphabetical letter search, or via the ‘Advanced Search’ box in the upper toolbar. Finally, you can access resources through the ‘Collections and Resources’ section, again through the A–Z search function.



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Welcome to HumBox

The HumBox is a new way of storing, managing and publishing your Humanities teaching resources on the web. Share handouts, exercises, podcasts, videos and anything else you can imagine!

Sign up for a free account, or take a look at what's already inside.



Recently uploaded resources

	<p>The Utopian years? Radical left movements in Pompidou's france</p> <p>This half day conference, organised by Dr Manus McGrogan at the University of Portsmouth on 12 May 2011, uncovered the</p> <p style="text-align: right;">► Read More...</p>	<p>Added On: 25 May 2011 14:27 Added By: Mr Emmanuel Godin Tags: Ukoer, OER-LLAS, France, Politics, Pompidou, Left, Radicalism, History, Abortion, Feminism, Violence, Youth Culture, Press, Immigration, Military,</p>
	<p>Employability action plan</p> <p>I used this with postgrade students in conjunction with an adaptation of the ESECT card sort.</p>	<p>Added On: 12 May 2011 15:05 Added By: Dr John Canning Tags: Ukoer, Employability, Postgraduate, Action Plan Languages: English</p>
	<p>Using, developing and sharing resources</p> <p>These are the slides from a presentation I gave at the LLAS annual event for new staff in languages, linguistics and area studies,</p> <p style="text-align: right;">► Read More...</p>	<p>Added On: 19 Apr 2011 17:04 Added By: Ms Kate Borthwick Tags: LLAS, New Staff, Oer, Sharing Resources, Ukoer Languages: English</p>
	<p>Working with Threshold Concepts</p> <p>The object of this resource is to help you think about an area where subject thinking and knowledge overlap in suggestive ways</p> <p style="text-align: right;">► Read More...</p>	<p>Added On: 13 Apr 2011 11:32 Added By: Mr Brett Lucas Tags: Ukoer;, Benchmark, Statement;, Pedagogy;, Professional, Development;, CPD;, English, Literature;, Threshold, Concepts Languages: English</p>
	<p>Writing & the Teacher</p> <p>This resource contains a set of activities that use 'Imaginative writing' in various ways as a tool for thinking and learning. The</p> <p style="text-align: right;">► Read More...</p>	<p>Added On: 12 Apr 2011 16:19 Added By: Mr Brett Lucas Tags: Ukoer;, Professional, Development;, English, Literature;, Creative, Writing;, Writing, Exercises;, CPD;, Imaginative, Writing Languages: English</p>

Calling all HumBox users!

If you have used a HumBox resource in your teaching, we would love to know more about how you used it! What did your students think of it? How did you adapt it? Please tell us more about how you use HumBox by dropping us an email!

HumBox unaffected by cut of Subject Centres

HumBox came into being as the result of the effective collaboration of four Subject Centres and continues to be part of the activity of these centres. However, the Higher Education Academy, the body that manages the Subject Network, has decided to cease supporting the Network and so you may be worried about what this may mean for HumBox. Let me assure you that HumBox will continue! It will continue to be developed and managed by the University of Southampton, School of Humanities/School of Electronics and Computer Science, with no disruption of service at all.

Setting up an account

When you find any resources you want to save, use or adapt, you can 'bookmark' them and thus add them to your own resource bank. To do this you need to create an account; this is easy to do, all that is required is an academic email address (ac.uk). Help videos are available via the 'Help' tab at: <http://humbox.ac.uk/faq.html>.

Once your account is authorised you can manage your own resources, either items you have bookmarked or those you upload to share with others. Forming 'collections' allows you to group your own and bookmarked materials into a single place. One of the main advantages of collections is that they gain a four-digit number to go on the end of the HumBox URL, which makes it easy to direct others to your resources. For example, there is a collection called Islamic Studies Network at: <http://humbox.ac.uk/2677>.

Sharing your own resources

Uploading resources into HumBox is comparatively simple. The project team was aware that lecturers would be put off uploading resources if it took too long to provide the required metadata. Thus, the data required are minimal: you have to provide a title, description and keywords/tags. It is important to use keywords carefully to ensure that all related materials can be accessed in one place.

You can include any type of material used for teaching. These could be Word files containing information or activities for students, PowerPoint slides, or other visual presentations for sessions. Images, audio files, videos, podcasts or other learning objects can also be uploaded. You can also link to your own web materials or videos on YouTube through URLs.

Further details about copyright issues are available from the 'Help' section, where users can obtain guidance on the level of sharing resource creators are happy to permit by clicking on the 'Online copyright helper' link.

Ways that I use HumBox

The main use I make of HumBox is to support conference presentations. The PowerPoint for the session, together with supporting materials, can be placed in a collection and a four-digit HumBox URL can easily be provided to participants. This also makes it possible to address any issues explored in the session with additional materials. Conference participants can also add their own materials to the collection and thus expand and develop the wider understanding of the topic under consideration.

Secondly, my development of local case study collections offers colleagues an opportunity to share similar materials and makes possible comparative study of experience in different localities. Thus, my collection 'Muslims in Wolverhampton' contains details of the development of a community in the West Midlands, which could be used by students in other UK localities to compare and contrast experiences.

Finally, lecturers are aware of the benefit of images, still and moving, in teaching. HumBox makes it possible to upload single images of places of worship, which can be used for teaching purposes by colleagues. Many of the key features of a mosque, for example, can be explored through images that show the same architectural principles in a variety of geographical locations.

With the extension of HumBox to colleagues in Religious Studies and Islamic Studies more generally it is anticipated that a real sharing of resources can take place as colleagues deposit their own materials.

Benefit for Islamic Studies Network

HumBox has a great deal to offer the Islamic Studies Network and its members. The repository is up and running and just waiting for contributors to add their materials. Other repositories that you may use for your subject teaching may be restricted to a particular discipline and not suited to a cross-disciplinary theme such as Islamic Studies.

To encourage participants from the Islamic Studies Network to use HumBox, I have set up an Islamic Studies Network collection, accessible at: <http://humbox.ac.uk/2677>. This collection can allow for a sharing of teaching materials from different subject disciplines, so that when dealing with an aspect of history, law or religion, we can draw from materials developed by a subject expert.

What could you get out of it?

One way of thinking about the benefit is to multiply each resource you upload by the total number of contributors. Thus, consider that if the reader of this article were to add one resource, then each individual having submitted one item would be able to access the total sum of materials. One of the main benefits of the project has been to see the benefit of variety; a single image could be as valuable as complex learning objects for a lecturer putting a session together. All materials in HumBox can be adapted and repurposed according to the individual lecturer's needs.

Finally, the HumBox metadata enable you to see how many people have accessed or commented on your materials. This evidence of impact adds to your own profile, particularly for colleagues who are new to teaching, and may be looking to develop their professional profile for academic appointments.

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British Muslim students' experience of higher education: an analysis of National Student Survey results for UK business schools



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This article provides a review of the British Muslim student experience in higher education based on the National Student Survey (NSS) results for UK business schools between 2008 and 2010. At the present time, business and related studies is one of the most popular areas of study for British Muslim university students (UCAS 2011). Although the analysis in this article is based on results for one specific area of study, the conclusions will be of interest to practitioners across the sector working with Muslim students.

The National Student Survey came into existence after HEFCE abandoned an extensive 'subject review' mechanism and focused its efforts on developing a survey instrument that would provide prospective students information to make an informed judgement about where to study. To fulfil this objective, a percentile summary of the findings of the NSS are made public and are available on the www.unistats.com. SurrIDGE (2009, 8) found that the published data are also widely used by the media to prepare league tables, by institutions in their marketing material and by prospective students to help them make informed decisions.

The NSS was designed by academics and colleagues from The Open University and after a successful second pilot test in 2004, it was administered to all final-year students in England starting from January 2005 (Richardson et al. 2007). The questionnaire seeks feedback from final-year students to determine their educational experience at university. There are 22 core questions, 21 of which are grouped together in six analytical scales, namely: teaching; assessment and feedback; academic support; organisation and management; learning resources; and personal development. The final questionnaire item (Q22) measures 'overall satisfaction'. There are two additional open-ended questions, which seek positive and negative views of

the student experience and other optional questions are available for institutions that choose to include them. Data collection is carried out between January and April by a private organisation (IPSOS MORI) that generates emails, letters and makes reminder phone calls to encourage high response rates. In recent years, the response rates have been above 60%; over 300,000 higher education students complete the survey, which has been suggested to be sufficient to permit valid comparisons between institutions (SurrIDGE 2009). The collected NSS responses are then linked to student HESA (Higher Education Statistics Agency) records, adding a range of demographic details to student responses. This makes in-depth analysis possible whereby responses can be analysed by gender, ethnicity, religion, domicile, age, A-level points on entry, and other factors.

A robust methodology was adopted in selecting universities for inclusion in the present analysis. The Higher Education Academy recommends that universities with less than 23 responses should not be included. Consequently only university business schools that exceeded this threshold were included; furthermore only business schools located in England were selected. These preliminary criteria led to 79 English universities being identified as suitable for analysis. To facilitate comparisons between universities the current classification of universities has been adopted, namely: Russell Group, pre-1992 and post-1992. There were 11 Russell Group, 22 pre-1992 and 46 post-1992 universities included. In total 91,666 students emerged from the selection criteria. As this research is primarily interested in British Muslim students, only Pakistani and Bangladeshi students living in the UK were selected. This criterion is limited in some sense as British Muslim students who are not of Pakistani or Bangladeshi ethnic origin have not been included. Further analysis could be carried out to investigate the experience of international Muslim students. The focus on UK students of Pakistani or Bangladeshi ethnic origin resulted in 5,523 students emerging as appropriate for analysis; in this article these students will be referred to as (British) Muslim students.

The analysis reveals: the A-level performance of Muslim students; their destination by type of university; their preferences in term-time accommodation; their overall satisfaction, including gender differences; and the factors influencing satisfaction, with some important implications for those working with Muslim students.

A-level performance

Figures 1a and 1b highlight the distribution of A-level grade achievement by different ethnic groups, based on responses to the NSS. It is quite clear from the graphs that Black and Pakistani or Bangladeshi students are not achieving high grades in the same proportion as other ethnic groups (see Figure 1b).

Figure 1b clearly shows that Black and Pakistani/Bangladeshi (British Muslim) students have a very high percentage for achieving low A-level grades and a low percentage for achieving high A-level grades.

The percentage of Muslim students that achieve a very high A-level grade was very low; almost 10% (see Figure 1c).

Destination of British Muslim students by type of university

There are 5,523 (3,555 male and 1,968 female) Pakistani- or Bangladeshi-origin business students who completed the NSS between 2008 and 2010. The overwhelming majority of these students were from post-1992 universities (see Table 1 and Figure 2). This is further corroborated by the Higher and Education Statistics Agency (HESA), which provides a detailed breakdown of gender and ethnicity at each university. The data clearly show that post-1992 universities have a significantly larger number of British students from diverse ethnic backgrounds (HESA 2011).

Table 1: Muslim business school students who completed the NSS

Gender	Type of university			Total
	Russell group	Pre-1992 university	Post-1992 university	
Male Muslim students	134	700	2,721	3,555
Female Muslim students	80	350	1,538	1,968

Term-time accommodation

Unlike other ethnic groups, the vast majority of British Muslim male (over 60%) and female (over 70%) students live at home with their parents when studying for their degree (see Figure 3).

Muslim students who stayed in university or rented accommodation ranked their overall university experience with greater satisfaction than those Muslim students living at home (see Figure 4).

Muslim student responses to the NSS

Statistical analysis using non-parametric tests, used to compare the differences between ethnic groups, revealed that Pakistani- or Bangladeshi-origin students score their higher educational experience lower than many other ethnic groups.

A closer examination of the ranking of NSS themes by Muslim students reveals that both male and female students' overall satisfaction has decreased over the last three years (see Figure 5). Male students are particularly disappointed with the teaching, while female students are disappointed with the organisation and management in the university. Female Muslim students were also less satisfied with their overall educational experience at university than their male counterparts.

If we compare how the means of the NSS variables differ with the majority of the student population, we find that Muslim students rank the teaching (Q1–Q4), academic support (Q10–Q12) and IT resources (Q16–18) lower than White (English) students (see Figure 6).

If we compare Muslim student responses to the mean average of all universities then we see that Pakistani or Bangladeshi students score the teaching and academic support very low (see Figure 7). These NSS themes will later be shown to be highly relevant to ensuring a valued educational experience at university.

Factors influencing overall student satisfaction

A number of statistical tests (Decision Tree Analysis and Ordinal Regression) can be applied on the NSS data to determine which NSS variables have a significant impact on overall student satisfaction. These statistical tests were applied and revealed complementary findings. Findings from both tests revealed that organisation and management, teaching, personal development, and academic support are vital to helping students achieve a valued educational experience. Some of these themes were scored lower by Muslim students (see Figures 6 and 7) when compared with students of other ethnicities studying in higher education.

Conclusions

The findings from this research have identified the very low percentage of British Muslim students who achieve a very high A-level grade. This issue needs to be addressed at the national level in relation to pedagogical support and student development. There is also a sizable difference in the number of female and male Muslim students completing the NSS. What is worrying is that female Muslim students score their educational experience lower, in relation to satisfaction, than their Muslim male counterparts. The research points to the possible effect of living at home having a major impact on the students' overall educational experience. Students living at home, and in this case over 70% of female British Muslim students lived at home during their studies, scored many of the variables on the NSS lower than students living in halls or rented accommodation. Differences in the expectations of educational experience could also be a factor contributing to this difference.

The NSS findings, in relation to female British Muslim students, have major implications for tutors across the sector who need to be aware of the social pressures that are placed on female Muslim students and how this might affect their studies. For example, if Muslim students are required to be at home by a certain hour in the evening this limits the time they can invest in group meetings and activities at university. These issues need to be addressed by tutors who set group assessments and activities for students, especially female Muslim students.

Finally, the results all indicate that teaching is a major influence on student satisfaction, and university tutors need to reflect on their teaching strategies to ensure that they are engaging their Muslim students. Considerable research has been undertaken on culturally responsive teaching, and tutors need to be made aware of the social background and pedagogical learning preferences of students from various ethnic backgrounds to ensure greater participation and engagement in academic activities.

If universities are to engage one of the largest ethnic groups in the UK, British Muslims, then strategies need to be developed and resources committed to encourage greater participation in higher education by Muslim students. The consequences of failing to address this will lead to a greater divide in social and economic terms and will have an impact on the long-term prosperity of the UK.

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Figure 1a: Number of business school students by ethnicity and A-level grades achieved

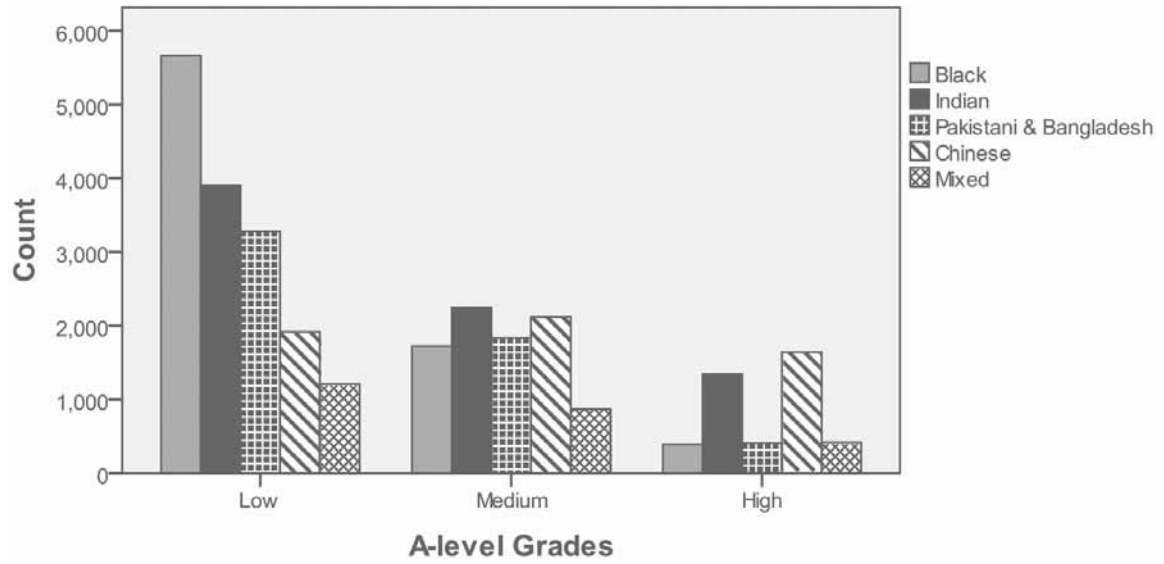


Figure 1b: Percentage of business school students by ethnicity with low, medium and high A-level grades

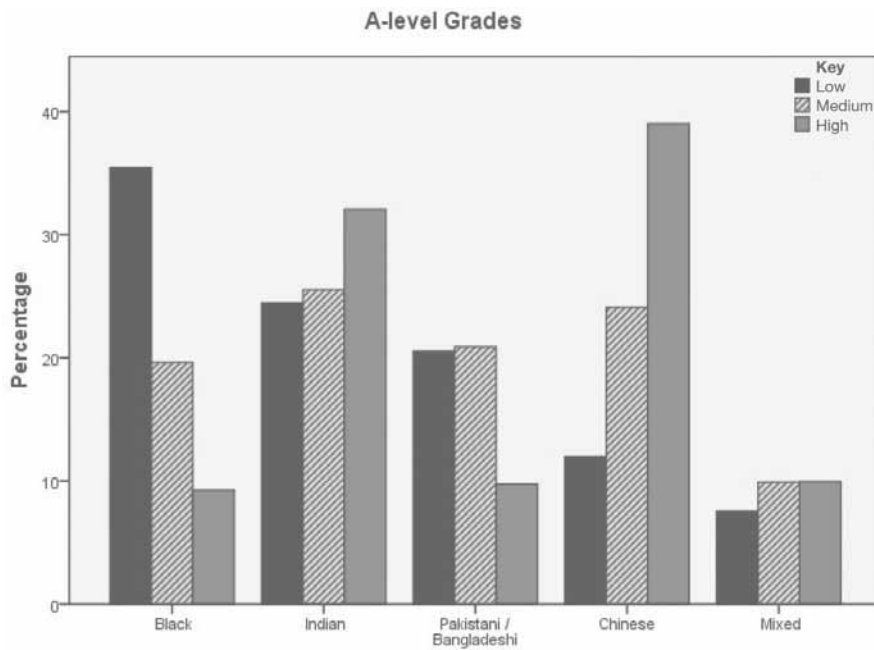


Figure 1c: A-level grade distribution of Muslim business school students

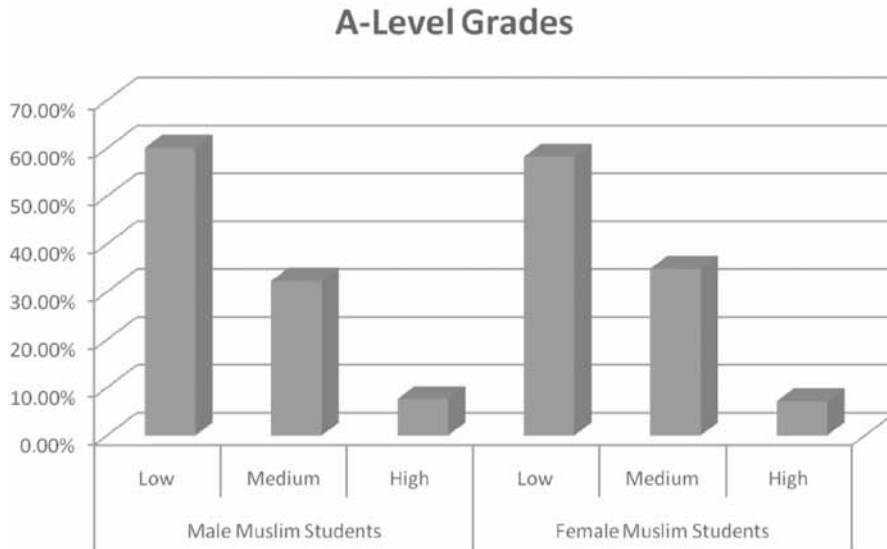


Figure 2: British Muslim students studying a business degree at various types of university

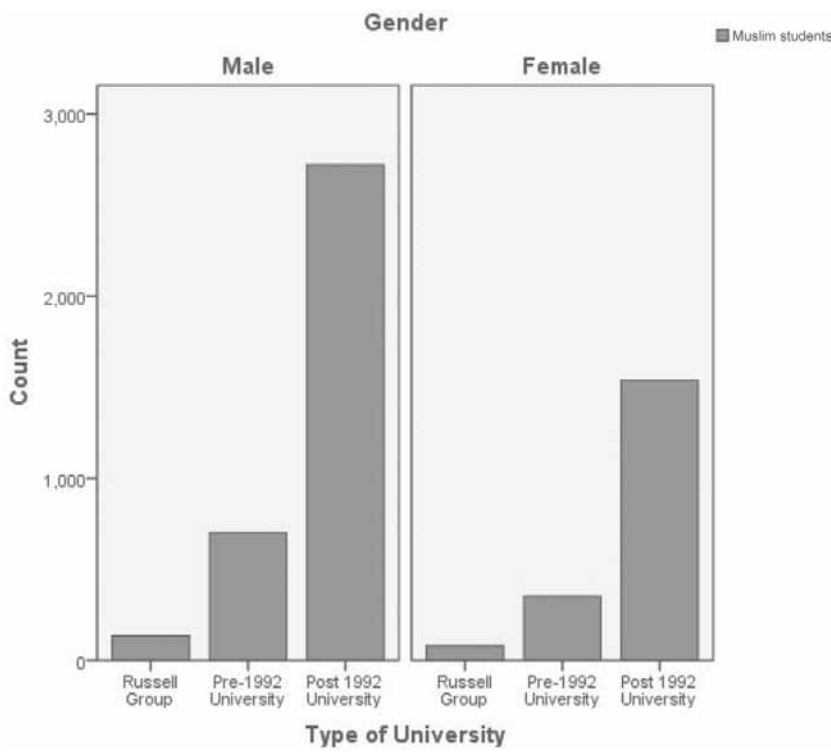


Figure 3: Term-time accommodation of British Muslim students

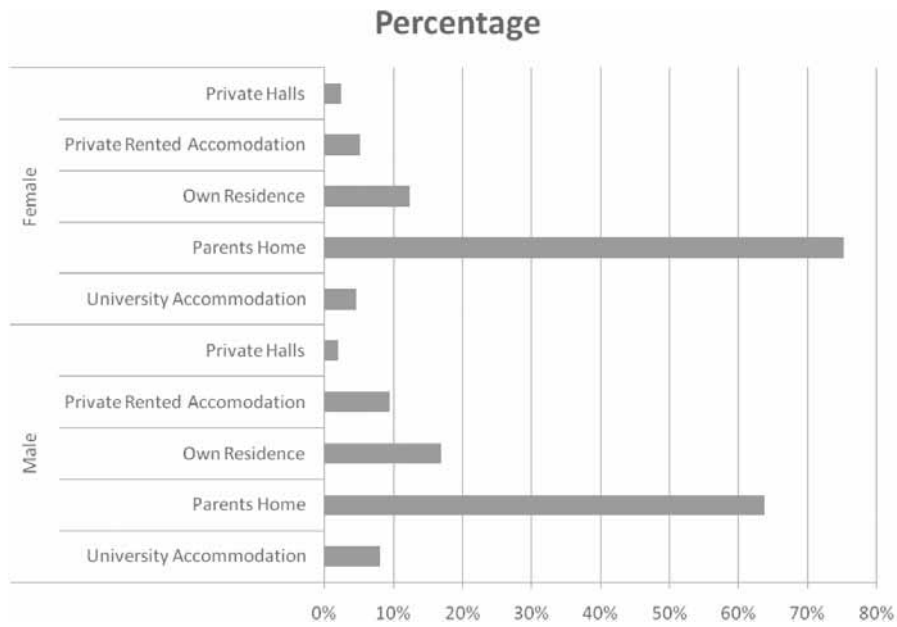


Figure 4: Satisfaction levels of Muslim students based on term-time accommodation

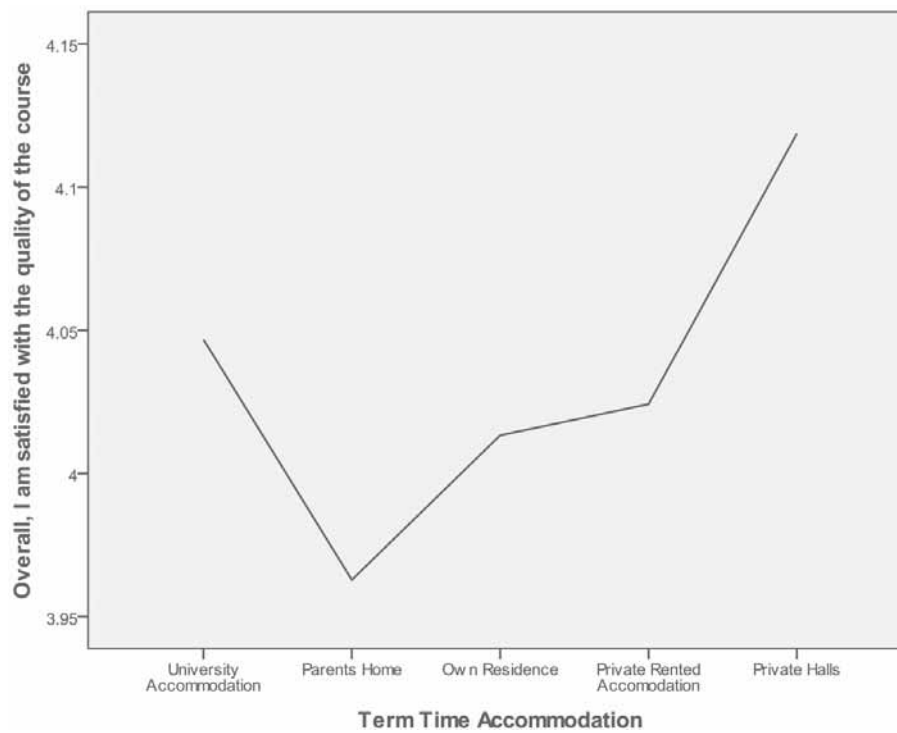


Figure 5: Muslim students' ranking of NSS themes over the last three years

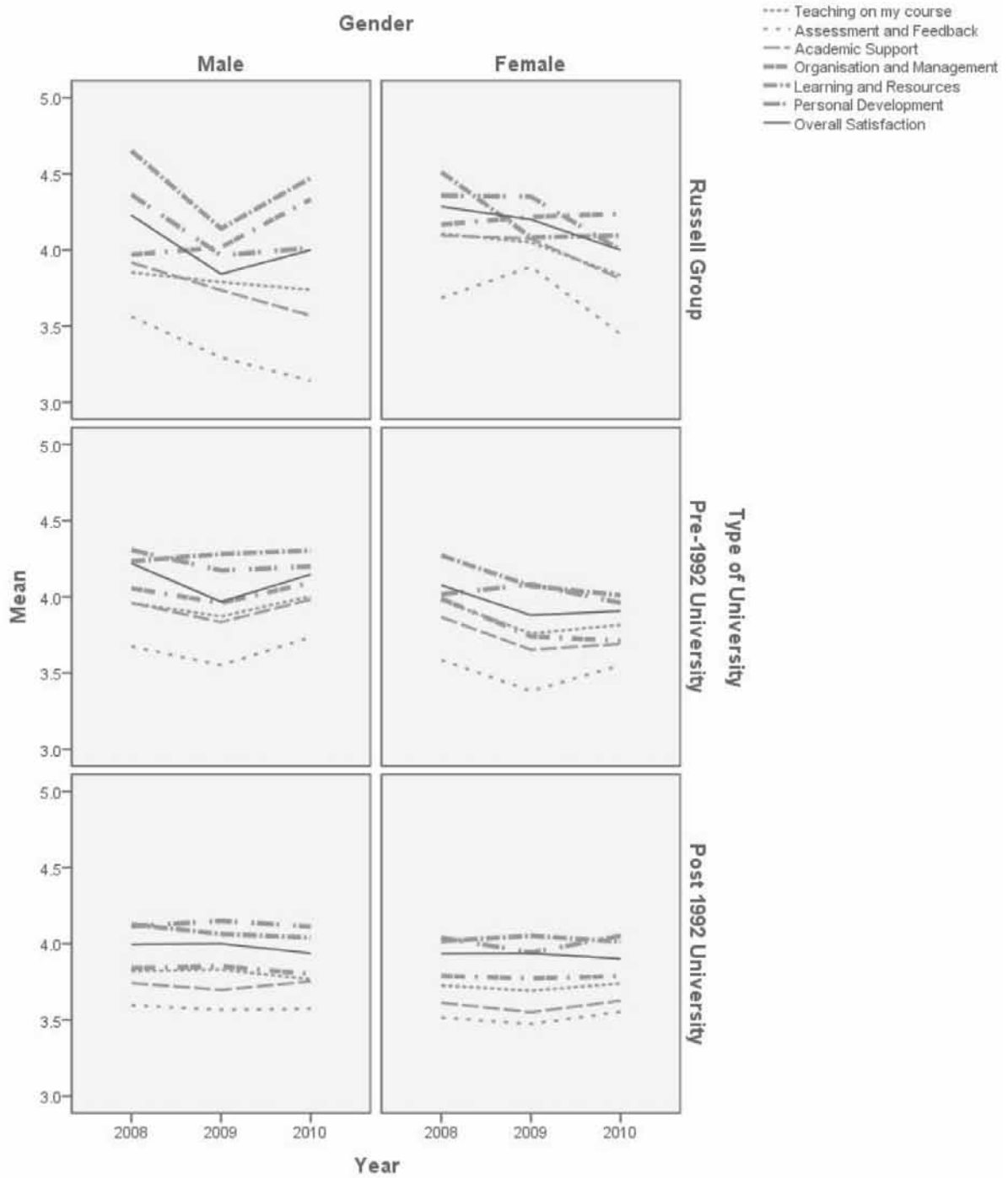


Figure 6: Mean difference between Muslim and White (English) students' scoring of NSS variables

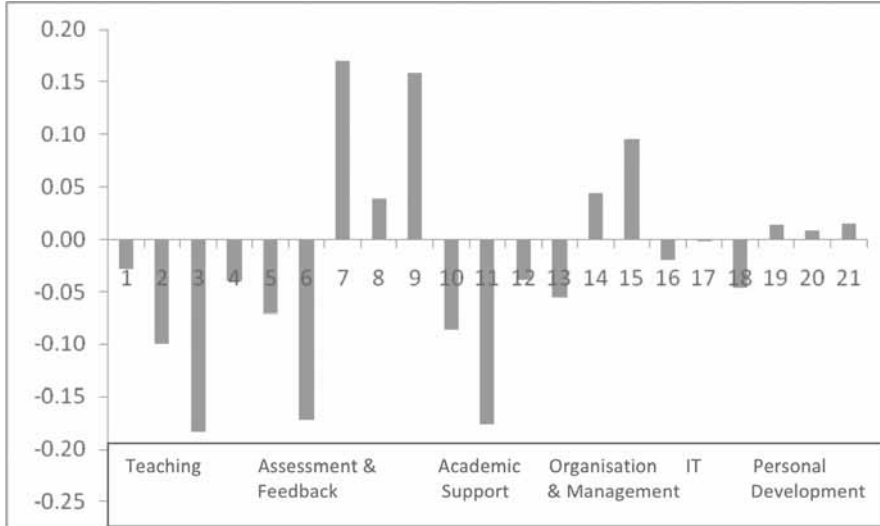
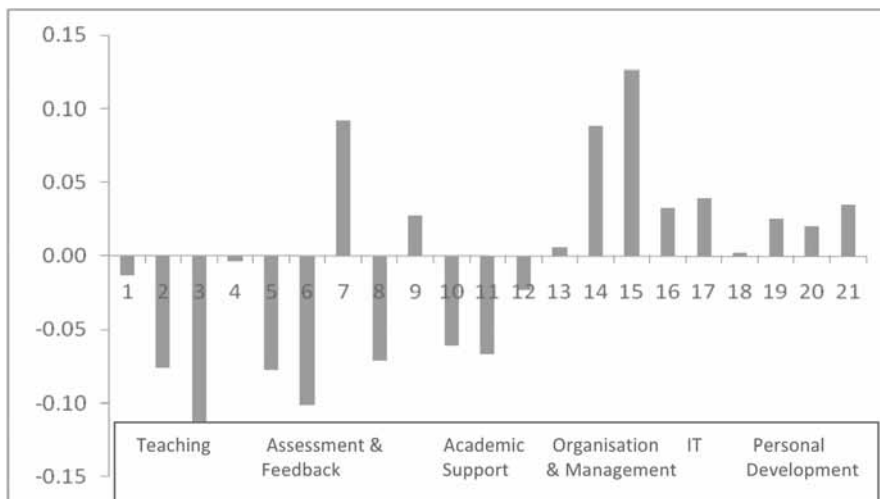


Figure 7: Mean difference between British Muslim students' and all UK students' scoring of the NSS variables



Researching Islamic Studies provision: the Islamic Studies module database



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In 2009 the research team working on the HEFCE-funded report *Islamic Studies provision in the UK* (Bernasek and Bunt 2010) built a database to assist in the collection and analysis of data. The database contains details of over 1,000 modules and research projects relating to the field of Islamic Studies in the UK. Following correspondence with the institutions whose data were collected by the researchers we are pleased to announce that that the modules portion of the database is now available for public use. A limited number of research projects are also available for consultation.

There is no fixed definition of Islamic Studies for the purpose of the database. The remit of this sub-project was to conduct as comprehensive a survey as possible of the teaching provision in this field. Information was gathered primarily from publicly available data on institutional websites. Any module or project concerning wholly, or partly, the study of Islam and Muslim cultures has been included, from introductory courses in world religions to specialist Arabic language training for the purposes of reading the Qur'an. Each entry indicates the institution, module title, a description of the module (wherever one was available), the department it is taught by and the degree programme to which the module contributes. Where possible we have also included the level of the course, the number of credits, the number of students enrolled and an estimate of the percentage of the module that involves the study of Islam or Muslims. In some cases this will be 100%, but it could be as little as 5%.

The database is easy to use and includes an online user guide. Users can choose to see a list of all modules or projects, or to search by field or keyword. If users find errors or omissions in the database they can fill in an online form that allows the Islamic Studies Network project team to make the necessary amendments.

The database might be used for a number of purposes including:

- informing the design of new courses and modules by examining existing courses and modules;
- examining the extent of provision by discipline (e.g. Politics, History, Business) or by theme (e.g. modules about the Qur'an, Middle East politics, Islamic Spain);
- finding out about research projects relating to the study of Islam or Muslims.

The information held in the database demonstrates especially clearly the diversity of teaching and research in the area of Islamic Studies. By extension, it also reveals the diversity of students' choices ranging from choosing a full degree in Islamic Studies through to studying a number of single modules related to Islamic Studies as part of another degree.

The database can be found at:
<http://is.prs.heacademy.ac.uk>.

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Teaching Islamic Studies in an Australian university



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Christian West and Muslim East share a religious tradition that traces its history back to the prophet Abraham. Over the centuries Western scholars have often studied Islam in different Muslim societies as an exotic phenomenon. However, the events of 9/11 have changed this approach in a radical way. Today, Islam is being studied not only within Muslim-majority nations, but also within the countries of the West, and is being researched by not solely Western scholars but people of all creeds and ideological persuasions, including Muslims themselves.

In Australia in the wake of the events of 9/11 and subsequent bombings in Bali, Madrid and London, Islamic Studies as an academic discipline has picked up increased momentum and has become popular in many universities across the country. Although a plethora of Muslim organisations have also emerged since the aftermath of 9/11 offering Islamic Studies programmes, the university degrees and courses in Islamic Studies are the most popular. This is because they offer a social scientific study of the religion of Islam as well as of its adherents, while the vast majority of Muslim organisations, colleges, institutes and academies take essentially a theological approach to understanding Islam and Muslim societies. These organisations are self-funded and operate independently. Many of them are not recognised by the Government and do not have any ties with the Muslim umbrella organisation, the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils¹. The workers in them are often volunteers, many of whom do not have formal teaching qualifications.

Islamic Studies as a relatively new but fast-growing field of exploration and research in Australia is currently led by the National Centre of Excellence for Islamic Studies. The Centre is a University of Melbourne, University of Western Sydney and Griffith University partnership established in 2007 from Government funding

under the former Prime Minister, John Howard. It is a teaching as well as a research centre.

Research into the recent development of Islamic Studies in Australian universities has shown that the University of Western Sydney has Australia's largest Muslim student population at its Bankstown campus (White 2007)². This area is surrounded by suburbs with the highest concentration Muslim population in Australia (Wise and Ali 2008). Arguably, at this institution the development of Islamic Studies as an academic discipline is an academic endeavour as well as a commercial enterprise. Cultural reasons also seem to be an important variable driving the development of this phenomenon. Muslim students who take up Islamic Studies at the University of Western Sydney seem to be attracted to it to further their understanding of Islam and Muslim societies, in which their identity is deeply embedded.

Islam and Muslims in the modern world

In any discussion of the contemporary development of Islamic Studies as an academic discipline, it is critical to first and foremost appreciate the importance of Islam itself on the global stage. Globally, Islam is the world's second largest religion, after Christianity. In Australia there are 340,389 Muslims, constituting 1.7% of the total Australian population, and Islam is the third largest religion³. In 2009 the American think tank, the Pew

¹ www.afic.com.au

² *I concur with White based on what I have found in my own experience of teaching Islamic Studies. When I taught the unit 'Contemporary Islam: Religion and Identity' at the University of Sydney in 2007 approximately 30% of the students in the class were Muslim; in the following year when I taught a similar unit – 'Islam in the Modern World' – at the University of Western Sydney on its Bankstown campus, between 98% and 100% of the students were Muslim in the three classes that I taught. This reinforces the suggestion that the Bankstown campus of the University of Western Sydney is home to the largest Muslim student population.*

³ *Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006 census: www.abs.gov.au. See also Table 1 at: <http://bit.ly/hFpFKN>.*



Research Center, found that Islam has 1.57 billion adherents, constituting 23% of the world's total population of 6.9 billion (Pew Research Center 2009). In the Middle East, northern Africa and in certain parts of Asia, Islam is the predominant religion (Esposito 1992). The Pew Research Center found that over 60% of the world's Muslim population live in Asia, and approximately 20% live in the Middle East and North Africa, where more than half of the 20 countries have a population that is about 95% Muslim.

There are around 50 Muslim-majority countries in the world and Indonesia is the world's largest Muslim country in relation to population. Over 300 million Muslims, or one-fifth of the world's Muslim population, live in countries where Islam is not the predominant religion, although Muslims as minority populations are often quite large. For example, India has the world's third-largest Muslim population (Pew Research Center 2009). Interestingly, more

Muslims live in China than in Syria, and the Russian Muslim population exceeds the combined Muslim population of Jordan and Libya (Pew Research Center 2009).

We can see that Muslims constitute a huge population who live in almost every country of the world. Bearing this in mind let us turn our attention to the recent development of Islamic Studies as an academic discipline in Australian universities and grapple with some of the sociological underpinnings of this phenomenon.

Islamic Studies in Australia

The events of 9/11, the Bali bombings in October 2002, Madrid bombing in March 2004 and London bombings of 7/7 have no doubt brought an intense focus on Islam and its adherents around the world, but particularly in the West. Since these events Islam and Muslims have been equated with

terrorism and the vilification of the religion and its adherents has been on the rise (HREOC 2004). In Australia as elsewhere Islam and Muslims have come to be erroneously viewed by some to be complicit in these events. The misunderstanding of Islam in Western societies and the popular construction of Islam as a monolith that is now associated with acts of terrorism and political violence have deeply distorted the reality (Mansouri and Kamp 2007).

For Australia, one of the most pressing concerns has been the presence, so close to its soil, of the militant group Jemaah Islamiah in Indonesia. Whether Jemaah Islamiah or, for that matter, Indonesia as the world's largest Muslim country, pose a 'real' or perceived threat of terrorism, Australia nevertheless has resolved to take the matter seriously. It has cast its interest beyond Indonesia and is serious about better understanding Islam in the whole of South East Asia. Akbarzadeh et al. assert that:

There has been an acknowledgment in the Australian policy-making circles of the increasing relevance of scholarly research into our region. The importance of research into Islam in South East Asia and its implications for Australian security have become even more salient in the wake of the September 11, 2001, attack in New York and the October 2002 attack in Bali.

(2004, 3)

Behind this background and the fact that the Muslim population is growing quickly in Australia, academic research and teaching interest in Islam is gradually gaining momentum. As Akbarzadeh et al. note: "Studies of Islam and Muslim societies constitute a relatively new, but growing, field of research in Australia" (2004, 3). Therefore, a growing trend in research activity and a heightened interest in various aspects of Islam, particularly its socio-cultural and political role in a globalised world are penetrating academia with great force. The growing effects of globalisation and a post-9/11 world order have important ramifications for Muslim residents in Australia, and understanding this is critical. Issues relating to Muslim citizenship in relation to their ability to access the labour market and participate fully in

civic life, as well as the growth of the phenomenon of Islamic revivalism and its impact on governance in numerous Muslim states are also important considerations in better appreciating the role of Islam today. How this can be made possible is through academic research and a formal and comprehensive Islamic Studies programme.

The table in Appendix A, by no means exhaustive, is a list of units in Islamic Studies offered by Australian universities at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. There is a great diversity of units available to students of Islamic Studies. In some instances universities offer distinct units and specialise in certain subjects, and in other instances there is some overlap between units across the institutions.

Many of these universities – for example, the Universities of Newcastle and New South Wales – have opted for small Islamic Studies programmes and therefore offer students the option to take one or a few units that count towards their degree as core units or as electives. Other universities, such as the University of Western Sydney, have opted for a more comprehensive programme in Islamic Studies by offering students a 'key programme' in Islamic Studies with a major or a sub-major option. Other institutions such as the Australian National University and the University of Melbourne have taken a more significant step towards teaching Islamic Studies by developing a comprehensive undergraduate or postgraduate programme or both.

To take the University of Western Sydney as an example, students can pursue a key programme in Islamic Studies within the following degree courses⁴:

- Bachelor of Arts;
- Bachelor of Arts (Pathway to Teaching Primary);
- Bachelor of Arts (Pathway to Teaching Secondary);
- Bachelor of Arts (Dean's Scholars).

4 See: http://yourfuture.uws.edu.au/ug/arts/bachelor_of_arts/bachelor_of_arts_islamic_studies.

The key programme in Islamic Studies lays down a theoretical foundation in the first year of study for the students, who are then able to gradually progress into topics and disciplines critical to understanding Islam through systematic Islamic Studies. The field of study considers text and context, historical and modern Islamic studies, and research methods. There is an emphasis on the relevance of Islamic Studies to the modern world through developing a solid appreciation of past traditions in Islamic scholarship and their social and historical contexts. Preparation for graduate study is another important aim of this programme, with strong attention paid to developing analytical and interdisciplinary research skills by combining several approaches.

Students at the University of Western Sydney can also undertake the following degree courses with a major or sub-major in Islamic Studies:

- Bachelor of Arts (major or sub-major);
- Bachelor of Arts (Pathway to Teaching Primary) (major);
- Bachelor of Arts (Pathway to Teaching Secondary) (major);
- Bachelor of Arts (Dean's Scholar) (sub-major).

Students who enrol in the Bachelor of Arts key programmes of Humanities or Languages, and those from outside the Bachelor of Arts, also have the option of designing the elective component of their degree into an Islamic Studies major or sub-major series. The field of study in these options is similar to that of the key programme described above.

Generally speaking, research into Islam and Muslim societies and formal Islamic Studies programmes have important benefits. As can be ascertained from the course listings in Appendix A and the preceding discussion, they allow students of Islamic Studies to structure a career or professional path such as primary school or secondary school teaching. Another important benefit of Islamic Studies is that individuals gain a better appreciation of lived Islam and learn more about Muslim societies and Muslim diaspora communities. Islamic Studies programmes help students focus on various aspects of Islam but at the same time learn more specific knowledge of the religion as a cultural and belief system. This

understanding is important in appreciating Islam's contribution to the multi-cultural and multi-faith nature of contemporary Australia. It also enhances the researchers' and students' knowledge of different Islamic values, rituals and practices and thereby dispels some of the myths and misconceptions often propagated by the media. For example, it defuses the threat wrongly ascribed to Islam in the age of terror.

Economic and cultural factors

Although terrorist attacks in the early part of the last decade, coupled with the global rise of Islam and the continuous growth of the Muslim population, were the major catalysts to the development of Islamic Studies in Australia, these factors alone do not provide a comprehensive explanation. Undeniably economic and cultural factors are important in the analysis of this phenomenon.

Economically, Islamic Studies is a real generator of revenue for universities. Since universities are no longer solely places of higher learning but increasingly have become areas of commercial activity and operate with a corporate ethos, any opportunity to increase income is given important consideration. This is certainly reflected in Sharon R. Roseman's assertion that:

Many recent publications have examined the impact of specific pressures to shift the focus in universities from teaching, learning, and research to other priorities. These pressures have included an emphasis on: the commercialization of research, the search for corporate donations and private-public 'partnerships' to fund basic university infrastructure as well as specific programs and research projects, the expansion of tiers of insecurely-employed instructors and staff, the search for new ways of competing with other universities and units for student tuition money, and attempts to promote self-interested individualism and competition among workers.

(2010, 6)

Islamic Studies is one area which, if shrewdly marketed, has the potential to generate substantial income for universities. Table 1 provides an example to explore this hypothesis.

Table 1: Bachelor of Arts (Islamic Studies) – University of Melbourne⁵

Study mode	Duration	Tuition fee
Full-time	3 years	<p>Full domestic fee: AU\$17,850 (£11,471) per year</p> <p>Commonwealth Supported Place (CSP) fee: AU\$5,310 (£3,412) per year</p> <p>International fees : AU\$21,400 – AU\$27,400 (£13,754 – £17,610) per year</p>

Without dwelling too much on the figures in the table above, it is clear that Islamic Studies programmes are a profitable enterprise. The ability of these programmes to generate revenue for universities cannot be denied, and it seems that this is the economic driver behind the development of these courses.

Culturally, Islamic Studies in the contemporary world has become the purview of mainly Muslims themselves. Of course many non-Muslims take intense interest in Islamic Studies and successfully explore many complex aspects and issues surrounding Islam, but it is now Muslims who are studying their own religion in great numbers. As previously mentioned, the University of Western Sydney at its Bankstown campus has the largest Muslim student population in Australia. Many of these students take Islamic Studies units either as electives or as major or sub-major sequence in their degrees. I have been teaching Islamic Studies units at the Bankstown campus since 2008 and have noticed that over 90% of the students in each of the units that I teach are Muslim. In one particular unit – Islamic Law in a Changing World – 100% of the students are Muslim.

If Islam is a complete way of life and the religion of Muslims, why is it that Muslims need to study their religion in universities? Shouldn't they know their religion and since it is a way of life practice it in order

to be a Muslim? I want to suggest that studying Islam by Muslims in universities at degree level is not so much about learning rituals and practices of Islam or developing a theological appreciation of it. For them it is in a minor way about gaining credentials, but essentially they have a genuine interest in exploring Islam beyond their immediate practices and understanding. They demonstrate a keen interest in learning about Islam as a religion as well as a political system. This is true for many students at the University of Western Sydney, as the extracts from student feedback below reveal:

As a third year university student studying B. social work, I have not come across a course quite so intellectually challenging. As a practicing and devoted Muslim at first I was offended by the subject because the teacher was asking us to consider how Islam is practiced in the modern world and that was what Islam is. As the weeks went on, I soon came to understand that this was not supposed to be insulting but rather an explanation of not what Islam is theologically but what Islam has become, sociologically speaking i.e. what Muslims have made it and what non-Muslims say about it and what the world has come to understand Islam as. As soon as I realised this, I became aware that I was being intellectually challenged by what was being taught.

(Student feedback for the unit 101463: Islam in the Modern World, 2008)

Another student wrote that:

In general I think it was unanimous that the unit was very enjoyable. Mainly because the content itself was relevant to many of us having been growing up as Muslims in the West. Some topics like suicide bombings, jihad, Palestine, the revivalists are often off limits to talk about in any setting, and so it was quite good to talk about these things in such an open manner. Many contentious issues were clarified, and I think many in the class were challenged by some of these notions offered in the lectures and particularly those raised in class.

For me personally having studied elements of shariah before, it was quite challenging and I

⁵ The table is modified from: www.hotcourses.com.au/australia/course/bachelor-of-arts-islamic-studies-university-of-melbourne/96125/879/coursedetail.html.

started the unit with great scepticism, thinking that modernism and Islam and the West were entirely incompatible. After the initial assignment to do with this topic and the class discussion, I really changed many of my views on the topic. Also the sociological view offered by you was good. I found it interesting to listen to counter opinions and made many realisations that I think have helped me as a Muslim and 'Australian'.

(Student feedback for the unit 101463: Islam in the Modern World, 2008)

Conclusion

Islamic Studies is undeniably a fast-growing phenomenon in Australian universities. People from different religious and ideological backgrounds and Muslims themselves seek to study Islam in order to gain a better appreciation of this important world religion that shares its tradition in a fundamental way with Christianity and Judaism. There are multiple drivers of the growth of Islamic Studies in Australian universities; prominent among them are economic motivations related to the generation of revenue for universities from popular courses or units, and cultural factors related to interest in Islamic Studies from Muslim students.

It is important to appreciate that Islamic Studies is not about the study of the religion alone, but also about its adherents. In other words, Islamic Studies in universities involves a social scientific exploration of the ways in which Muslims describe and pursue their everyday religious life. Since Islam is being interpreted and practised by its followers in a variety of ways, understanding this dimension of Muslim everyday living is critical, particularly through higher learning, which is made possible in universities.

What is interesting about the situation described in this article is that it provides an insight into the Islamic Studies teaching curriculum in certain universities in Australia and explores the rationale for the need to develop Islamic Studies in a post-9/11 world. While universities create the opportunity to generate revenue from teaching Islamic Studies, students from Muslim backgrounds in particular benefit from a better appreciation of their religion in a fragmentary and constantly changing modern world.

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Appendix A: Universities teaching Islamic Studies in Australia

Source: Relevant university websites.

Institution	State	Unit name	Course
The Australian National University Centre for Arab and Islamic Studies and College of Arts and Social Sciences	ACT	ARTH2100: Islamic Art and the West	Undergraduate
		MEAS2104: Islam: History and Institutions MEAS8102: Islamic Radicalism MEAS8111: Islam, the West and International Terrorism MEAS8115: Islam in World Politics MEAS8116: Islam and Democracy MEAS8117: Islam in Central Asia MEAS8118: Islam in Australia MEAS8119: Islam In Turkey MEAS8120: Islam, Faith and Community MEAS8121: Approaches to the Study of Modern Muslim Societies MEAS8122: Shiite Islam in World Politics MEAS8123: Special Topic in Modern Islam	Postgraduate Master of Islam in the Modern World
Monash University Centre for Islam and the Modern World	VIC	APIS 100: Introduction to Islam APIS 101: Approaches to the Qur'an and Hadith ATS2586/ATS3586: Islam: Principles, Civilisation and Influence ATS2907/ATS3907: Islamic Leadership in the 20th Century APIS 200: Islamic Faith and Creeds: Ethics and Praxis APIS 201: Sufism: Spiritual Journeys	Undergraduate
		PLM4430/PLM5430: Political Islam APG4331: Islam in Indonesia and Turkey APG4336: Islam and Modernity APG5329: Political Islam APG4337/APG5337: Conflict Resolution and Islam in the Middle East APG4338/APG5338: Islam in South Asia APG4342: Islamic Thought in the Modern World APG4654/APG5654: Islamic Business and Economics	Postgraduate Master of Islamic Studies
The University of Melbourne National Centre of Excellence for Islamic Studies Australia and Graduate School of Humanities and Social Sciences	VIC	110-113: Understanding Islam and Muslim Societies 110-211: Great Texts of Islam: Qur'an and Hadith 110-253: Islam in Southeast Asia 110-114: Islam in the Modern World 110-250: Islam, Media and Conflict 110-254: Islamic Banking and Finance 110-252: Islamic Law in a Changing World 110-210: Ethical Traditions in Islam 131-046: Great Empires of Islamic Civilisation 110-223: Islam and the West 110-251: Islam and the Making of Europe	Undergraduate
		ISLM40003: Methodologies of Hadith ISLM40005: Muslim Philosophical Traditions ISLM90008: Islam and Politics ISLM40002: The Qur'an and its Interpretation ISLM90009: Special Seminar in Islamic Studies ISLM40004: Islamic Theology: Schools and Methods ISLM40001: Topics in Arabic & Islamic Studies ISLM40007: Methods of Islamic Law ISLM90005: Islam and Questioning of Modernity	Postgraduate Master of Islamic Studies

Institution	State	Unit name	Course
Macquarie University Department of Anthropology and Department of Ancient History	NSW	ANTH365: Islam AHIS120: Antiquity's Heirs: Barbarian Europe, Byzantium, and Islam	Undergraduate
University of New South Wales School of Languages and Linguistics, School of History and Philosophy, and Architecture Programme	NSW	HIST2600: Islamic Worlds: From Muhammad to the Present INDO2150: Islam in East Asian and Southeast Asian Countries BENV2240: Domestic Architecture in Islam and the Poetics of Space	Undergraduate
University of Sydney Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies	NSW	ARIS3680: Approaches to Arabic and Islamic Studies ARIS1672: Arab-Islamic Civilisation: Introduction ARIS1671: Arabs, Islam & Middle East: Introduction ARIS2673: Islam and Muslims in World History ARIS2674: Islam and Politics: Modernity Challenges	Undergraduate
University of Technology – Sydney Faculty of Law	NSW	76005: Islamic Law 11287: Islamic Architecture	Undergraduate
University of Newcastle School of Humanities and Social Science	NSW	RELI3251: Islam in Modern Society RELI3000: Islam: History, Theology and Culture	Undergraduate
University of Western Sydney School of Humanities and Languages	NSW	101462: Understanding Islam and Muslim Societies 101464: Great Texts of Islam: Qur'an and Hadith 101467: Islam in Southeast Asia 101463: Islam in the Modern World 101468: Islam, Media and Conflict 101471: Women in Arabic and Islamic Literature 101465: Islamic Law in a Changing World 101466: Ethical Traditions in Islam 101822: Islam and the West	Undergraduate
The University of Queensland School of History, Philosophy, Religion & Classics	QLD	RELN1301: Introduction to the Islamic Tradition HIST2137: Islamic Civilisation 632-1258 RELN2307: Islam in the Contemporary World LAWS5189: Islamic Law	Undergraduate
Griffith University Humanities, Languages and Criminology	QLD	1603HUM: Islam in the Modern World 2604HUM: Great Texts of Islam (Quran and Hadith) 2612HUM: Islamic Law in a Changing World 2606HUM: Islam in South East Asia 2611HUM: Islam, Media and Conflict 2608HUM: Islamic Banking and Finance 2610HUM: Great Empires of Islamic Civilisation 3602ART: Islam and the Making of Europe 3696HUM: Ethical Traditions in Islam 3609HUM: Advanced Islamic Studies	Undergraduate

Religious belief and educational marketing: the case of student fees and sharia law



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The price of education continues to rise causing the majority of students to incur some form of debt if higher education is sought from the further or higher education sectors. How this debt is perceived can affect student uptake from certain sectors based on belief. Sharia law and the prohibition of *riba* (interest or usury) can play a factor when the decision-making process takes place. How the public education sector responds to these issues has been further brought to the fore by the recent decision by the UK Coalition Government to increase yearly tuition fees to potentially £9,000. Government student loans provide lending to any eligible student to pay the university or college for tuition costs; however, according to sources of sharia law there may be issues regarding the interest charged. Although the Browne review (Browne 2010) suggested a flat rate of interest be charged at 2.2% plus inflation, the Government has opted for a tapered rate, which would rise to 3% depending on earnings.

Responding to these concerns is important as the Islamic finance market as a whole has been reported to be a trillion dollar industry¹, and the MENASA (Middle East North Africa and South Asia) region is home to 29% of the world population. The various strategies used in the increasing drive for recruitment to the UK higher education sector have included focus on these regions through teaching being undertaken by 'flying faculty', the use of overseas franchises and campuses, and the increasing use of high-end, digital e-learning content. In addition to the overseas market, there

are significant numbers of British Muslim students wishing to pursue higher education; this has been discussed at various academic levels (Open Society Institute 2005).

The question posed by the market opportunity is how to facilitate access to opportunities while providing reassurance that religious belief will be taken into consideration. Statements on university websites and agreements with banks may beneficially alter the specific consumption behaviour shown in transactions (such as student loans and uptake of student places) that may be considered to be based on *riba*.

The Human Rights Act

The wider issues of access to education stem from the provisions contained within the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). The Human Rights Act makes it possible for Convention rights and freedoms to be enforced by UK courts and tribunals. Courts and tribunals must take the Convention into account when making their decisions and Parliament has to scrutinise UK legislation more carefully where human rights are concerned. The Convention states that:

No person shall be denied the right to education ... the State shall respect the right of parents to ensure education and teaching in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions.

— Council of Europe 2010, First Protocol, Article 2

The UK Government accepted this article into the Human Rights Act 1998 with its usual proviso: "only so far as it is compatible with the provision of efficient instruction and training, and the avoidance of unreasonable public expenditure" (Human Rights Act 1998).

In addition the Convention states that the right of access to education must be given without discrimination on any ground "such as sex, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status" (Council of Europe 2010, Article 14). This issue may be called to the fore if students of a specific religious background feel that either of these foundational rights are being infringed by Government, local authority or university policy within this area.

¹ *Speaking at a panel discussion in May 2010 at the MENASA Forum titled 'The Challenges Ahead for Islamic finance', Rushdi Siddiqui, Global Head of Islamic Finance at Thomson Reuters, said: "It took the Islamic finance industry 40 years to become a \$1 trillion industry. It will take another two to five years to become a \$2 trillion industry." Forum organised by the Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC).*



Access to education

Although there is unlikely to be a Human Rights Act violation, the plans for higher education outlined by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills have stated that: “In exceptional cases, universities will be able to charge higher contributions, up to a limit of £9,000, subject to meeting much tougher conditions on widening participation and fair access” (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills 2010a).

Under the new plans:

Universities and colleges will have to meet conditions set by the Office for Fair Access demonstrating how they will spend some of the additional income making progress in widening participation and fair access. OFFA will be able to apply sanctions in cases where universities do not deliver on the commitments in their access agreements, up to and including withdrawing the right of the university to charge more than £6,000.

- Department for Business, Innovation and Skills 2010b

These statements may mean further thought is given to ensuring that uptake is based on the principles of widening participation and fair access. Certainly the production of a website outlining the various options and the assurance that recruitment staff are aware of the options that can be outlined to potential students who voice their concerns will help to accomplish the above goals.

The response from the banking sector: alternatives to student loans?

Sharia boards (consisting of Islamic finance specialists) are used by the banks to work out if the arrangements that they have put in place for mortgages and insurance have been made to be sharia compliant. It may well be more expensive for the consumer but that will be due to the novelty of the offering and the drastically different financial instruments utilised.

A number of banks including the Islamic Bank of Britain, HSBC and Lloyds TSB offer sharia-compliant facilities including deposit accounts, such as Lloyds TSB sharia-compliant student accounts (Lloyds TSB 2011) and Amanah, an interest-free bank account for making deposits and withdrawals offered by HSBC whereby funds are kept separate from conventional funds and are not used to generate interest.

At present these alternative forms of money management are still considered to be a niche market in the UK; however, with international student satisfaction high on the agenda for all universities, the promotion of this kind of service once a student is studying at a university campus may provide a unique addition to the university offer.

The response from the further and higher education sector

Previous to the Browne Review and the increased student fees there have been calls for sharia-friendly student loans. The *Guardian's* Polly Curtis

(2004) reported in April 2004 that representatives of the Federation of Student Islamic Societies (FOSIS)² met with the then education secretary Charles Clarke. The issues at hand involved the belief that taking out a loan contravenes sharia law, which outlines that Muslims should not pay or receive interest on loans. In the 2004 debate there were splits in view over whether student loans – as they incur inflation-only levels of interest – are against sharia law.

In 2004 a spokesperson for the Department for Education and Skills said:

We appreciate the Muslim position on borrowing. But, it is important to remember that student loans do not incur a real rate of interest and the government does not make any profit out of these loans. The uptake of student loans amongst Muslim students compares favourably with other groups.

– Curtis 2004

This argument may have worked in 2004, but it may not hold in 2011. The FOSIS issued a press release in October 2010 stating:

In response to reports by the BBC that the government is considering asking all but the poorest graduates in England to pay a 'market' rate of interest on their student loans, the Federation of Islamic Student Societies [sic] warn that such a rise has the potential to wreck the participation of Muslim students in higher education.

– FOSIS 2010b

Nabil Ahmed, president of FOSIS, also commented in November 2010 that:

Charging market-rates of interest on tuition-fee loans is no solution – and an unethical way to clear debt. By adopting such interest-rates the government has shown the same insensitivity and disregard to Muslim students as the Lord Browne Review; many Muslim students are averse to interest due to teachings in the Islamic faith – such interest derails accessibility to higher education.

– FOSIS 2010a

The success of the university sector in accommodating students' concerns about interest-bearing loans is not likely to be achieved by individual universities producing internal sharia-compliant loans; however, it is perhaps surprising that university/bank partnerships have not arisen. The perception of universities would be improved by being empathetic to the needs of potential Muslim students through focused communications and alternative funding pathways being made available.

Case study: Queen Mary, University of London

Queen Mary, University of London has a webpage dedicated to the area of loans, banking and sharia law within its advice and counselling service:

Islamic Sharia law prohibits 'Riba', which means the paying and receiving of interest for profit. The prohibition is usually applied to excessive or unreasonable interest, but is sometimes deemed to include the commercial rate of interest paid on a Career Development Loan, Professional Study Loan, bank overdraft or credit card. Occasionally, even the inflation-only interest that is paid on student loans for undergraduates is seen as riba, although there are many Islamic scholars who do not see it this way. We have prepared this page of information for undergraduate and postgraduate Muslim students who need to finance their education, and who also have questions or concerns about Sharia compliance.

– Queen Mary, University of London 2011

2 The Federation of Student Islamic Societies (FOSIS) is a national umbrella organisation aimed at supporting and representing Islamic societies at colleges and universities in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. FOSIS was established in 1962 and is currently affiliated with 150 universities and 600 colleges, representing the interests of over 100,000 Muslim students.

Queen Mary uses a quote from Dr. Muzammil Siddiqi, a former president of the Islamic Society of North America, on its website to forward a compromise to deal with the riba issue:

... if a student is in dire need to pursue his/her studies and no loans are available without interest, then in that case, under the rule of necessity, it will be permissible for the student to take the minimum loan and he/she should pay it back as soon as possible. This is of course, in the case when pursuing that field of education is also very important for the future of the Muslim student. But if a study is not necessary and it is only as a matter of enhancement of one's knowledge, then one should not take loans with interest.

— Queen Mary, University of London 2011

Perhaps surprisingly this is not a typical arrangement on university websites at present despite the ease of providing information in this area. There may, in the future, be a link between local banks and universities who wish to pre-emptively pursue this area and this may reduce the potential for friction arising when religious practice is not taken into consideration.

Conclusion

Alongside focused university online communications that deal with the issues outlined above, other options have been used by universities to ease the conflict between religious mandate and a robust student learning and teaching experience. These options have included not scheduling any university teaching during Friday prayers; whether this is a proportional response to need is unclear, especially when no current empirical data exist. Further work concerning these issues is likely to arise from the unknown territory that the new funding system has introduced; empirical work is intended to be undertaken in this area both in regard to student perception and university response to the issues that have been brought up in this article.

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Review of *The SAGE Handbook of Islamic Studies and Rethinking Islamic Studies: From Orientalism to Cosmopolitanism*

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The SAGE Handbook of Islamic Studies. Akbar S. Ahmed and Tamara Sonn (editors). London: SAGE Publications, 2010. 392 pages. ISBN: 9780761943259 (hardcover, £90.00).

www.uk.sagepub.com/books/Book225624

Rethinking Islamic Studies: From Orientalism to Cosmopolitanism. Carl W. Ernst and Richard C. Martin (editors). Afterword: Bruce B. Lawrence. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2010. 312 pages. ISBN 9781570038921 (unjacketed cloth, \$59.95). ISBN 9781570038938 (paperback, \$29.95).

www.sc.edu/uscpres/books/2010/3892.html

Two significant volumes that make a useful contribution to the teaching of Islamic studies have been published within the past year. They are relevant not just for academics working in the field(s) from diverse disciplinary perspectives, but also for general readers seeking to improve their knowledge of Islam, Muslim societies, and the study of Islam.

The SAGE Handbook of Islamic Studies, edited by Akbar S. Ahmed and Tamara Sonn, draws on the combined expertise of 16 academics (together with the editors). The majority are based in American institutions, although there are also contributors based in Iran, Turkey, Germany, Australia, Pakistan and the UK. The *Handbook* provides key introductory information, separated into five sections: 'Islam and Multiculturalism'; 'Foundations of Islam'; 'Culture of Islam'; 'Contemporary Issues in Islam'; and 'Diversity within Islam'.

In a crowded marketplace of introductory books and electronic resources, the *Handbook* is pertinent in providing a focused specialism for every chapter, with some of the key academics in the fields providing contributions. Information is easily accessed via the index and through the introduction 'Current Issues in Islamic Studies' by Laura Thomas; this provides a précis for each chapter – although more depth on 'current issues' specifically associated with studying Islam would have been useful. The *Handbook* works best at providing quick introductions to significant areas: John Obert Voll gives a comprehensive overview of

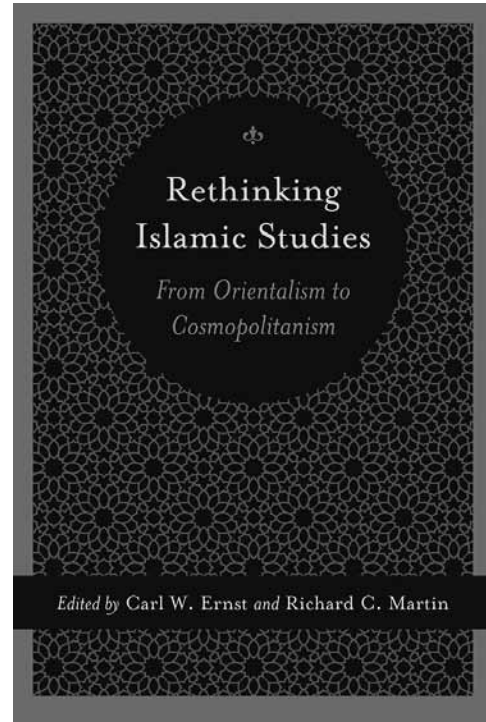
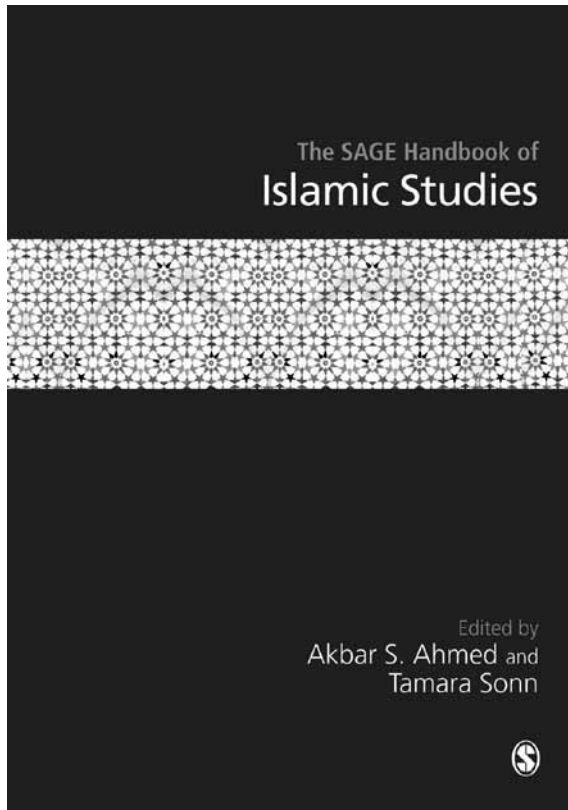
'Islam as a Community of Discourse and a World-System'. While this chapter is very concise, it would provide undergraduates and introductory readers with an informed and nuanced perspective. Bryan S. Turner on 'Islam, Diaspora, and Multiculturalism' is relevant for those working on the study of Islam and Muslims within a 'Western' context in its effective exploration of 'multiculturalism' and Muslim 'diaspora'. This chapter is juxtaposed with Camilo Gomez-Rivas' interesting case study on 'Understanding Iberia's Islamic Experience'.

The Qur'an features in the second section of the *Handbook*: 'Foundations of Islam'. Qaiser Shazad's chapter is useful, within the word limits given by the editors; inevitably, more expansion would have been helpful, especially in putting the Qur'an into context of Revelation. A detailed section on Hadith sources might have been appropriate in this part of the *Handbook* as well.

This chapter is followed by an overview of 'Islamic Concepts of Justice' from Lawrence Rosen: this offers a valuable reflective analysis of the term, which is frequently applied in discourse (academic and other) without consideration of its definition. The chapter on Islamic economics by S.M. Ghazanfar is a summary of a relevant topic in contemporary work on Islam, given the expansion of this sector within academia.

In relation to the Islamic Studies Network, one of the most interesting chapters comes from Dietrich Reetz: 'From Madrasa to University – the Challenges and Formats of Islamic Education'. It provides an overview of issues associated with education in Islam, and then provides two case studies, of the Deobandi Darul Ulum and (by contrast) the International Islamic Universities (IIU). The former is relevant, given the presence of *dār al-ʿulūm* in the United Kingdom, and their influence on perceptions of – and interpretations by – British Muslims; the IIU are significant because of their international networking and their relationship to the promotion of the 'Islamisation of knowledge'.

The *Handbook* also includes several chapters which would be useful in student seminars: there is a brief but effective chapter by Earle Waugh on Islam in the West, and a contribution from Haldun Güllalp (from Yildaz Institute, Istanbul) on Islam and democracy with particular reference to Turkey. Other chapters provide a solid foundation in key elements of Islam and Muslim societies, including Walter Denny's discussion on Islamic Art, Amineh Ahmed's



study of Pukhtun women's negotiation of life-cycle events in Pakistan, and Charles Butterworth's chapter on medieval Arabic-Islamic political philosophy and thought – which continues to have an impact on the contemporary framing of Islam.

The *Handbook* concludes with an engaging section on diversity within Islam, which features a chapter on Shia Islam by Ayatollah Seyed Mostafa Mohaghegh Damad; it was interesting to have this overview from the perspective of an Iran-based academic. Damad's chapter is followed by a contribution from Seyyed Hossein Nasr discussing doctrinal Sufism and theoretical gnosis, looking at diverse regional contexts and determining their contemporary relevance. Following on from these foundations of theoretical discussion, Robert Sampson's chapter on contemporary Sufism is an accessible overview and series of case studies, focusing on mystical orders (*tārīqāt*), shrine worship (*ziyārah*) and what is described as 'technical Sufism' (*taṣawwuf*).

Overall, the *Handbook's* emphasis on issues of religious practice and expression is a helpful one, which will be relevant to many readers from diverse disciplinary perspectives. The *Handbook* would be a good source book for programmes where the contemporary study of Islam is one component of wider general studies, although

dipping into individual chapters offers much to specialists. Inevitably, the volume is an eclectic mix, but nonetheless useful, and its editors are to be commended for bringing together such a group of scholars. Perhaps the book would have benefited from contributions by the editors Akbar Ahmed and Tamara Sonn (perhaps in a concluding comment), and it also lacks a glossary. Unfortunately, the *Handbook* is not available as a paperback and is relatively expensive (at £90 in the UK), which may restrict general levels of access.

On a more reflective level, Carl W. Ernst and Richard C. Martin's edited volume *Rethinking Islamic Studies* is a critical reader for developing understanding of key issues relating to the study of Islam. The book has relevance that – in many chapters and themes – goes beyond academic discourse to present concise and relevant analysis of key themes associated with developing contemporary understandings of Islam and Muslim issues. While the volume is written from American academic perspectives, it is relevant to all those

engaged in Islamic Studies. It would be useful, within a UK context, for those seeking to get up to speed on relevant issues associated with the teaching of Islam – to determine what is shared, and what is specific to the US context. There is plenty to engage a specialist reader, and the volume also contains accessible sections that will be useful to the non-specialist.

Two key elements inform the premise of this volume: firstly, Richard Martin's influential edited book *Approaches to Islam in Religious Studies* (1985), which provided a platform for scholars to analyse the state of their discipline in what was a developing field; secondly, the writing of Bruce Lawrence, who has sought to analyse and develop a discourse on modernity and fundamentalism in Islam – in books such as *Defenders of God* (1989) and his co-edited (with Miriam Cooke) volume *Muslim Networks: from hajj to hip-hop* (2005)¹. Operating within a post-orientalist context, *Rethinking Islamic Studies* provides a welcome connection between Islamic Studies and Religious Studies in a number of the essays, which emerge from generation(s) of key American academic thinkers in the field.

Rethinking Islamic Studies is divided into the following sections: 'Rethinking Modernity: Islamic Perspectives'; 'Rethinking Religion: Social Scientific and Humanistic Perspectives'; and 'Rethinking the Subject: Asian Perspectives'. It features an introduction from the editors, and a critical Afterword from Bruce Lawrence. Each of these sections would be worthy of expansion into a volume in its own right, and hopefully this book will encourage further discourse on these critical themes. The book should be read as a critical introduction, and as a way to encourage further scholarly engagement at this important time within the study of Islam.

In the section on 'Rethinking Modernity', Vincent Cornell opens with an exploration of the 'epistemological crisis of Islam', in a discussion which draws upon dialogues on 'liberal democracy' and 'sharia fundamentalism', critical in developing an informed understanding of the rhetorical framing

of Islamic Studies in contemporary contexts. The discussion on approaches to 'modernity' is further developed by Katherine Pratt Ewing's study of the 'misrecognition' of *Islamische Gemeinschaft Milli Görüş*, based in Germany, but with Islamic roots in Turkey. This is the only Europe-specific chapter in the volume, and offers insight into perceptions of Islam and Muslims, 'cosmopolitanism', and notions of pluralistic societies and public spaces.

Omid Safi has written significantly elsewhere on 'progressive Islam', and in his chapter demonstrates ways in which approaches towards this dialogue can connect with discussions on 'reform' emerging from Iranian-origin philosophers and thinkers – a source that Safi feels merits greater attention from academic discourse.

In a related chapter, A. Kevin Reinhart explores the issue of the representation of sources, in particular the domination of (and perceived superiority of) Arabic origin discussion on the Qur'an and sharia at the expense of what he sees as nuanced analysis from other contexts. While not negating the value of contemporary Arabic discussion nor making generalisations, Reinhart focuses on a subtlety of academic engagement on significant modern themes that has emerged from outside the Arabic language sphere.

Juxtaposed with this chapter is a valuable contribution from Jamillah Karim on defining 'true' Islam, from the perspective of African American Muslim women responding to transnational Muslim identities. This presents insights on the social elements of mosque attendance, and factors associated with dress codes and identity(ies), which would have relevance and transferability for anyone studying Muslim women in UK contexts.

Commencing the 'Rethinking Religion' section, Charles Kurzman and Ijlal Naqvi apply a 'meta-analysis' in order to "review the state of our knowledge about the social bases of Islamist leaders, activists, and supporters" (133). Drawing on a comprehensive range of sources, this is useful in providing a typology of 'Islamist activists' and 'supporters', which could be drawn upon by students and commentators in the field.

The volume also offers some informed perspectives on Sufism and its role within contemporary Islamic Studies. One highlight is David Gilmartin's contribution, which explores the relevance of a nuanced understanding of the importance of Sufism and Sufi saints in developing

1 I contributed to the *Muslim Networks* volume and project. Bruce Lawrence and Carl Ernst were the series editors for my book *iMuslims* (2009).

knowledge about Islam, focusing on the roles of oral narrative. This is, perhaps, an under-represented field, which has particular relevance when exploring contemporary expressions of Islam (in Pakistan and in 'diaspora' contexts).

Richard Martin and Abbas Barzegar look at 'formations of orthodoxy', particularly within contemporary contexts, as shaped through globalisation and the world wide web. Attention is paid to the shaping of these dialogues through specific issues of heritage relating to the pre-modern era, which they consider under-represented in some recent works on modernity and Islam. They provide an approach to the challenges faced in interpreting shifts in orthodox paradigms in the internet era of online Muslim networks. There is also reference to the internet in Ebrahim Moosa's chapter. This is associated with ideas of religious authority in modern contexts, in particular notions of *ijtihād*. Moosa frames his analysis as part of a study of transnational Indian Muslim thought, which has relevance in particular for those studying influences on Muslim communities in 'diaspora' contexts. The focus on online activities in *Rethinking Islamic Studies* was welcomed by this reviewer, who feels it has often been neglected in general works on Islam and Islamic Studies.

The third section of the book has a further chapter on Sufism, based on a study by Tony K. Stewart of South Asian Chishtis' approach to hagiography. It provides some important general points on approaches to historical biography within Islamic sources. This is followed by Scott Kugle's dynamic chapter 'Dancing with Khurso', an analysis of a Chishti tomb cult in Delhi and institutional Sufism. Kugle focuses on *qawwālī*, from diverse historical perspectives, drawing on critical social theory and gender studies to explore traditional themes relating to Islamic Studies and their contemporary relevance. The 'Asian' theme continues with Carl Ernst's analysis of the background to *Islam hadhari* ('civilisational Islam'), a slogan that has dominated political discourse about Islam in Malaysia in recent years. The ambiguities associated with this concept are relevant if one is to understand the religious, intellectual and political dynamics of Malaysian politics in the 21st century.

One of the strengths of *Rethinking Islamic Studies* is the bringing together and analysis of

the book's themes in the concluding Afterword by Bruce Lawrence. It links the questions within Richard Martin's original edited volume (1985) and the associated conference (and earlier scholarship) with the contemporary issue of the impact of, and engagement with, the media and its approaches towards Islam. This has implications relating to globalisation and Islam. Lawrence draws attention towards the issue of 'cosmopolitanism', which takes readers away from what have – certainly since 9/11 – been dominant and negative themes of 'fundamentalists' and 'Islamists'. These have overwhelmingly exercised control over definitions of, and discourse about, Islam and Muslims. In the Afterword, Lawrence uses these themes in order to discuss their impact on the chapters in this volume.

Given the range of contributions and analysis within *Rethinking Islamic Studies*, it is a pertinent volume for those academics engaged in aspects of the teaching and study of Islam (from many disciplines). It would be useful for postgraduates considering working in higher education. *Rethinking Islamic Studies* is also important because there are very few reflective books on the nature and trajectory of Islamic Studies in contemporary academic contexts. While keeping in mind its American origins, it could inform the planning and development of Islamic Studies in UK higher education. The availability of a paperback edition means that its insights are more widely accessible to students and general readers – helping to inform a future generation on the framing of Islamic Studies.

Both *Rethinking Islamic Studies* and *The Sage Handbook of Islamic Studies* would be worthy additions to university libraries, particularly those serving Religious Studies students.

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Events calendar

Sharing and building bibliographic capacity in Islamic Studies: law and finance

15 June 2011

Radcliffe House, University of Warwick

The ability to locate and manipulate bibliographic material is as vital for research as it is for teaching and learning. Islamic Studies is no exception. Using the Law of Islamic Finance as a pilot project, colleagues at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) and the University of Warwick have been exploring the possibility of using electronic, web-based means to resolve this problem. Nick Foster and Shaheen Sardar Ali will explore the capabilities of Zotero, as modified by Frank Bennett of Nagoya University, to create a shared resource to which scholars can contribute, and on which they can draw, from all over the world. This event will be of interest to anyone researching and teaching Islamic Studies.

This event is being organised by the UK Centre for Legal Education and the Business, Management, Accountancy and Finance Network. Please register at: www.ukcle.ac.uk.

Teaching about Islam in the Social Sciences workshop

24 June 2011

Hornton Grange, University of Birmingham

This workshop is being organised by the Subject Network for Sociology, Anthropology and Politics (C-SAP). The event will give lecturers, practitioners and postgraduate students an opportunity to share practice and discuss issues and potential developments in teaching Islam in the social sciences, including sociology, anthropology, criminology, politics and international studies courses. We are especially interested in examining what learning, teaching and assessment issues are raised by the teaching of Islam and how tutors respond to these in the classroom or lecture room. The event will also provide an opportunity to examine a series of case studies that have been produced for C-SAP describing teaching which is related to the study of Islam.

www.c-sap.bham.ac.uk

Islamic Law special interest group meeting

6 July 2011

University of Warwick

This is the second meeting of the UK Centre for Legal Education's Islamic Law special interest group. Members will provide updates on progress with their work, following on from the inaugural meeting of the group in November 2010. The meeting will also forward plans for the future development and sustainability of the group. Speakers will include: Mashood Baderin (School of Oriental & African Studies (SOAS), University of London); Shaheen Ali (University of Warwick); Nicholas Foster (SOAS); Jonathan Ercanbrack (SOAS); and Julian Webb (UK Centre for Legal Education).

www.ukcle.ac.uk

Islamic Studies Network events 2011–12

Cross-disciplinary workshops

The Islamic Studies Network will hold four cross-disciplinary regional workshops in 2011–12 for those working in Islamic Studies and related disciplines at higher education institutions. These events aim to bring together teachers of Islamic Studies from a wide range of disciplines (e.g. Theology and Religious Studies, History, Politics, Literature, Sociology, Anthropology, Law, Business and Finance), and are open to both specialists and non-specialists who teach on modules related to Islam. The events will focus on different themes, and will be an opportunity for practitioners to network and share practice.

Islamic Studies Network PhD workshop

This two-day event will be an opportunity for PhD students in Islamic Studies from a variety of disciplines to network, discuss their research and teaching activities, and address issues related to life as a postgraduate and beyond.

Details of these events and other Islamic Studies Network activity for 2011–12 will be announced on www.islamicstudiesnetwork.ac.uk.

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