



Oxford's New Chancellor Lord Hague Visits the Centre



Lord Hague with Sir David Clary and Dr Farhan Nizami

Lord William Hague, who was recently inaugurated as the 160th Chancellor of the University of Oxford, visited the Centre. The Centre's fellows and staff greeted Lord Hague, joining him in conversation and offering an overview of the research, teaching, publication projects, outreach activities, and other initiatives currently underway at the Centre.

The Chancellor reflected on the contributions that the

Centre makes to Oxford's wider cultural and academic environments. He expressed appreciation for the pressures faced by academic institutions in a fast-changing world, emphasizing the importance of making education, intellectual endeavour and scholarship equitable and accessible.

Lord Hague reflected on the road ahead of him as Chancellor, noting the long history of the institution and his esteemed predecessors. He considered the important work to be carried out in his new role in light of challenges posed to the educational sector by unprecedented advances in artificial intelligence, societal change, and the wider impact of global events on teaching, research, and innovation in higher education.

The Chancellorship of the University marks a return to Oxford for Lord Hague, who graduated from Magdalen College in 1982, where he read for his Politics, Philosophy, and Economics (PPE) degree before embarking on his political career. As a politician he served in a variety of roles, including Leader of the Opposition and later Foreign Secretary.

Chevening–OCIS Day Celebrating a Global Academic Community

The Centre hosted a series of research presentations delivered by the Centre's four current Chevening fellows to an audience of internal and external attendees, including some former Chevening fellows and representatives from the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). Two former Chevening fellows also shared insights about the positive and lasting impact of their time at the Centre, highlighting their appreciation for the support they received.

The Chevening fellowships at the Centre, which arise from a collaboration with the FCDO, enable recipients to carry out self-directed research related to the culture and civilization of Islam and contemporary Muslim societies in their global contexts. The scheme has hosted 66 scholars from 17 different countries, making it an important part of the Centre's wider commitment to



Some current and former Chevening fellows with representatives of the FCDO

growing a global academic community with a broad range of academic interests in the study of the Muslim world.

Hilary Term Seminars

The following lectures and seminars will be held at the Centre at 5 p.m.

22nd January: Professor Scott Williamson (University of Oxford), *Monarchy and Mass Politics in the Middle East*.

29th January: Mr Simon Anholt (Anholt & Co.), *The Sun Sets in the West: The Battle for Soft Power in a Multipolar World*.

5th February: Dr Taha Arslan (Istanbul Medeniyet University), *Mirror of the Universe: The Evolution of the Astrolabe*.

12th February: Professor Kamaldeep Bhui (University of Oxford), *Social, Cultural and Political Determinants of Riots*.

19th February: Professor Adnan Khan (FCDO), *Economic Diversification, State Fragility, and Development in Muslim Societies*.

26th February: Professor Azfar Moin (University of Texas, Austin), *Coinage of Mughal South Asia and the Muslim Chain of Being*.

5th March: Professor Frank Griffel (University of Oxford), *How to Study Arabic and Islamic Philosophy? Once Again about al-Ghazali and Descartes*.

12th March: Dame Rosalind Marsden (RIIA), *Reflections on the War in Sudan*.

Occasional Seminars

26th February, Chevening Alumni Seminar: Dr Kholoud Al-Ajarma (University of Edinburgh), *Mecca in Morocco: Studying the Socio-Cultural Embeddedness of Pilgrimage in Muslim Everyday Life*.

6th March, Humanities Stream Seminar: Dr Abbas Panakkal (University of St Andrews), *Musaliar King: De-colonial Historiography of Malabar Resistance*.

International Contacts

Egypt



HE Mr Sherif Kamel with the Director

HE Mr Sherif Kamel, Ambassador of Egypt, visited the Centre in December. The Ambassador had a meeting with the Director and expressed admiration for the Centre's work and commitment to the study of Islamic culture and civilization. Possibilities for co-operation in areas of mutual interest in classical Islamic learning were also discussed, particularly in relation to the importance of Egypt's Al-Azhar University.

Lecture on Threats to the Rule of Law

Lord Neuberger, Former President of the Supreme Court of the United Kingdom,



Lord Neuberger

overcoming threats to this vital principle.

delivered the Centre's Sultan Azlan Shah Lecture. The speaker addressed societal understandings of the 'rule of law' in different national and societal contexts and how the judiciary plays a key role in

Sir Paul Collier lectures on A New Economics for Neglected Places



Sir Paul Collier

of Government. Sir Paul shared insights from his award-winning book, *Left Behind: A New Economics for Neglected Places* (2024), relating ideas about inclusive prosperity

The 2024 Sir Keith Griffin lecture was delivered by Sir Paul Collier, Professor of Economics and Public Policy at Oxford University's

Blavatnik School

Iraq

The Centre's Director, together with the Centre's Registrar, attended a meeting with HE Mr Mohammed Shia' Al-Sudani, Prime Minister of Iraq, in London.



HE Mr Mohammed Shia' Al-Sudani

The meeting addressed the importance of peace and prosperity in the region, as well as the prominent intellectual and cultural heritage of Iraq and its contribution to the wider intellectual traditions of the Islamic world, with an acknowledgement of shared interests in preserving this heritage.

Lecture on History and the Modern Middle East

Sir John Jenkins, Former UK Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, spoke about the need for



Sir John Jenkins

contemporary politics and diplomacy to have a 'sense of the past' and harness history as a guide for the future. Sir John outlined how poor understanding of history can lead to misguided political decisions that overlook key lessons from the past.

Pathways to Future Collaboration Links Strengthened with Central Asia

The Centre hosted a visit from representatives of Central Asian research centres, including the Center for Islamic Civilization, the International Islamic Academy of Uzbekistan, the International Research Center of Imam Bukhari, the Imam Maturidi International Scientific Research Center, and the International Scientific Research Center of Imam Termizi. The group was headed by Dr Firdavs Abdukhalikov, Director of the Center for Islamic Civilization, and was accompanied by Shakhzod Islamov, Senior Officer at the Administration of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan. Discussions during the visit focused on a variety of possible future collaborations. Centre members presented on current and planned research relating to Central Asia, charting areas of mutual interest that explore the contribution of Uzbek figures to Islamic intellectual history and cultures of learning. Members of the delegation shared insights from



Representatives of Central Asian research organizations with the Director

initiatives at their respective institutions, reflecting on shared practices and methods. A Memorandum of Understanding between the Center for Islamic Civilization in Uzbekistan and the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies was signed, thereby reinforcing the institutions' commitment to pursuing joint intellectual and academic endeavours. The visitors presented the Centre's Library with a gift of 50 volumes arising from the Cultural Legacy of Uzbekistan in the West Project, which makes visible the extensive cultural and historical heritage of Uzbekistan.

Academic Partnerships Institutional Co-operation Consolidated



HE Dr Saleh Bin Ali Alagla and the Director

The Centre has made progress on strengthening and formalizing co-operation with two Saudi Arabian universities, solidifying shared institutional interests in the study of Islamic culture.

A senior delegation from the Islamic University of Medinah Munawwara, led by its President, HE Dr Saleh Bin Ali Alagla, visited the Centre. The delegation included the Vice-President, key advisors, and Deans, with the visit focusing on implementing the recently signed Memorandum of Understanding through strategic discussions with the Centre's Director and Fellows. A Joint Agreement was signed, and

a steering committee was formed to oversee progress. Several initiatives for institutional partnership are underway, with more under consideration.

Professor Wardah Alasmari and Dr Suhad Sonbul of Umm al-Qura University, Makkah Mukarrama, also visited the Centre. As Vice President and Supervisor of the University's International Partnerships Unit, respectively, they offered a detailed presentation about the structure, departments and projects of the University, with subsequent discussion of possibilities for collaboration between the two institutions in areas of common interest.



Professor Wardah Alasmari and the Director

Visiting Fellows

The Centre welcomed the following Visiting Fellows in Hilary Term 2025:

Dr Nagihan Doğan, MA, PhD (Hacettepe)
Visiting Fellow

Dr Ahmad Labeeb Tajudeen, PhD (Brunei Darussalam)
Visiting Fellow

Dr Fatima Kadić, BA, MA, PhD (Sarajevo)
Imam Bukhari Visiting Research Fellow

Mr Zamri Mohamad Sarawak
Sabbatical Academic Visitor

Dr Hasan Gül, BS (Istanbul), MS (METU), PhD (Akdeniz)
Academic Visitor

Library

The Centre's Library hosted the 105th Meeting of the Middle East Libraries Committee UK (MELCom). Established in the 1960s, MELCom is a key forum for collaboration among specialists working with Middle Eastern and Islamic Collections.

Librarians and curators from the British Library, British Museum, the Universities of Oxford, Cambridge, Exeter and Edinburgh, Aga Khan Library and Al-Furqan Foundation were in attendance. The discussions centred around strategic expansion of collections in times of technological advancements.

The Centre's Library is a long-standing member of MELCom UK, thus contributing to important discussions about stewardship of collections and the future of libraries.

Makers of Islamic Civilization Series

This series, produced by the Centre and published by Oxford University Press, consists of concise, accessible biographies of influential figures in the history of Islam.

The next title to be published is *Haji Imdadullah*, by Centre Fellow, Dr Moin Ahmad Nizami. Haji Imdadullah (1817-99) was a prominent shaykh of the Chishti order and a spiritual forefather of seminaries at Deoband, Saharanpur and Lucknow, and of important movements such as Tablighi Jamaat and Jamiat-i Ulama-i Hind.

Astrolabe Study Day

Promoting Understanding of Islamic Sciences

The Centre, as part of an ongoing institutional collaboration with the Oxford History of Science Museum, hosted a public hands-on event to accompany the exhibition on 'Lines of Faith: Astronomy and the Art of the Astrolabe in the Islamic World', which is on display at the Centre until the end of this year.

The study day took place at the Centre, and gave participants a unique opportunity to learn about the history and development of the astrolabe as a scientific instrument, and to try their own hand at crafting these extraordinary objects.

Participants were able to take part in a sequence of workshop activities involving brass astrolabes and received lessons in how to use these fascinating and complex instruments. The event was led by Dr Taha Yasin Arslan (Medeniyet University, Istanbul), Dr Stephen Johnston (co-curator



Dr Taha Arslan, Dr Stephen Johnston, Dr Afifi Al-Akiti and Dr Silke Ackermann

of the 'Lines of Faith' exhibition) and Dr Silke Ackermann (History of Science Museum Director). Dr Arslan delivered a related lecture at the Centre in the lead-up to the study day, which focused on the evolution of the astrolabe in the wider context of Islamic learning, particularly innovations in mathematical sciences.

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