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OCIS NEWS

OXFORD CENTRE FOR ISLAMIC STUDIES

Centre Scholars and Exhibitioners

Creating Opportunities, Empowering Talent

The Centre's scholarship programme supports students reading for undergraduate and graduate degrees at the University of Oxford. Centre scholarships are awarded to both domestic and international students, enabling them to read for degrees in fields relevant to the needs of Muslim societies.

This academic year's cohort is pursuing a diverse array of disciplines, ranging from medicine, engineering, and genomics to history, law, education, and international development. Beyond their individual research, these Scholars actively enrich the Centre's vibrant intellectual and collegiate life. From participating in Centre seminars and academic lectures to engaging in informal gatherings and networking, they help cultivate a stimulating environment in which to exchange ideas, explore new perspectives, and forge enduring academic connections.

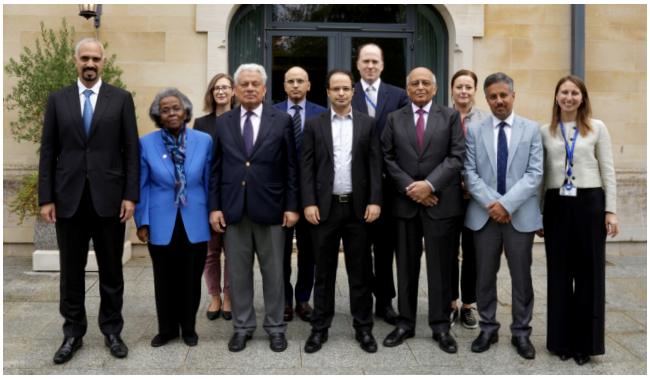
The Centre's community is likewise enriched by Exhibitioners—graduate students of the University of Oxford whose research is of particular relevance to the Centre's mission and areas of activity. Exhibitioners participate in the Centre's academic activities and receive mentorship from Centre Fellows working in relevant academic disciplines.

Scholars and Exhibitioners have the opportunity to present their research at the Centre's Graduate Colloquium, which serves as a forum for work-in-progress. In the 2025–26 academic year 39 Scholars and Exhibitioners were in residence, and the number will increase to 42 in the 2026–27 academic year.

Together, Scholars and Exhibitioners contribute meaningfully to the Centre's academic community, reflecting the institution's wider commitment to fostering sound multidisciplinary scholarship. Through this programme, the Centre supports the study of Islam and Muslim societies, and co-operation between different traditions of learning.

International Collaborations

The Kuwait Programme at the Centre



Participants of the Kuwait Programme Steering Committee Meeting

The Centre continues its collaboration with the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS). The Kuwait Programme includes the Kuwait Library, the Kuwait Fellowship, whose holder teaches in the Faculty of Theology, and the provision of Arabic courses at the Centre.

The third meeting of the Kuwait Programme Steering Committee took place at the Centre, giving both institutions the opportunity to reflect on different areas of the Programme. The Director and Centre colleagues welcomed Dr Ameenah Rajab Farhan (Director General of KFAS), HE Sheikh Dr Meshaal Al-Jaber Al-Sabah (Board Member of KFAS) and Eng. Yusuf Yazidi (Head of Director General's Office).

The Steering Committee discussed the current components of the Programme and considered possible priorities for future development, particularly in relation to Visiting Fellowships and the Centre's Library. The committee also addressed synergies between the research interests of the two institutions. Also addressed at the meeting was the latest institutional collaboration between the Centre and KFAS: a feasibility study project to support the National Library of Kuwait in initiating a comprehensive and sustainable digital transformation.

Michaelmas Term Seminars

The following lectures and seminars will be held at the Centre:

Sir Tim Besley (The London School of Economics), *Just Production: Framework and Policy Implications.*

Professor Ricardo Laremont (SUNY Binghamton), *From Ideology to Governance: The Transformation of Political Islam in the Twenty-First Century.*

Baroness Hale of Richmond (Former President of the Supreme Court of the UK), *The Future of Human Rights in the UK.*

Dr Ahmed Ghoneim (Grand Egyptian Museum), *Introducing the Grand Egyptian Museum.*

Professor Marcus du Sautoy (University of Oxford), *Symmetry: How to Read the Tiles of the Alhambra.*

Professor Jokha Alharthi (Sultan Qaboos University), *Novels and Women in Oman.*

Professor Steve Monroe (National University of Singapore), *Mirages of Reform: The Politics of Elite Protectionism in the Arab World.*

HRH Prince Hassan bin Talal, *A New International Humanitarian Order: Dignity for All.*

The OCIS–TORCH joint seminar will be held at The Schwarzman Centre for the Humanities. The session will include a presentation by Dr Steven Firmin (Oxford), moderated by Dr Afifi Al-Akiti, with Dr Tareq Moqbel as discussant.

Malaysia

Fostering International Contacts



HE Shamsul Azri Abu Bakar and the Director

The Chief Secretary of Malaysia, HE Shamsul Azri Abu Bakar and the Malaysian High Commissioner, Dato' Indera Dr Azfar bin Mohamad Mustafar visited the Centre. Their visit provided an opportunity to discuss the Centre's collaboration with Malaysian institutions, including the Securities Commission, the Yayasan Khazanah Nasional, and the Johor State Administrative Service.

This year marks the fifteenth anniversary of the Merdeka Scholarship Programme at the Centre. Launched in partnership with the Yayasan Khazanah Nasional to mark the fiftieth anniversary of Malaysian independence, the scholarships support Malaysian students reading for graduate degrees at the University of Oxford. The programme has supported nearly 60 students from different disciplines and has strengthened the Centre's academic ties with Malaysian scholars.

Central Asia

History, Culture and Intellectual Legacies

The Centre continues to engage with the study of Central Asian history and culture. The Visiting Fellowships programme has brought many scholars from Central Asia to Oxford, supporting research in history, religious studies, economics and development. Dr Firdavs Abdukhalikov (Director of the Center for Islamic Civilization, Tashkent) has visited the Centre and discussed areas of mutual interest in the study of Central Asia.

The Centre was recently represented at the conference on 'Islamic Civilization: Mawarannahr's Great Spiritual and Scientific Heritage and Horizons of Enlightenment' held at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris. The conference was organized under the auspices of the Islamic Civilization Centre in Uzbekistan, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Uzbekistan, and UNESCO.



The Director speaking at the conference

Islamic Finance

Building Resilience through Innovation



HRH Sultan Nazrin Shah with the Roundtable participants

Islamic Finance continues to be an active area of the Centre's research programme. The 17th SC–OCIS Roundtable on 'Building Resilience: The Intersection Between Capital, Climate and Innovation' took place at the Centre, with many participants from across the UK, Malaysia, and Europe. Many institutions were represented, including the Bank of England, Standard Chartered, and HSBC.

The Summer School on 'Islamic Finance: Markets & Development' was held at the Centre. It was convened by Dr Abdulkader Thomas, the Sultan Nazrin Shah Fellow in Islamic Capital Markets, and Professor Muhammad Meki, Centre Fellow and Associate Professor at Oxford University.

Sultan Azlan Shah Lecture

Protecting Expression, Balancing Interests



The Rt Hon Lady Simler

The Rt Hon Lady Simler, Justice of the Supreme Court of the UK, explored the complex legal and philosophical dimensions of freedom of expression. The lecture was chaired by Lady Hale of Richmond, the former President of the Supreme Court of the UK and the Sultan Azlan Shah Fellow at the Centre.

Lady Simler discussed the balancing acts that courts and policymakers must perform when rights clash, emphasizing proportionality and the rule of law. By drawing attention to contemporary legal challenges, the lecture provided insights into how the judiciary must find an equilibrium between upholding free speech and addressing harms like hate speech or discrimination, ensuring that fundamental freedoms are neither absolute nor exercised without civic responsibility. The lecture highlighted the need to balance individual rights and public interest.

Visiting Fellowships

An International Community

The Centre continues to host an active and vibrant visiting fellowships programme, which brings together researchers from across the world. In the 2025-2026 academic year over 30 visiting fellows from 18 countries joined the Centre's academic community.

This year's visiting fellowship intake included six Chevening visiting fellows, supported jointly with the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. The Visiting Fellowships programme will be further enhanced by up to two additional visiting fellowships for the next academic year, offered jointly with AfOx (Africa Oxford Initiative).

The inaugural Tan Sri Dr Lim Wee Chai Visiting Fellowships will be held by JUDr Luděk Sekyra (DPhil, Charles University), who will join the Centre in Michaelmas Term. His work in and support for the study of moral philosophy adds to the breadth of the research areas of the incoming visiting fellows. The visiting fellowship will also include winner of the Man Booker International Prize, Dr Jokha Alharthi.

Young Muslim Leadership Programme

Cultivating Future Leaders

The 21st Young Muslim Leadership Programme brought together aspiring young leaders from across the UK for an engaging week of workshops, discussions, and networking opportunities.

Participants heard from distinguished speakers across public service, law, business, media, medicine, and academia, including MPs, senior legal professionals, academics, and industry leaders. Sessions covered vital topics such as leadership, ethical decision-making, civic engagement, professional growth, and community impact.



YMLP 2026 participants

Special discussions focused on Prophetic leadership, media and social influence, Islamic art, and developing a theory of change.

New Appointments



Dr Tareq Moqbel

Dr Tareq Moqbel was appointed as the Emir Abdelkader Al-Jazairi Fellow and Islamic Centre Lecturer in Classical Islam at the Faculty of Theology and Religion. He has published widely on exegesis, Qur'anic Arabic, and scriptural hermeneutics. His books include *Interpreting the Bible and the Qur'an through Love* (Bloomsbury, 2025) and *Ethics in the Qur'ān and the Tafsīr Tradition* (Brill, 2024).



Dr Hiba Salem

Dr Hiba Salem has joined the Centre as a Research Fellow in Education Studies. Her field of expertise is education in contexts of forced displacement. She received her PhD from the University of Cambridge and previously held a Visiting Fellowship at Campion Hall. Her monograph, *The Politics of Education and Hope in Forced Migration: Journeys of Syrian Young People Across the World* (2025) won the OUP's First Book Prize.

The Dean of Windsor

The Rt Rev Dr Christopher Cocksworth visited the Centre, where he was given a tour of the building as well as the King Charles III Garden. The Dean met with Centre staff and discussed the academic and outreach work taking place. His visit was an opportunity to reflect on the importance of interfaith dialogue.



The Rt Rev Dean of Windsor

The Centre's Next Chapter

Looking to the Future

The Centre's 40th anniversary year concluded during the summer. The celebrations began with the visit of the Centre's Patron last summer and the inauguration of The King Charles III Programme. Two distinguished lectures were given to mark the anniversary year. The first was by Lord William Hague, Chancellor of Oxford University, who spoke on the future of multilateralism. The second distinguished lecture was delivered by HRH Prince Turki AlFaisal, who offered a Muslim perspective on the contemporary global order.

The Centre's academic community was expanded by two Anniversary Fellowships. Sir Paul Collier (Blavatnik School) and Professor Robert Hillenbrand (University of Edinburgh) contributed to the Centre's activities in this capacity.

The Annual Meeting of the Trustees took place in September. This was the first meeting since the 40th anniversary celebration. The meeting was followed by the Annual Trustees' Dinner, held in the Oman Hall, which offered an engaging setting for the exchange of ideas among Trustees, Centre Fellows, University of Oxford academics, and members of the diplomatic community.



The Trustees and the Director in The King Charles III Garden

The 40th anniversary year provided opportunities to celebrate and reflect on what has been achieved. As the new academic year commences it marks the beginning of a new chapter in the Centre's history.

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