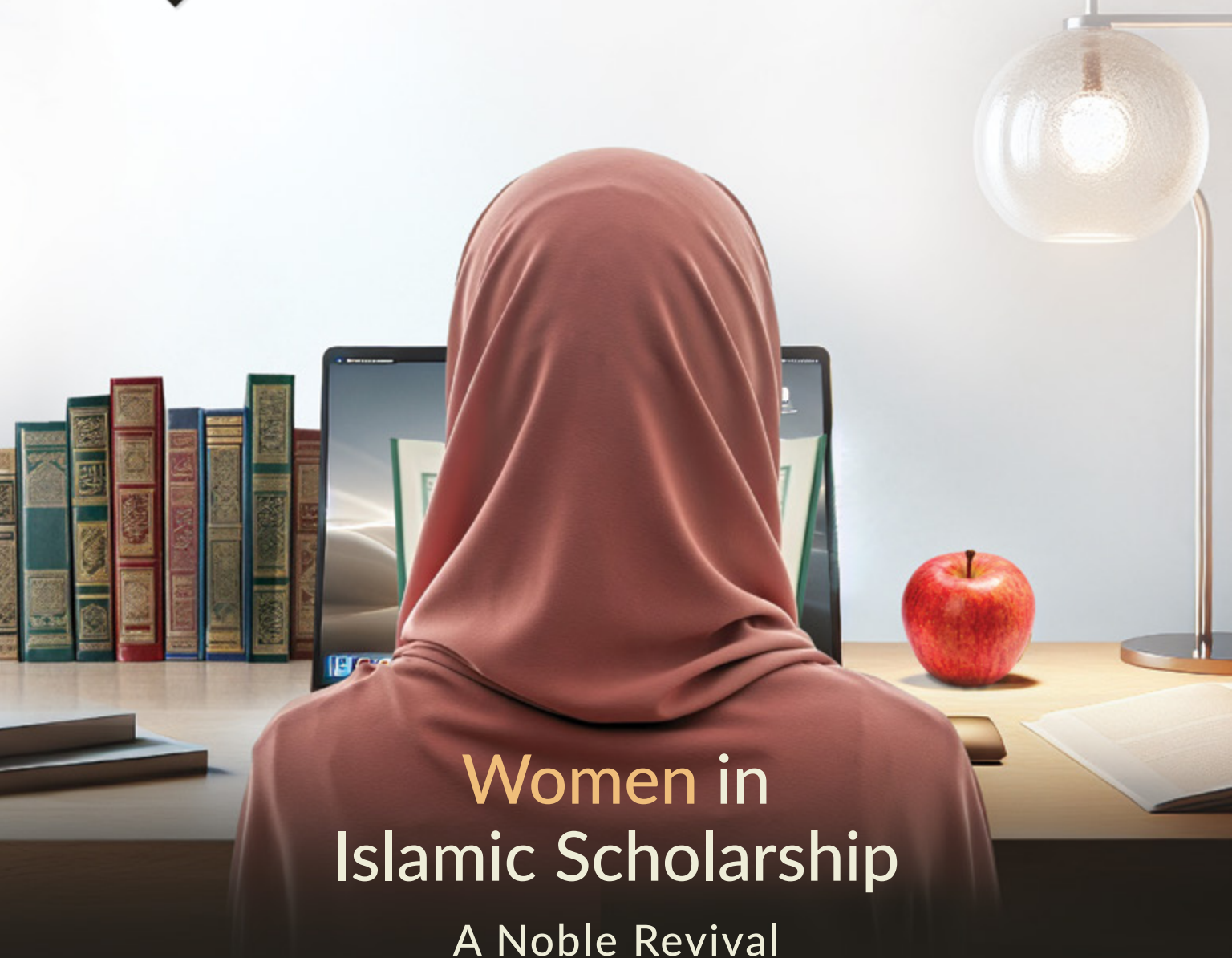




INTERNATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY

# INSIGHTS

MAGAZINE



## Women in Islamic Scholarship

A Noble Revival

### INSIDE

10th Annual  
**Convocation**  
Highlights

**1MAS** Expands to  
Cameroon, Nigeria &  
Vanuatu

IOU Uganda  
Receives  
**ITC Award**

& much more...

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Insights is a biannual magazine that features the International Open University's (IOU) progress and development. The magazine presents the achievements of all the departments and highlights the new programs that were launched, while sharing valuable experiences from students and alumni. It is a testimonial to the talents and efforts of all the students and faculties who fueled IOU's successes.

### MEET THE TEAM

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As-Salamu Alaykum wa Rahmatullahi wa Barakatuhu.

Dear Readers,

Women seeking and sharing Islamic knowledge is not a new phenomenon. Since the time of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) and the establishment of Islam, women have been active learners, scholars, and teachers. Islam granted women rights and privileges in education, inheritance, and society that were revolutionary at the time - rights that did not exist in other societies.

Over the centuries, however, socio-cultural barriers emerged that made it difficult for women to access Islamic education. Despite these challenges, the foundational principles established by Islam regarding women's rights remained unchanged.

Alhamdulillah, we are now witnessing a remarkable revival of this noble tradition. Women are once again embracing their rightful place in seeking and sharing knowledge. With the advent of digital platforms, Islamic education has become more accessible than ever before. Women around the world can now empower themselves by studying Islam online, often from the comfort of their own homes.

Institutions like the International Open University (IOU) have reopened doors, enabling women from all walks of life to study authentic Islam anywhere, anytime, and at their own pace. Remarkably, at IOU, women outnumber men five to one in our student body and consistently outperform them academically. Most of our top ten graduates each year are female, reflecting their dedication to excellence and outstanding performance.

As we move forward, let us continue to support, advocate, and make supplication to Allah for a future where Islamic knowledge remains easily accessible to everyone all over the globe. It is a privilege to bring you this edition of the *Insights Magazine*.

May it inspire you to increase your knowledge and encourage continuous reflection on the profound heritage of Islamic scholarship.

For the sake of Allah,

*Siddiqah Philips*

Siddiqah Philips

Managing Editor  
IOU Insights Magazine

## The Enduring Relevance of Islamic Studies in a Changing World

At its core, Islamic Studies involves the exploration of a variety of fields including theology, jurisprudence, history, and philosophy within Islamic thought. This comprehensive understanding is important for Muslims seeking to live their lives in accordance with Islamic principles. Engaging deeply with these branches of knowledge and traditions helps internalize values of justice, compassion, and integrity, which are essential in both personal and communal contexts.

Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) emphasized the importance of knowledge, stating, ***“Whoever treads a path in search of knowledge, Allah will make easy for him the path to Paradise” (Sahih Muslim)***. This hadith underscores the spiritual significance of seeking knowledge, central to Islamic Studies. Islamic principles are intrinsically timeless and offer guidance on a wide range of contemporary issues. For instance, the concept of social justice is deeply rooted in Islamic teachings. By studying such teachings as justice and equity, we can address modern social challenges such as poverty, discrimination, and inequality.

On a personal level, Islamic Studies fosters spiritual growth and a deeper sense of purpose. The study of Islamic spirituality explores the inner dimensions of faith, guiding individuals on a path of self-purification and closeness to Allah. This journey of self-discovery and spiritual development is crucial for achieving personal tranquility and fulfillment.

In an authentic narration, our Prophet also (ﷺ) conveyed that, ***“When a man dies, his deeds come to an end except for three things: Sadaqah Jariyah (a continuous charity), knowledge which is beneficial, or a virtuous descendant who prays for him” (Sahih Muslim)***. This hadith highlights the enduring impact of beneficial knowledge, encouraging Muslims to seek and disseminate Islamic knowledge.

The applications of Islamic Studies extend beyond the religious sphere, influencing fields such as education, law, and economics. In education, Islamic Studies enhances curricula by promoting critical thinking and a holistic understanding of knowledge. In law and governance, the principles of Islamic jurisprudence provide valuable insights for developing just and equitable legal systems.

Looking ahead, the future of Islamic Studies lies in embracing technological advancements and fostering global collaboration. Modern technology and methodologies offer new opportunities for making Islamic education more accessible and engaging. Online learning platforms, digital libraries, and virtual classrooms bridge the gap between traditional scholarship and contemporary learners, ensuring that Islamic education is not limited by geographical boundaries.

I encourage everyone to pursue knowledge at IOU. In spite of our busy lives, we must remember that whoever follows a path in the pursuit of knowledge, Allah will make a path to Paradise easy for him (or her).



*Muhammad Salama*

Dr. Muhammad Salama

Head of the Islamic Studies Department  
International Open University

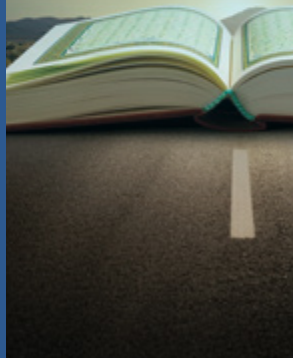


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# WOMEN IN ISLAMIC SCHOLARSHIP

**A Noble Revival**





# The Remarkable Legacy of Women Seeking Knowledge in Islam

The quest for authentic Islamic knowledge has never been easy, regardless of gender. Indeed, even IOU's Founder and Chancellor, Dr. Abu Ameenah Bilal Philips, encountered his own unique set of challenges. Driven by his desire to deeply understand authentic Islamic teachings, he traveled from Canada to Madeenah in pursuit of knowledge. Despite discouragement from those who believed this knowledge would be archaic and impractical in modern society, he pursued his spiritual and academic goals far from the comforts of home. Al hamdu lillah, today he is recognized as one of the world's renowned contemporary scholars.

For women seeking knowledge, however, the challenges of availability and access in pursuing knowledge have been even more pronounced due to restrictions, personal responsibilities, and limited admission to universities which traditionally only admit men. This stands in stark contrast to the historical contributions of women, who played significant roles in seeking, preserving, and sharing knowledge. Their enduring legacy is a testament to their resilience, intellect, and unwavering commitment to education. Their stories serve as powerful examples and motivation for women to return to the rich tradition of pursuing Islamic knowledge today.

*"Their enduring legacy is a testament to their resilience, intellect, and unwavering commitment to education."*

Let's remember some of the remarkable women who pioneered the pursuit and sharing of knowledge, acknowledging their significant contributions to Islamic scholarship.

## Inspiring Female Scholars Who Shaped Islamic History

*"Her contributions to Hadith and Fiqh are unparalleled."*

► **Aishah bint Abu Bakr** (رضي الله عنها), the beloved wife of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ), is one of the most prominent and respected female scholars in Islamic history. Her contributions to *Hadith* and *Fiqh* are unparalleled. Aishah narrated over 2,000 *hadiths*, providing detailed accounts of the Prophet's (ﷺ) sayings and practices. Her profound understanding of Islamic law and theology allowed her to offer interpretations and legal opinions that have guided Muslims for generations. Aisha's home was a center of learning where many early Muslim scholars, both men and women, came to study.

*"A role model for Muslim women everywhere."*

► **Fatimah bint Muhammad** (رضي الله عنها), the daughter of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ), holds a revered place in Islamic history. Known for her piety, strength, and dedication, she became a role model for Muslim women everywhere. Fatimah's teachings and actions continue to shape ethical and family values in Islam. She was deeply involved in community welfare and known for her charity work, often helping those in need despite her own modest means. Her life exemplified the principles of justice, compassion, and devotion to family, making her an enduring symbol of Islamic womanhood.

*"Her home became a hub of intellectual activity."*

► **Nafisa bint al-Hasan**, a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ), was renowned for her profound knowledge of the *Quran* and *Hadith*. Born in Makkah, she later moved to Cairo, where she established a learning circle that attracted many students, including the renowned Imam Shafi'i. Despite societal constraints, Nafisa memorized extensive collections of *Hadith*, taught widely, and engaged in scholarly debates. Her home became a hub of intellectual activity, influencing many future scholars. Known for her piety and charitable works, Nafisa's legacy is celebrated for her contributions to Islamic jurisprudence, her role as a teacher and mentor, and her unwavering commitment to education.

*"Her determination to learn and teach Islamic sciences led her to become a renowned teacher."*

► **Fatima bint Sa'ad al-Khayr**, an influential scholar from the 12th century, traveled extensively to seek knowledge. Born in Valencia, she studied in various cities, including Damascus and Cairo. Fatima faced numerous challenges as a woman traveling alone in a patriarchal society, but her determination to learn and teach Islamic sciences led her to become a renowned teacher in her own right. Her legacy includes numerous students who went on to become significant scholars themselves.



## Reviving the Legacy



The rapid advancement of technology has democratized education, breaking down barriers and allowing women from diverse backgrounds to access high-quality Islamic education. Online platforms make learning more accessible and adaptable to women's varying needs and responsibilities. For example, women who are caregivers or have familial obligations can now engage in structured learning without compromising their duties at home. Others who

have careers can seamlessly integrate learning into their daily lives by dedicating just a few hours a day to study from home, or even listen to lectures during the day.

The International Open University (IOU) exemplifies this advancement. Through its comprehensive curriculum, interactive modules, and access to highly qualified and experienced teachers, IOU ensures that sisters enjoy a virtual learning experience that is flexible, as well as academically and spiritually rewarding. Islam strongly advocates the education of women. Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) said, ***"Seeking knowledge is an obligation upon every Muslim"*** (Ibn Majah).

By supporting inclusive and accessible education to all through platforms like IOU, we honor the legacy of past female scholars and pave the way for future generations of women to continue contributing to Islamic scholarship. Let us draw inspiration from these remarkable women and strive to keep the flame of knowledge burning brightly for generations to come. The legacies of these remarkable women remind us that with perseverance, faith, and Allah's help, indeed, anything is possible.



### By Siddiqah M. Philips

Siddiqah M. Philips is the Content Lead at IOU. She is a certified Content Marketing Strategist, SEO Strategist, Social Media Marketer, and Editor. Siddiqah channels her zeal for writing into creating content that enlightens, educates, and empowers the global Muslim community. With a deep commitment to making Islamic teachings accessible and engaging, she crafts content that fosters continuous learning and personal growth. Driven by a sincere desire to serve the community, her work helps individuals deepen their understanding and connection with Islam. Through her innovative and passionate approach, Siddiqah aims to inspire, uplift, and make a meaningful impact on the lives of all those she reaches by sharing authentic Islamic knowledge.

## WOMEN IN ISLAMIC SCHOLARSHIP

# 10 Ways Busy Sisters Can Integrate Learning Into Daily Life





Amidst the relentless buzz of modern society, where each tick of the clock weighs heavy with expectations, Muslim women stand at the crossroads of religious obligations and the turbulence of daily demands. The struggle to uphold family duties, carve out professional roles for themselves in the workplace, and still pursue Islamic knowledge can feel like a tightrope walk between time constraints and endless tasks.

Yet, Allah Almighty counsels in the Noble Quran, **“Wealth and children are [but] adornment of the worldly life. But the enduring good deeds are better to your Lord for reward and better for [one’s] hope”** (Surah Al-Kahf (18):46).

Among these deeds is seeking and sharing knowledge. Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) said, **“Whoever treads a path in search of knowledge, Allah will make easy for him the path to Paradise”** (Sahih Muslim). Dr. Bilal Philips also highlights the enduring benefits of this act both in this life and the hereafter, notably stating that: **“The zakat of knowledge is teaching it.”** These reminders underscore the fleeting nature of worldly possessions compared to the lasting impact of knowledge. Acts of worship like these extend beyond providing worldly blessings - they also serve as *sadaqah jariyah* (ongoing charity), offering continual benefits even from the grave.

**With this in mind, here are ten thoughtful steps designed to help balance the demands of daily life with the enriching pursuit of Islamic knowledge.**



#### Set Clear Priorities

Identify the most crucial aspects of your daily life including prayer times, family responsibilities, work commitments, and study sessions. Use a priority matrix tool to visualize and manage these tasks effectively, ensuring you fulfill both religious and worldly duties without becoming overwhelmed.



#### Establish a Structured Daily Schedule

Plan your day in advance, dedicating specific times for prayers, work, family, and study. Utilize scheduling apps like Google Calendar to set reminders and block time for each activity. This organized approach reduces stress and ensures a balanced distribution of your time.



#### Utilize Breaks Wisely

During short breaks, engage in micro-learning sessions. For example, read a page of the Quran, memorize a short Hadith, or listen to a 5-minute Islamic podcast. Tools like the [Quran Companion](#) app can help you utilize these moments effectively.



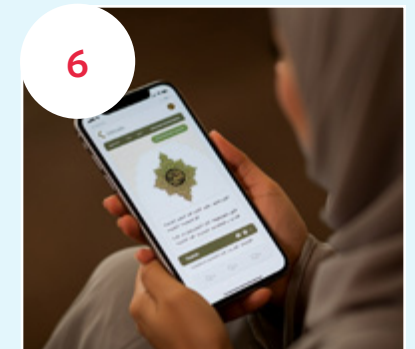
#### Combine Activities for Multitasking

Integrate learning into daily chores by listening to Islamic lectures or podcasts while cooking or commuting. Apps like [Muslim Central](#) offer a range of lectures that can be easily played during these tasks, ensuring you’re continuously engaged in seeking knowledge.



#### Enroll in Online Classes

Join flexible courses that fit your busy schedule. Platforms like the International Open University offer various courses in Islamic studies that can be accessed at any time. Choose courses that match your interest and current level of knowledge to ensure steady progress.



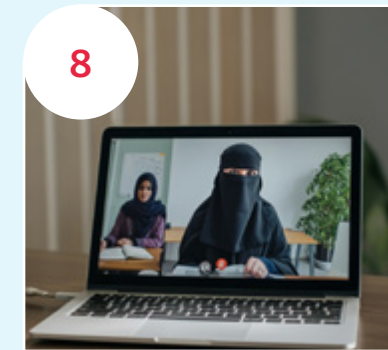
#### Leverage Mobile Apps for Learning on the Go

Utilize apps like [iQuran](#) or [Hadith Collection](#) for quick access to religious texts during idle moments throughout the day. These apps provide easy-to-navigate interfaces that allow for effective study sessions, even during short periods.



#### Maintain Consistency in Learning

Commit to a small daily learning goal, such as reading a Hadith or a few verses from the Quran each night. Apps like [MyDuaa](#) can help you track these daily learning activities, encouraging consistency and gradual accumulation of knowledge.



#### Seek Support Through Community Learning

Connect with a study group or find a learning partner to discuss and share insights on Islamic topics. Online forums or local study groups can provide community support and enhance your learning experience. Engaging in group discussions can make the process more enjoyable and enriching.



#### Reflect and Adjust Regularly

Periodically review your learning schedule and progress. Reflect on what’s working and what isn’t, and adjust your approach accordingly. Use journaling apps like [Day One](#) to keep a learning diary, which can help you stay mindful of your progress and motivate adjustments as needed.



10



### Involve Family in Your Learning Journey

Make learning a family activity. Share insights from your studies during family meals or set up a weekly family study circle. This not only reinforces your own learning but also builds a supportive environment and a culture of learning at home.

## Balancing Faith and Functionality

As Muslim women handle the demands of modern life alongside their spiritual aspirations, it is crucial to find ways to incorporate Islamic learning into our everyday activities. By adopting practical strategies like using brief moments for micro-learning and leveraging technology for study, you can enhance both your daily life and spiritual depth. Each effort to learn and apply Islamic teachings is an act of devotion that brings you closer to Allah. Encourage yourself and inspire those around you to include Islamic knowledge into daily routines. Move forward with confidence and purpose, knowing that your dedication to balancing faith with responsibilities is deeply valued and richly rewarded by Allah.

**DOWNLOAD YOUR FREE GUIDE**

**By Irfana Bokhari**  
International Open University



### WOMEN IN ISLAMIC SCHOLARSHIP

## Featured Degree

# Bachelor of Arts in Islamic Studies

*Bridging Classical Knowledge and Contemporary Relevance*



*Imagine  
achieving your  
degree from  
the comfort of  
your home!*

Imagine achieving your degree in Islamic Studies from a globally recognized university from the comfort of your home, regardless of where you live in the world. This vision became a reality when the International Open University (IOU) launched its groundbreaking Bachelor of Arts in Islamic Studies (BAIS) program in 2010. As the first accredited degree offered by IOU and one of the first of its kind to be offered entirely online, the BAIS program set a pioneering standard for accessible, affordable, high-quality Islamic education online.





### Flexibility and Accessibility

Two of the standout features of IOU's programs are its flexible study timings and accessible online learning model. Whether pursuing the standard four-year full-time track or extending coursework to nine years, students can tailor their studies to fit their personal and professional lives.

This flexibility ensures that education is within reach for a global student body, breaking geographical barriers. The ability to study without leaving one's home or from anywhere one chooses, makes the program especially appealing to a diverse range of students.



### Comprehensive and Diverse Curriculum

Drawing from the rich academic traditions of esteemed Islamic institutions like Madinah University, Omdurman Islamic University, and Al-Azhar University, IOU's BAIS program offers a thorough and intensive curriculum. Students explore core areas such as:

- Arabic Language Studies
- *Aqeedah* (Creed)
- *Fiqh* (Jurisprudence)
- *Seerah* (Prophetic Bio)

- *Hadeeth* (Prophetic Narrations)
- *Tafseer* (Quranic Exegesis)

These courses are designed to not only share authentic knowledge, but also develop critical thinking, professional communication, digital literacy, and research skills, preparing students for a wide array of career opportunities.



### Commitment to Islamic Values and Educational Excellence

IOU is committed to providing high-quality Islamized education that upholds the core values intrinsic to Islam while including contemporary subjects. The BAIS program aligns with this mission, fostering an environment of intellectual rigor and high

ethical standards. By offering affordable and accessible education, IOU ensures that students worldwide can gain valuable Islamic knowledge and apply it effectively in their personal and professional lives.

For more details about the BAIS program, including its admission requirements and how to apply, please visit [www.iou.edu.gm/stream/bais](http://www.iou.edu.gm/stream/bais).

### WOMEN IN ISLAMIC SCHOLARSHIP



The Profound  
Impact of  
**Knowledge**  
on the Heart



Ibn Taymiyyah (رحمه الله) once said, “The heart becomes sick, as does the body, and its remedy lies in repentance and seeking knowledge.” These words encapsulate the transformative power of knowledge in Islam, likening it to a luminous thread that weaves through the hearts and minds of believers, infusing their lives with spiritual depth and emotional richness.

This knowledge holds significant emotional and spiritual significance, shaping the lives of believers and nurturing a deeper connection with Allah. It spans a wide spectrum - from understanding Quran and Hadith to delving into jurisprudence, spirituality, and theology, meaningfully affecting the heart and soul of believers. Individuals seeking Islamic knowledge venture into a journey of spiritual growth and enlightenment, fostering a deeper connection between the Creator and His creation.

*“The heart becomes sick, as does the body, and its remedy lies in repentance and seeking knowledge.”*

### What is *Ilm* (knowledge) in Islam?

*Ilm* is highly revered and encompasses religious and secular information. It is multidimensional, including the knowledge of Allah and His attributes, the Quran and Hadith, Islamic law and jurisprudence, as well as intellectual and scientific learning.

Allah says, **“...Allah will elevate those of you who are faithful, and raise those gifted with knowledge in rank. And Allah is All-Aware of what you do” (Surah Al-Mujaadilah (58):11).** This verse underscores the divine elevation of those who seek and possess knowledge. Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) emphasized this, stating, **“Seeking knowledge is an obligation upon every Muslim.” (Ibn Majah)**

Islam encourages both men and women to seek not only religious knowledge but also modern knowledge. Consequently, Muslims have made notable contributions not only to Islamic jurisprudence but also to the development of various modern-day sciences.

### Spiritual, Emotional, and Psychological Impacts of Islamic Knowledge

Islamic knowledge enhances the spiritual connection with Allah, nurtured through worship, supplication, *tafakkur* (reflection), and *taqwa* (devotion). This leads to the purification and softening of hearts and minds. Ibn Taymiyyah (رحمه الله) emphasized the inseparable connection between knowledge and the heart, stating, “The heart is the sanctuary of God; therefore, do not let anything enter it except God, the Exalted.” He believed beneficial knowledge nurtures faith, purifies the heart, and guides individuals toward righteousness.

The Noble Quran frequently highlights the importance of the heart in spiritual life. In Surah Ash-Shu'ara, Allah says, **“The Day when there will not benefit [anyone] wealth or children, but only one who comes to Allah with a sound heart” (Surah Ash-Shura (26):88-89).** This verse emphasizes that a pure heart is crucial for salvation and closeness to Allah.

*“A pure heart is crucial for salvation and closeness to Allah.”*

Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) also spoke about the significance of the heart. He said, **“Beware! There is a piece of flesh in the body; if it becomes good (reformed), the whole body becomes good; but if it gets spoiled, the whole body gets spoilt. And that piece of flesh is the heart” (Sahih Bukhari).** This hadith underscores the central role of the heart in determining the overall moral and spiritual health of an individual.

Shaykh Ibn Baz (رحمه الله) reiterated this, saying, “The heart is the foundation. If the heart is sound and good, everything else will be sound and good. If the heart is corrupt, everything else will be corrupt.” He encouraged Muslims to engage in regular acts of worship and self-reflection to keep the heart pure and connected to Allah. He also spoke about how knowledge softens the heart, making it more receptive to faith and compassion.

### Application of Knowledge in Daily Life

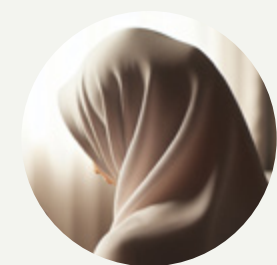
Islamic principles provide a comprehensive framework that enables Muslims to live balanced and fulfilled lives. It facilitates women in their roles as daughters, wives, and mothers, inspiring them to acquire both religious and worldly knowledge, thus empowering them to contribute positively to society. Islamic teachings on modesty guide working women in navigating social settings with confidence and dignity. Similarly, Islamic knowledge fosters a sense of social responsibility and communal engagement. Women are encouraged to take dynamic roles in their communities, contributing to social welfare and development.

Moreover, the teachings of Islam guide every aspect of a believer's life, ensuring that the heart remains pure and connected to Allah. The Prophet (ﷺ) said, **“Verily, Allah does not look at your appearance or wealth, but rather He looks at your hearts and actions” (Sahih Muslim),** emphasizing that Allah values the sincerity and purity of one's heart above all else.



### A Heart Enlightened by Knowledge

Islamic knowledge purifies, enlightens, and softens the heart by fostering a close relationship with Allah. It offers emotional healing, promotes introspection, and establishes a sense of accountability. By nurturing the heart with Islamic knowledge, both men and women can attain spiritual tranquility, moral excellence, and a closer bond with Allah. This profound impact of knowledge is a testament to its significance in Islam, guiding believers on a path of spiritual and emotional fulfillment. Through the words of great scholars like Ibn Taymiyyah (رحمه الله) and Shaykh Ibn Baz (رحمه الله), we understand that the heart is central to our faith and actions, and its purity and softness are essential for true devotion and connection to Allah.



### By Javaria Khalid

Javaria Khalid is a researcher and educator in the field of International Relations. She holds a Master's degree in International Relations from Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, and a Bachelor's degree from Punjab University, Lahore. She has worked as a research fellow at SASSI and an International Relations lecturer at the International Open University.



## From Struggles to Triumph

# One Sister's Inspiring Journey to Academic Success

In the pursuit of knowledge, no obstacle should be insurmountable. Ayan Mohamud's story exemplifies the incredible resilience and determination required to achieve one's academic goals, regardless of the adversities life throws at you.

### Early Life and Challenges

Ayan Mohamud, a 29-year-old sister, began her journey amidst immense hardship. Born in Somalia and raised in a Kenyan refugee camp, her early life was marked by severe health challenges. At two and a half years old, she fell critically ill. A blood transfusion led to severe complications, causing her to bleed and slip into a coma. Diagnosed with meningitis, she emerged from the ordeal physically disabled, with slurred speech, and reliant on a wheelchair and the help of her devoted mother. When her family moved to America, she slowly learned to speak again but remained physically impaired.

Despite these physical limitations, Ayan's determination to seek knowledge never wavered. In 2013, she enrolled in the Bachelor of Arts in Islamic Studies (BAIS) program at the International Open University (IOU). Typing with only one or two fingers was slow and painstaking, and accessing her computer required a strict schedule. However, IOU's flexible online platform provided a lifeline, allowing her to pursue education from home.

### Personal and Academic Triumphs

Ayan's journey was filled with moments of fear and heartache, but also inspiration and faith. She believed that if one truly seeks knowledge for the sake of Allah, He will facilitate his/her path.

By 2020, Ayan had graduated with her degree from IOU, overcoming immense obstacles to achieve her academic dreams. Her success is not only a personal triumph, but also a testament to the power of courage, determination, and faith against all odds!

### A Mother's Pride, A Daughter's Determination

Fatima Umar, Ayan's mother, initially doubted her daughter's ability to succeed. When Ayan expressed her desire to study at IOU, she worried about the challenges ahead. However, she soon witnessed Ayan's remarkable progress and dedication. No one helped her except Allah. Ayan learned to read the Quran in Arabic, even teaching her mother the rules of tajweed, showcasing her incredible knowledge and dedication.

Ayan's success inspired her entire family. Her achievements serve as a powerful reminder of the strength and resilience of Muslimahs who set their mind to pursue Islamic knowledge. Despite physical challenges and limitations, Ayan demonstrated that with faith, perseverance, and Allah's help anything is possible.

### Impact and Inspiration

Ayan's story is a beacon of hope and a call to action for women who follow Islam. Her journey inspires others to pursue their dreams, no matter the obstacles. She has proven that women are incredibly strong and capable of overcoming great odds. Ayan's journey illustrates that with belief and hard work, academic and personal success are within reach for all women.

Ayan did this despite seemingly insurmountable odds. What challenges are stopping you?



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[www.iou.edu.gm](http://www.iou.edu.gm)

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**Higher Diploma in Islamic Studies**

**Master in Islamic Studies**

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BEFORE 28TH SEPTEMBER**





# HEADQUARTERS HIGHLIGHTS



## HEADQUARTERS HIGHLIGHTS



## IMAS Center in The Gambia Showcases Enhanced Facility

The International Open University (IOU) 1MAS Center has a longstanding history of providing internet services to IOU students, particularly to those students facing financial challenges in acquiring laptops. The 1 Million African Scholarship (1MAS) Project has been vital in covering tuition fees and supplying computers for students' online access.

In the past, the 1MAS Center has been a hub for students needing to complete their lessons, assignments, midterms, and finals online. Initially, the internet services at the 1MAS Center faced challenges due to its outdated computer systems and subpar network connectivity. However, these issues have been resolved with the center's recent transformation into a state-of-the-art computer lab.

In August 2023, the center underwent significant improvements, receiving a modern facelift that included replacing old desktop computers with high-quality portable Dell laptops, thus boasting fast internet connections. These enhancements have greatly improved the reliability and speed of internet access, leading to a substantial improvement in students' experience during tests and assignments. Additionally, the appointment of a lab assistant

*The 1MAS Center has been a beacon of support, bridging the digital divide for countless students.*

manager has further streamlined support and simplified addressing student needs, Alhamdulillah.

These upgrades have led to a safer and more student-friendly environment with significantly fewer internet issues. The resources provided ensure an enhanced educational experience in the coming years, in shaa Allah.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to everyone who played a role in this remarkable transformation, contributing to a brighter future for our students and community.

Jazaakallahu Khairan.

**By Tamsir Gaye**  
1MAS Student



## HEADQUARTERS HIGHLIGHTS

# Celebrating a Decade of Excellence

## International Open University's 10th Convocation

Marking a significant milestone of educational excellence, the International Open University (IOU) recently held its 10th global convocation and its third offline graduation in The Gambia. The ceremony, which took place on January 13, 2024, brought together esteemed guests, faculty members, proud parents, and graduates from all corners of the world, underscoring the university's global reach and impact. It was a moment of pride and connection for all involved, celebrating the university's continuous commitment to providing quality education worldwide.



The event was graced by the presence of Honorable Claudiana Cole, Minister of Basic and Secondary Education, who served as the Chief Guest of Honor. In her address, she highlighted the pivotal role of quality education in national development. "Education forms the backbone of any nation, impacting its development and progress. By investing in quality education, we uplift the lives of our students, equipping them with the resources they need to succeed in an ever-evolving world," she emphasized.

IOU's 10th convocation was a celebration of academic achievements and a testament to the institution's growth and resilience over the years. From a modest beginning with 51 graduates worldwide in 2014, the university has seen exponential growth, now celebrating 585 graduates from 57 countries, including 120 from The Gambia alone. This growth is a result of the collective efforts and support of our esteemed faculty, proud parents, and dedicated graduates. This year's convocation awarded degrees in various fields, such as Islamic Studies, Business Administration, Education, Islamic Economics, Banking and Finance, Psychology, Information Technology, and Law.



Dr. Cherno Omar Barry, the Vice Chancellor of IOU, underscored the university's mission of integrating Islamic values into education, thereby creating knowledgeable and compassionate leaders. "Our goal is not only to impart knowledge but also to inculcate the required spiritual morals necessary for a better society, good leadership, and peaceful coexistence," he remarked in his address.

The convocation also featured a heartfelt tribute to Dr. Gibril Jaw, the visionary leader and inaugural CEO of the National Accreditation and Quality Assurance Authority (NAQAA). Dr. Jaw's contributions to the educational framework in The Gambia, including developing the Gambia Skills Qualifications Framework (GSQF) and the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), were pivotal. His efforts in accrediting IOU's bachelor's

and master's degree programs were particularly highlighted, cementing his legacy as a catalyst for positive change in the Gambian education sector.

Special acknowledgements were given to the MRC Holland Foundation for their generous financial support, which has been instrumental in providing scholarships and empowering aspiring teachers in The Gambia. The hybrid program, which combines the Higher Teachers Certificate or Advanced Diploma in Education from Gambia College with a Bachelor's in Education from IOU, has significantly enhanced the capacity of educators to impart quality education in secondary schools.

The convocation also celebrated the remarkable achievements of its graduates with awards for academic excellence and service. Alhagie S. Jallow, the 2023 valedictorian, delivered an inspiring speech urging fellow graduates to use their education for societal transformation and to uphold the values they have imbibed during their time at IOU.



As the ceremony concluded, Dr. Bilal Philips, the Founder and Chancellor of IOU, reaffirmed the university's unwavering commitment to expanding its reach and maintaining the highest academic standards. "By adopting an Islamized education system, we aim to build bridges of understanding and unity among people from all walks of life. Together, hand in hand, we can create a better future," he stated, instilling a sense of reassurance and confidence in the audience.



The 10th convocation of IOU was a profound reminder of the transformative power of education and the university's unwavering dedication to fostering intellectual growth, innovation, and ethical leadership across the globe.



## HEADQUARTERS HIGHLIGHTS

# Innovative Law Program Takes Root at IOU

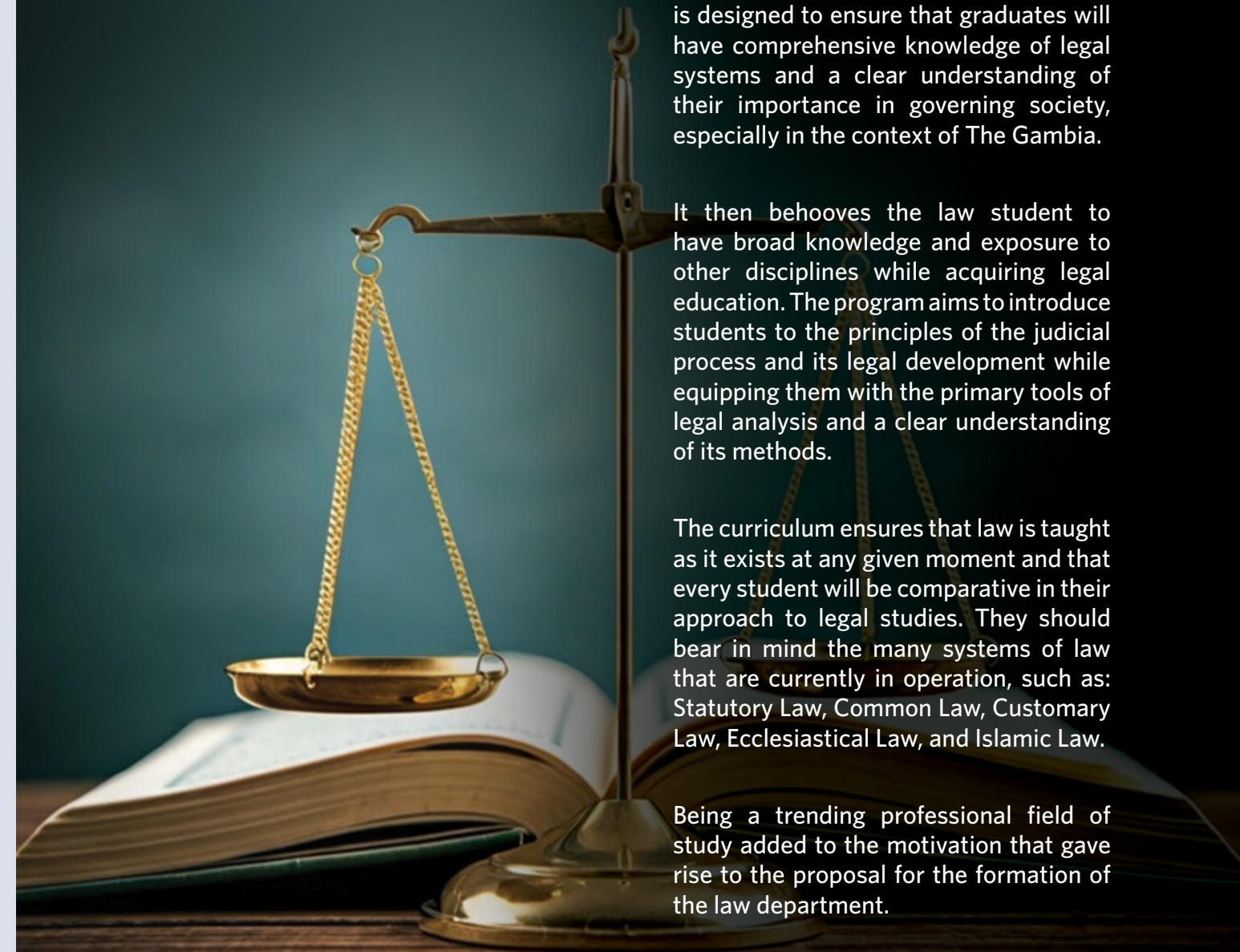
The National Accreditation and Quality Assurance Authority (NAQAA) is the accreditation body in The Gambia. After the shutdown of Legacy University in The Gambia, NAQAA requested that IOU accept the largest group of Legacy's students and take over the administration of their Law program in order to help students complete their education. IOU provisionally adopted Legacy University's curriculum and found a facility for its law studies, which included a courtroom.

All human activities – social, economic, and political – take place within a legal framework. IOU's upcoming law program is designed to ensure that graduates will have comprehensive knowledge of legal systems and a clear understanding of their importance in governing society, especially in the context of The Gambia.

It then behooves the law student to have broad knowledge and exposure to other disciplines while acquiring legal education. The program aims to introduce students to the principles of the judicial process and its legal development while equipping them with the primary tools of legal analysis and a clear understanding of its methods.

The curriculum ensures that law is taught as it exists at any given moment and that every student will be comparative in their approach to legal studies. They should bear in mind the many systems of law that are currently in operation, such as: Statutory Law, Common Law, Customary Law, Ecclesiastical Law, and Islamic Law.

Being a trending professional field of study added to the motivation that gave rise to the proposal for the formation of the law department.





## Specializations of IOU's Law Program

IOU plans to offer courses and programs leading to the degree of Bachelor of Law (LLB) Honors, Diploma in Law, and a Certificate course in Legal Studies as it grows from what it is today, and to offer four specializations:

### 1. International Law

Since IOU is an international university, studying international law is essential and incumbent. Domestic law is specific to a country, but international law will give students worldwide legal knowledge, including international treaties and conventions.

### 2. International Human Rights

Human rights are discussed worldwide, but contemporary human rights bodies use their logic and rationale to decide what is moral. At IOU, human rights would be taught from an Islamic perspective using authentic Islamic sources, along with equipping students with the practical application of human rights within their countries.

### 3. Shariah Law

Laymen, lawmakers, and law students alike are ignorant of the Shariah law; therefore, most people assume it is brutal and extreme. Studying this subject is essential and beneficial for both Muslims and non-Muslims. If humans can make laws to control society, then why can't Allah, the Creator of the universe? This topic would cover the foundations of the Shariah, man-made laws, and the hudood, including the wisdom behind hudood and the legal processes. The hudood are more than just punishments, but deterrents put in place to keep society in order and to prevent chaos. When the Shariah laws are correctly implemented, it is rare to find the hudood carried out in Islamic societies, especially when you have a law-abiding community.

### 4. Peace and Conflict Resolution

Many conflicts are plaguing the world, such as wars, family problems, and the suffering of the weak and innocent due to oppression, injustice, trauma, refugee crises, and other vices. Studying how to prevent these conflicts and concerns through peaceful resolutions would be immensely valuable for societies worldwide.

“

**IOU's law program is designed to ensure that graduates have comprehensive knowledge of legal systems and their importance in governing society.**

”

Plans to add International diplomacy as the fifth specialization are underway.

Alhamdulillah, it is a great blessing from Allah that IOU can offer this program. It will teach students how to contribute and directly benefit society inshaa Allah.

May Allah allow the program to grow and spread its benefits worldwide.



### By Professor Dr. Chernom Omar Barry

Professor Dr. Chernom Omar Barry is the Vice-Chancellor of the International Open University. He also serves as the president of the Writers Association of The Gambia (WAG). He was the former Executive Secretary at the National Human Rights Commission and the Permanent Secretary in several ministries in The Gambia.

## HEADQUARTERS HIGHLIGHTS



## Soma IMAS Learning Center Spearheads Outreach in Lower River Region

A dedicated team led by Lamin Dibba, Center Manager of Jarra Soma 1MAS Learning Center, along with four Student Committee Executives, conducted an outreach mission on July 27, 2024. They visited several Senior Secondary Schools in the Lower River Region to inform graduating students about the International Open University (IOU) and the educational opportunities it offers.

During their visits to Kwinella and Pakaliba Senior Secondary Schools, Mr. Dibba thanked the school authorities for creating a supportive environment that facilitated a meaningful exchange of ideas with graduates and teachers. He introduced the founder of IOU, Dr. Bilal Philips, and his mission of “Changing the Nation through Education.”

Mr. Dibba discussed various aspects of the university, including its unique mode of learning, the Islamized curriculum, the diverse courses available, admission criteria, and the

“

**Since its establishment, the Soma 1MAS Learning Center has registered over 60 students each semester, becoming a beacon of educational advancement.**

”

1 Million African Scholarship (1MAS) project. He highlighted the need for close cooperation between the schools and the university to ensure that deserving students benefit from the 1MAS scholarships.

The Principals of Kwinella and Pakaliba Senior Secondary Schools, Mr. Abdoulie Singhateh and Mr. Abdoulie Drammeh respectively, expressed their gratitude for the team's visit. They pledged to work in conjunction with the university to promote its educational agenda, acknowledging the crucial role of genuine knowledge in the nation's development.

The outreach included handing out T-shirts and flyers to the school authorities by the Student Committee Executives, symbolizing the ongoing partnership and commitment to educational advancement.

### About the Soma 1MAS Learning Center

Located on the Casamance Highway, a stone's throw from the Soma Car Park, the Soma 1MAS Learning Center is an educational hub in Soma, a bustling market town with a population of about 20,000. The center boasts well-equipped facilities, including air-conditioned rooms and internet-connected computers, conducive to daily studies and research. Since its establishment in September 2022, the center has played a significant role in promoting the visibility and reach of IOU, registering over 60 students into various programs each semester through its outreach initiatives.

# IOU

## IN FOCUS



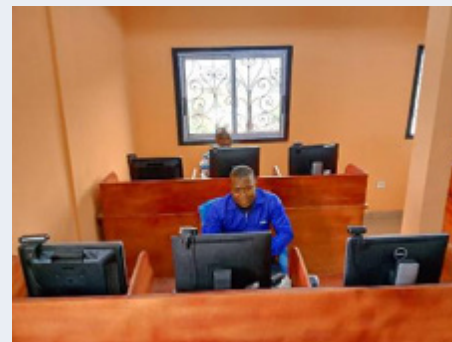
### IOU IN FOCUS

## Triple the Reach!

### *1MAS Launches New Operations in Yaoundé, Yola, and Vanuatu*

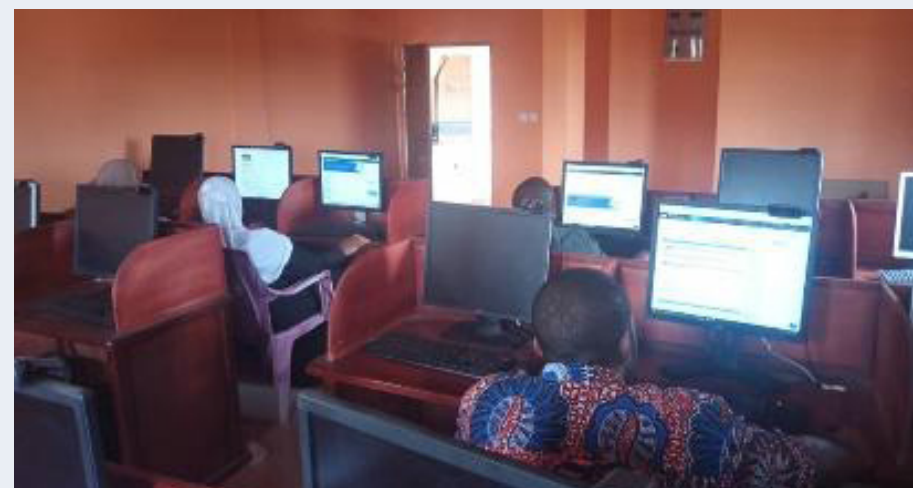
Understanding the vital role of education in shaping individuals and communities, the International Open University (IOU) launched the 1 Million African Scholarship (1MAS) project. This ambitious project aims to provide scholarships and financial support to one million Africans, helping them achieve their academic goals.

**“THE 1MAS PROJECT IS TRANSFORMING LIVES ACROSS AFRICA AND BEYOND, ONE SCHOLARSHIP AT A TIME. FROM YAOUNDE TO VANUATU, WE’RE WITNESSING EDUCATION’S POWER TO UPLIFT COMMUNITIES.”**



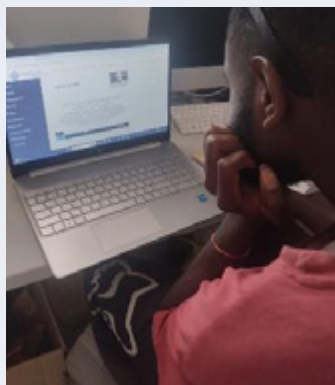
### **YAOUNDE, CAMEROON**

In collaboration with NSO Islamic Cultural and Development Association (NICDA), IOU established the first 1MAS learning center in Yaounde, Cameroon. Through this initiative, more than 50 students have been given scholarships, while many students are currently applying for scholarships for the Fall 2024 semester.



The local community has wholeheartedly welcomed this project and we’ll soon witness further expansion in the region – *inshaa Allah*.





## YOLA, NIGERIA

The IOU successfully established the 1MAS learning center in Yola, Nigeria in alliance with the Abdullahi Basallube University (ABU). Due to the huge potential in the region, the 1MAS Yola center has become the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest center in Nigeria within a few months. With over a hundred active students currently, this center is committed to induct more than 50 additional students for the upcoming semester to close the gap with the 1MAS Lagos center which stands at the second place in Nigeria in terms of the student numbers.

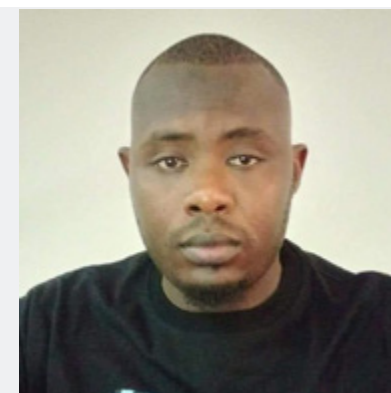
## VANUATU

In Melanesia, after Fiji, IOU has now expanded the 1MAS operations into Vanuatu. With the assistance of a local mosque we have established a learning center; currently 20 students are fulfilling the scholarship requirements for the Fall 2024 semester.

## IOU IN FOCUS

# 1MAS Scholarship Awardees Say “Thank You”

A collection of testimonials featuring 1MAS scholarship recipients expressing their deep gratitude, sharing personal stories about their transformative experiences at IOU.



**Lamin Dibba**

BSc in Information Technology  
Graduate (2023)

**The 1 Million African Scholarship (1MAS) has played a great role in my academic pursuit, enabling me to pursue my Undergraduate Degree without any interruptions, Alhamdulillah.**

All praise is for Allah who has guided us to this religion and given us the patience to persevere, *Alhamdulillah*.

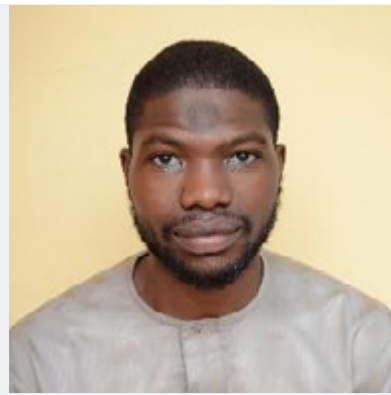
My name is Lamin Dibba from The Gambia. I am a graduate in Information Technology from the International Open University (IOU). I graduated in February 2023 and was a beneficiary of the 1 Million African Scholarship (1MAS), *Alhamdulillah*.

My academic pursuit journey at the IOU had been a wonderful one, which afforded me the opportunity to learn authentic Islamic Knowledge. The journey is indeed a blessed one, I have earned knowledge that can be applied to benefit in both this world and the hereafter, *Alhamdulillah*. I have been blessed to learn from renowned scholars like Dr. Bilal Philips in

various Islamic Studies subjects, which helped a lot towards my transformative life journey.

The 1 Million African Scholarship (1MAS) has played a great role in my academic pursuit. It enabled me to pursue my Undergraduate Degree without any interruptions, *Alhamdulillah*.

In conclusion, I would like to express my profound gratitude to the management and staff of the International Open University and the 1MAS team for the wonderful and unique opportunity that was made available to me. I pray to Allah Almighty to continue blessing all your efforts and to help the University in its mission of “Changing the Nation through Education.” *Baraka Allahu Feekum!!!*



## Mubarak Sani Muhammad

BSc in Information Technology  
Graduate (2023)

**Enrollment at IOU  
unveiled a vast expanse  
of profound knowledge,  
contemplation, and  
introspection, altering my  
life's trajectory.**

All praise is for Allah who has guided us to this and given us the sabr to persevere, *Alhamdulillah*.

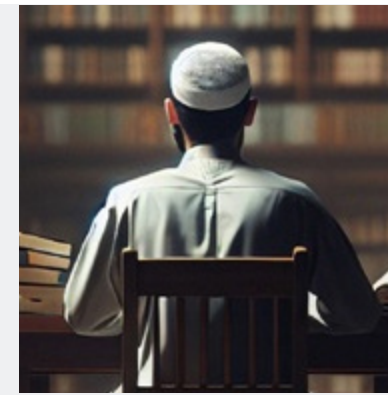
I am Mubarak Sani Muhammad from Plateau State, Nigeria. I pursued and completed my Bachelor of Science in Information Technology at the International Open University (IOU) from 2019 to 2023 as a beneficiary of IOU's 1 Million Africa Scholarship initiative.

Enrollment at the International Open University (IOU) afforded me the invaluable chance to gain authentic Islamic knowledge. This transformative journey at IOU has altered my life's trajectory, unveiling a vast expanse of profound knowledge, contemplation, and introspection. The educational experience at IOU is distinctive, equipping students with practical wisdom and skills for real-world challenges.

Throughout my academic journey at the International Open University (IOU), I've encountered a host of knowledgeable and passionate lecturers, teaching assistants, facilitators, and proctors. My studies have been marked by numerous trials, challenges, and moments of doubt, where the thought of

surrendering crossed my mind. Nevertheless, I am fortunate to have had the guidance of two esteemed facilitators: Sheikh Auwal Dahir and Sheikh Ibrahim Gata. Their dedicated efforts have been instrumental in helping me persevere through my studies, recognizing the value of education at IOU, and instilling the motivation to make necessary sacrifices. For it is true that the finest achievements are seldom easily attained.

I once again express profound gratitude to Allah for this immense blessing. I pray for His blessings and rewards upon Dr. Bilal Philips, the esteemed founder of IOU, as well as all the dedicated staff. I must not forget to express my gratitude to my national representative, Br. Abdullahi Akindele. His kindness and care have been immensely helpful. He stands as a paragon of leadership. Each encounter with him evokes the admirable qualities of Dr. Bilal Philips. My heartfelt thanks extend to my family and friends, whose unwavering support has been pivotal in this journey. Additionally, I extend special gratitude to every individual contributing to and sponsoring the 1MAS initiative at IOU. May this collective effort be blessed. *Ameen*.



## Abdulkadir Bashir Adeshola

BA in Islamic Studies  
Graduate (2023)

**Thanks to IOU's 1 Million  
Africa Scholarship  
initiative, I've gained the  
skills and confidence  
to make a significant  
impact in my community,  
spreading Islamic  
education both offline and  
online.**

As-salamu alaykum. I am Abdulkadir Bashir Adeshola from Kwara State, Nigeria. I completed my General Diploma in Islamic Studies and Bachelor of Arts in Islamic Studies at the Islamic Online University (IOU) between 2018 and 2023 under IOU's 1 Million Africa Scholarship initiative. My journey with IOU has been nothing short of transformative, opening doors I never imagined possible.

The comprehensive education I received at IOU has equipped me with a deep understanding of Islamic principles and practices. This knowledge, combined with the university's emphasis on practical application, has empowered me to make a significant impact in my community. Thanks to the skills and confidence I gained, I have been able to establish a local madrasa, providing accessible Islamic education to children in my area.

Furthermore, the digital literacy skills I acquired through IOU's online learning platform inspired me to expand my reach beyond physical boundaries. I am proud to say that I have successfully launched an online Islamic school, allowing me to share knowledge with students across Nigeria and beyond. This initiative not only spreads authentic

Islamic teachings, but also bridges educational gaps in underserved areas. I am deeply grateful to the Founder of IOU, Dr. Bilal Philips, and the entire academic and administrative staff, for their unwavering commitment to providing high-quality, accessible Islamic education. The university's innovative approach to distance learning has made it possible for students like me to pursue higher education while maintaining our other responsibilities.

IOU has not just given me a degree; it has provided me with a mission. The university's emphasis on combining traditional Islamic knowledge with contemporary issues has prepared me to address the challenges facing our ummah today. I am now better equipped to guide my students in navigating their faith in the modern world.

I wholeheartedly endorse IOU to anyone seeking to deepen their understanding of Islam and make a positive impact in their communities. My experience is a testament to the transformative power of education when it is rooted in authentic knowledge and delivered with sincerity.



## Lifetime Innovation Learning Centre Receives Muslim Startup Excellence Award

The Lifetime Innovation Learning Centre, part of the International Open University's ambitious 1MAS project, has been honored with the Muslim Startup Excellence Award at the Islamic Trade and Culture Awards 2024. This accolade recognizes the center's significant contributions to educational accessibility in Uganda, particularly for underprivileged communities.

Initiated in 2017, the 1 Million African Scholarship (1MAS) project aims to dramatically increase access to education across Africa by providing one million scholarships to African youth. The project includes establishing learning centers equipped with necessary technological resources, thereby ensuring that students who lack basic digital tools can still receive a quality education. The Lifetime Innovation Learning Centre in Uganda is a prime example of these efforts, serving as a hub for learning and community development.

This award highlights the center's success in aligning educational opportunities with Islamic values and contributing to the broader goals of the 1MAS project. It underscores the impact of providing educational access to those who need it most, helping to foster a generation that can contribute positively to their communities and the wider world.



## IOU and Universitas Terbuka Strengthen Ties with New MoU

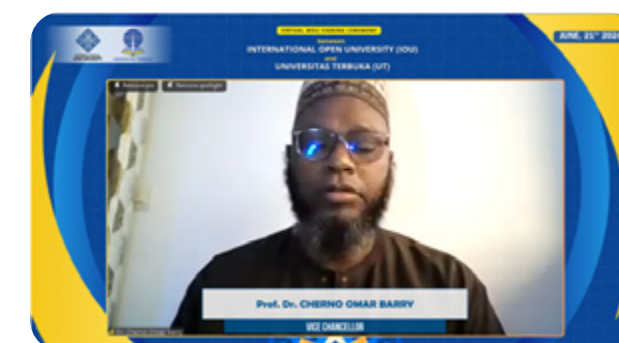
On June 21, 2024, the International Open University (IOU) and Universitas Terbuka (UT) in Indonesia celebrated the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), enhancing their commitment to academic collaboration. This significant event, held via a virtual ceremony, was attended by dignitaries from both institutions.

Universitas Terbuka, a respected open university in Indonesia, specializes in distance education, providing higher education opportunities to a wide range of students, particularly those in remote and underserved areas. This collaboration aims to leverage the strengths of both institutions to benefit their faculty and students.

Prof. Dr. Bilal Philips, IOU's Founder-Chancellor, and Prof. Ojat Darajat, the Rector of Universitas Terbuka, delivered opening speeches that set a collaborative tone for the proceedings. The signing was carried out by IOU's Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Dr. Cherno Omar Barry, who underscored the partnership's potential to benefit faculty and students alike.

The IOU-UT Teaching Collaboration Program is designed to foster international partnerships among faculty members. This initiative provides a platform for sharing experiences, advancing

professional development, and internationalizing curricula. Additionally, the Joint Research Program supports scholarly engagement through the exchange of articles and collaborative efforts between authors and editors in the respective journals of the participating parties, reinforcing research cooperation across institutions.





# EVENTS

## EVENTS

## EVENTS

# IOUCRIS CORNER

The 5th International Open University Conference on Research and Integrated Sciences (IOUCRIS) honors the exceptional contributions of participants in its academic paper competition, showcasing their innovative research and significant contributions to Islamic scholarship. Here are the distinguished winners from this round:

**Celebrating the exceptional minds shaping the future of Islamic scholarship.**

## Professional Category Winners



**Prof. Dr. Khaliq Ahmad**

ISTAC, International Islamic University, Malaysia



**Associate Professor Dr. Afroza Bulbul**

International Open University, The Gambia

### Submission:

Case Study of SABIC - A Saudi Company Producing Petrochemicals for Global Market Needs



### Abstract

SABIC is a large company with several affiliates. The company recorded a net profit of US\$5.7 billion in 2018. Founded in 1976 by a royal decree, SABIC (Saudi Basic Industries Corporation) specializes in the by-products of oil extraction to create value-added commodities such as chemicals, polymers, and fertilizers, including high-performance plastics, agro-nutrients, and metals. The company's export markets include the Americas, Europe, the Middle East, and Asia



Pacific. Its business indirectly supports customers in construction, medical devices, packaging, agro-nutrients, electrical and electronics, transportation, and serves as a source of clean energy for international clients.

Besides a net profit of US\$5.7 billion, SABIC's sales revenues for 2018 totaled US\$45 billion, and its total assets were US\$85 billion in the same year. Its production capacity reached 75.3 million metric tons in 2018. SABIC provides livelihood for over 33,000 employees worldwide and operates in approximately 50 countries. The Saudi Arabian government owns 70 percent of SABIC shares, with the remaining 30 percent publicly traded on the Saudi stock exchange.

SABIC's affiliated companies include SABIC Sukuk, Saudi Iron & Steel Company (Hadeed), and National Industrial Gases Co. (Gas), among others. Even companies such as Saudi Methanol Co. (Ar-Razi) and Korea Nexlene Company (KNC) are its associates. Islam, the official religion of the Kingdom, dictates business practices as mandated by Saudi laws, including fasting during Ramadan, performing Hajj, and pausing work for prayers five times daily. Facilities for ablution (Wudu/daily wash) are mandatory even in SABIC's headquarters in Riyadh/Jubail. SABIC's management adopts a guardian leadership style, promoting a just and fair environment and ensuring a return on investment for shareholders.

evident in the upper class. Despite acquiring substantial theoretical knowledge, this subset falls short in translating it into practical actions. The research emphasizes solutions for empowering youth to overcome these obstacles, providing guidance on adhering to Islamic teachings.

Through extensive analysis, the study reveals a consistent pattern where distractions such as social media and television consistently rank as the primary obstacle across all surveyed socio-economic strata. It critically examines the necessity of social media while offering recommendations to mitigate its adverse effects. Additionally, peer pressure to enjoy life emerges as the second most prevalent obstacle, prompting

discussions on societal norms and cultural influences on youth, along with recommendations on resisting undue influence.

The disparity between knowledge and practice for upper class participants is 15.5%, upper middle class is 3.5%, middle class is 4.7%, and lower middle class is 1.5%. The challenges encountered by different generational strata exhibit significant consistency, with distractions such as television and social media emerging as the primary factor, closely followed by peer pressure to enjoy life. Among the datasets, individuals with only their mothers practicing Islam exhibit the lowest percentage of adherence (40%), underscoring the crucial role of the father in the family.

## Student Category Winner



**Sr. Gia Sithara**

Department of Islamic Studies,  
International Open University

### Submission:

Study of the Efficacy of Islamic Practices among the Youth in Chennai, India



## Abstract

This study investigates the effectiveness of Islamic practices among the youth in Chennai, India, exploring various factors that influence their understanding and adherence to Islam. It encompasses socio-economic strata, generational

differences, and familial dynamics, focusing on youth aged 18-26 years and delving into obstacles faced across these subsets. Notably, the study identifies a disparity between theoretical knowledge and Islamic practices, particularly

The International Open University Conference on Research and Integrated Sciences (IOUCRIS) is a prestigious event that brings together scholars, researchers, and students from around the world to present and discuss their latest research findings in various fields of Islamic studies and integrated sciences. This conference aims to foster academic excellence, encourage innovative research, and facilitate the exchange of knowledge and ideas among the global academic community.

### CONFERENCE PROGRAM TRACKS

- Arabic Language and Literature
- Islamic Banking and Economics
- Business Administration
- Information Technology
- Psychology
- Education
- Islamic Studies
- Multidisciplinary areas

For more details, please visit the website at [conference.iou.edu.gm](http://conference.iou.edu.gm)

### PUBLICATION OPPORTUNITY

Full papers submitted are subject to double-blind peer review. Successful submissions will be published in the Journal of Integrated Sciences (JIS).

### BEST PAPER AWARDS

The Best Paper Award and the Best Student Paper Award, both valued at US\$ 100, will be conferred at the conference. To qualify for the awards, the author must submit a full paper that will be presented at the conference.



The Journal of Integrated Sciences (JIS) is a quarterly, multi-disciplinary, anonymously peer-reviewed publication established by IOU. The journal aims to publish quality academic research papers and review articles, with a particular focus on studies within the realm of Islamic sciences, and their impact on contemporary Muslim society. Submissions are open to the public, but are subject to rigorous evaluation by our editorial team, and a distinguished review panel consisting of renowned scholars from around the world. For more details, please visit [jis.iou.edu.gm](http://jis.iou.edu.gm).



## EVENTS

# HIGHER EDUCATION WEEK IN ZANZIBAR:

## IOU's Accomplishments

In order to address the information gap regarding academic programs and international study opportunities, the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training in Zanzibar launched 'Higher Education Week.' This annual event is a prime networking platform for the International Open University (IOU) in Zanzibar to share the university's programs and facilitate connections concerning admissions and other academic services.

The 3rd fair was hosted at the Gombani Stadium in Chake Chake District from July 24th to 28th, 2024. With the theme 'Knowledge, Competence, and Innovation in Education: Foundations for National Development,' it attracted extensive participation from Tanzanian universities, colleges, and vocational training centers.

Hon. Lela Mohamed Mussa, the Minister of Education and Vocational Training in Zanzibar, inaugurated the event, and Deputy Minister Hon. Ali Abdulgulam Hussein delivered the closing remarks. The event also welcomed the Regional Commissioner of South Pemba, among other esteemed government officials.

Significant figures, including both the Minister and Deputy Minister of Education and Vocational Training of Zanzibar, visited the IOU booth.



► Hon. Lela Muhamed Mussa, Minister of Education and Vocational Training Zanzibar visited the IOU booth at the ongoing Higher Education week, Pemba 2024.

### Results from Higher Education Week

Overall, the event drew significant attention, with over 7,300 participants from across Pemba Island. It proved especially engaging for IOU, attracting about 535 prospective students, of whom 321 were females and 214 were males. Many visitors took active steps towards registering and even enrolled, paying their tuition fees for the upcoming Fall 2024 semester. The demographic was diverse, and included both employed individuals and homemakers.

Looking ahead, the organizers anticipate even greater participation, and are excited about the ongoing expansion of similar opportunities within the community.

The fair effectively expanded IOU's visibility and reinforced its presence throughout Tanzania, marking significant progress in the university's efforts to integrate and connect with the community.



► Students from various secondary schools visited our booth



► Hon. Ali Abdulgulam Hussein, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Education and Vocational Training Zanzibar visited our booth on July 28, during the Higher Education Week – Pemba 2024.





► Hon. Ali Abdulgulam Hussein, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Education and Vocational Training Zanzibar delivered his speech during the Higher Education Week - Pemba 2024.



► Mr. Mohamed Nassor Salim, Officer-in-Charge, Ministry of Education and Vocational Training Zanzibar - Pemba office delivers his speech during the Higher Education Week - Pemba 2024 before welcoming guests of honor.



► Group Photo: Preparation Committee with the Guest of Honor and other officials



# ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT





## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

## A Success Story

# From the Bachelor of Islamic Studies Program

## My Journey at IOU: A Life-Changing Experience

In 2012, a friend of mine encouraged me to look into online schooling. I decided to explore the International Online University (IOU) and was instantly drawn to the flexibility of studying online. I eagerly enrolled with a burning desire to learn the Arabic Language. Little did I know that this decision would lead to a life-changing experience.

I decided to pursue a bachelor's degree in Islamic Studies at the university. One of the things that stood out for me was the tremendous effort that the institution put into ensuring that every student understood their requirements.

They implemented a system that facilitated learning by breaking down each lecture into three components: a reading assignment, an explanation recording, and live sessions with the instructor. This approach greatly enhanced my understanding and assimilation of course materials.

What made this university truly unique and noteworthy was its sense of brotherhood and community service. Despite being geographically dispersed, I always found fellow students online who were willing to guide and assist me. I must mention Sister Asma Miller, who played a significant role in helping me to plan and manage my studies. The introduction of a community service requirement was incredibly beneficial, as it encouraged students to engage with their communities in relation to their studies. Personally, I volunteered as a teacher in my community. This has contributed to my personal and professional development.

My degree at IOU has not only made me more confident in academic and religious matters but also provided me with a fair understanding of both aspects. Currently, I am pursuing a PhD in Electrical Engineering at Ahmadu Bello University in Nigeria, I am proud to say that the knowledge and skills I gained during my IOU degree still benefit me as a postgraduate student.

*The knowledge and skills I gained during my IOU degree still benefit me as a postgraduate student.*

As an alumnus of IOU, I am forever grateful for the opportunities and personal growth that I have gained. The university's emphasis on holistic education, considering not only intellectual development but also moral and spiritual growth, has shaped me into a well-rounded individual. The support and camaraderie I experienced during my time at IOU instilled in me a sense of belonging and the importance of fostering community spirit; these are values I carry with me to this day.

To all current students, my advice is to embrace every opportunity that comes your way. Engage with your professors, fellow students, and the wider community to maximize your learning experience. Remember that education extends beyond the confines of a classroom; step outside your comfort zone, participate in community service, and continuously strive for personal growth. The journey may have its challenges, but persevere and you will emerge stronger, armed with the tools and knowledge to make a difference in the lives of others.



**By Jaafar Sulaiman**

BA Islamic Studies Graduate. Jaafar Sulaiman is a registered electrical engineer at Kano Electricity Distribution Company. He is a fellow of the Nigerian Institute of Power Engineers (NIPE). He also serves as the Vice Chairman of the NIPE Kano Chapter and the Technical Secretary of the Nigerian Society of Engineers (NSE) Kano Branch. He is currently working towards his Ph.D. at Ahmadu Bello University, as well as teaches and coordinates the activities of an Islamic school in Kano.



# GLOBAL COLLABORATIONS



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## IOU and Jigjiga University Forge New Paths

During a significant visit to Jigjiga City, Ethiopia, Profesor Dr. Bilal Philips, Founder and Chancellor of the International Open University (IOU), engaged in discussions with Vice President of Academic Affairs Dr. Abdi Ahmed, regarding a partnership with Jigjiga University. Dr. Bilal highlighted the strides IOU is making in the region, particularly in establishing a new program in Islamic Banking and Finance. This initiative is expected to bring substantial educational advancements to students in Ethiopia and Somalia.





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# Dr. Bilal Ignites Academic Enthusiasm Across Kenya

In late March 2024, Dr. Bilal visited Kenya with a clear agenda: to enhance the educational programs led by the International Open University (IOU) and to strengthen community relationships. His ten-day stay was filled with targeted meetings, vibrant community gatherings, and strategic collaborations aimed at bolstering both education and unity.

His schedule was packed with productive discussions with Kenyan authorities and leaders from various institutions. These talks were crucial for discussing the validation and recognition of IOU's courses in Kenya, reflecting a shared goal of academic excellence. One key strategy that emerged was the suggestion to delay the signing of a key partnership agreement until a later meeting in Mombasa to ensure all details were addressed. Throughout his visit, Dr. Bilal also made several visits to prominent educational and religious centers, such as the Jamia Mosque and SUPKEM (Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims).

Beyond formal meetings, he engaged with the community through public talks and iftar gatherings, which served as excellent platforms for dialogue and cultural exchange. These events increased the visibility of IOU's programs and helped strengthen ties with the local community.

The outcomes of this visit were meaningful, laying the groundwork for future agreements on Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) and the exploration of new IOU learning centers. Dr. Bilal's proactive efforts and the warm

reception from local leaders underscored a promising future for academic and community development initiatives in Kenya.

Below is a complete list of venues Dr. Bilal visited during his productive tour, mashaa Allah:

- Jamia Mosque
- Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims (SUPKEM)
- Justice Training Institute (JTI)
- IOU Kenya Office
- Kibra Ramadan Initiative (Asr Makina Masjid)
- Kenya Bureau of Halal Certification (KBHC)
- Ummah Foundation
- Prisoner Rehabilitation Programme
- Commission for University Education (CUE)
- Park Road Mosque
- Maahad Pangani
- Ummah University
- Maahad Huda - Isinya
- Islamic University of Kenya, Kisaju
- Islamia College
- Mombasa Learning Centre
- Mewa Library/NEP MEWA College
- Masjid Ummu Kulthum and Masjid Shamim - Tudor Nora



▶ IOU Founder-Chancellor Dr Bilal Philips with Musa Qadir, Prison Rehabilitation Programs (right), Fauz Qureishi, CEO Halal Bureau / Trustee - Ummah Foundation (left) and officials.



▶ Dr. Bilal being received at Jomo Kenyatta International Airport by Jamia Mosque and Alamin Mosque officials.



▶ Dr. Bilal is with Ilm TV presenter and Dr. Dabar-IOU Kenya Trust board chairman. The IOU Kenya Trust Board are, Dr. Dabar Abdi Maalim (Chairman) and Sh. Abdullatif Sheikh (member).



▶ Prof. Dr. Bilal with Officials the Muslim Students from Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Nairobi during thier Grand Iftar where he was one of the distinguished guests. With him is the Chairman, IOU Kenya Trust Board, Dr. Dabar Abdi Maalim.



▶ Dr. Dabar, Dr. Bilal and Sh. Salim Ghalgan (MEWA chairman) heading to MLC College, an IOU learning and exam center in Mombasa.



▶ Dr. Bilal, Dr. Dabar and Bro. Kassim at Islamia college.



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## BARMM and IOU Advance Collaboration with Scholarship Initiatives

The International Open University (IOU) and the Ministry of Education in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) have made notable progress in collaborative educational initiatives. A recent meeting, chaired by MP Eddie M Alih, Chairperson for Education in BARMM, focused on scholarship funding and the formalization of partnerships.

### Enhancing Scholarship Opportunities

In a significant move to support education in the region, discussions during the second meeting revolved around budget allocations for scholarship grants aimed at senior high graduates and Imams involved in the Islamic Studies and Arabic Language (ISAL) program. The proposed plan involves full funding for senior high tuition fees and a combined effort with IOU to cover 40% of tuition fees for Imams, complementing IOU's 60% discount.

### Formalizing Educational Partnerships

The meeting also laid the groundwork for a structured partnership between BARMM's

Ministry of Education and IOU through the Kuliyyah Institute. This initiative aims to develop dual degree programs, enhance the educational offerings, and provide broader academic opportunities to students in the region. The next steps include formalizing the proposal, setting up meetings to finalize the details of the partnership, and drafting a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).

### Moving Forward with Strategic Collaboration

MP Eddie M Alih has committed to integrating the educational proposals into the ongoing budget discussions for BARMM's Ministry of Education and plans to advocate directly with the ministry's head to ensure its timely implementation.

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## IOU Shines at AAOU

# Educational Technology Webinar

The Asian Association of Online Universities (AAOU) has been at the forefront of integrating innovative tools and platforms to enhance educational accessibility and quality. In its latest initiative, the AAOU conducted the second episode of its "AAOU Lecture Series 2024", which focused on research publications in open and distance education. The series is designed to foster innovation, creativity, and knowledge-sharing among education enthusiasts.

### IOU's Key Representation

The International Open University (IOU) played a significant role in this event, ably represented by Professor Dr. Raufu Oyedapo, the Dean of Liberal Arts and Sciences. As a keynote speaker, Dr. Oyedapo addressed the theme "A Roadmap to Successful Publication", with a specific focus on "Choosing a Research Topic" during the webinar on March 20th, 2024.

### Insights from the Lecture

Dr. Raufu Oyedapo's presentation provided a comprehensive overview of selecting and developing a research topic. He emphasized the importance of a well-chosen topic to:

- Inform readers about the subject matter and central theme of the research
- Enable quick identification of how well the study aligns with the interests of potential readers
- Enhance discoverability through relevant keywords
- Spark curiosity and encourage further reading

Professor Oyedapo skillfully outlined common pitfalls in topic selection, such as choosing overly broad topics, using complex language, and selecting topics that do not align with the research objectives. He provided ten steps for

developing a strong research topic, illustrated with examples across various fields, including environmental studies, computer science, and business administration.

### Participant Engagement and Resources

The webinar was well-received, with over 150 students, lecturers, and researchers in attendance. Participants benefited from interactive discussions and were provided with e-certificates of attendance. [Watch the full lecture](#) to gain insights into effective strategies for developing impactful research topics.



**Dr. Raufu Oyedapo**

Dean of Liberal Arts and Sciences  
International Open University



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## Comments from Our Readers

### PREVIOUS ISSUE 14



**Hafsatu Inuwa Muhammed**  
Nigeria

*IOU is improving day by day faster than can be imagined. So happy and proud to be part of IOU!*

**Luqman Adeogun**  
Nigeria

*Insightful lessons!*

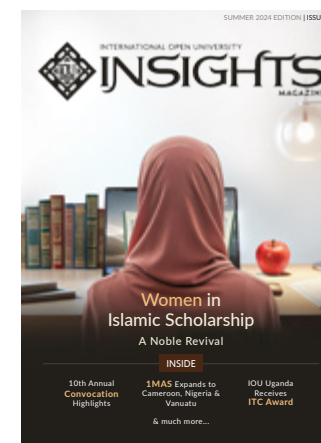
**Sidra Ahmed Khan**  
Pakistan

*I loved the convocation ceremony.*

**Nuha Rishad**  
Sri Lanka

*Everything is amazing!*

You can read our previous issues here: [www.iou.edu.gm/insights-magazine](http://www.iou.edu.gm/insights-magazine)



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### Your Feedback is Welcome!

We'd love to hear what you thought about Insights.

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The International Open University (IOU) is a pioneer in online learning founded in 2001 by Dr. Abu Ameenah Bilal Philips. It provides accredited degrees and certificates in Islamic Studies, Arabic and Islamized modern subjects at an affordable cost for all. Its mission is to

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### Other

- Quran Memorization & Tajweed
- General Diploma in Islamic Studies
- Ilm Institute Short Courses



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