



The Institute of Ismaili Studies

# INTERNATIONAL TRAINING PROGRAMME FOR WAEZEEN (English)



General Introduction  
2020 – 2022 Cycle



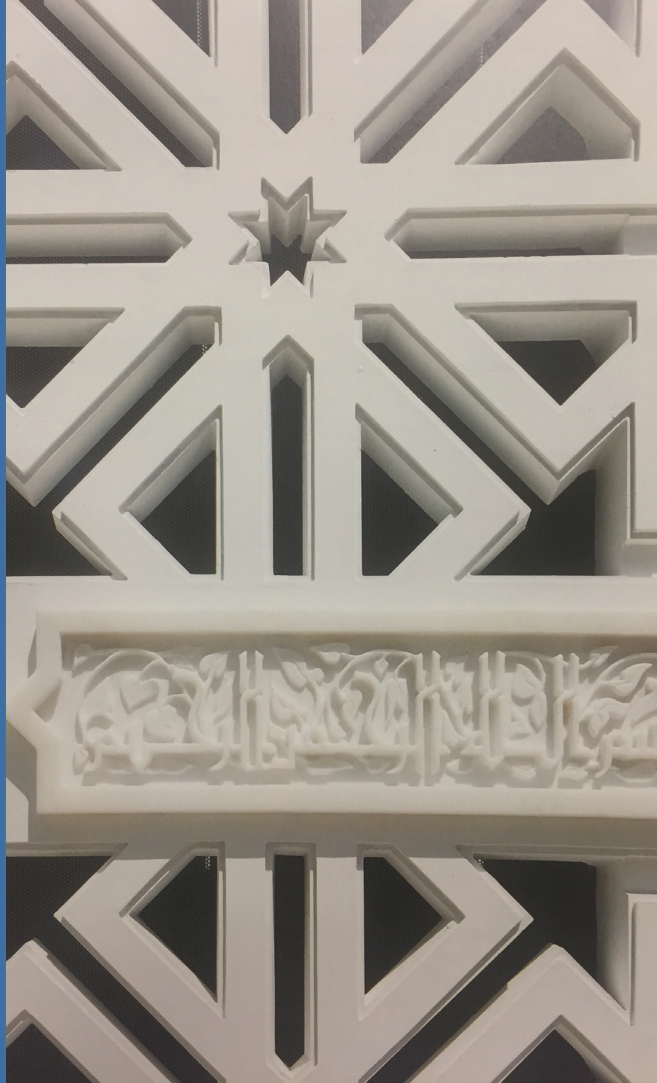
“ The passage of a millennium has not diminished Nasir Khusraw’s relevance nor dulled the lustre of his poetry. It continues to uplift and inspire, reminding us that we are the authors of our own destiny. As he has said, we can be like a poplar tree which chooses to remain barren, or we can let our path be lit by the candle of wisdom, for only “with intellect, we can seek out all the hows and whys. Without it, we are but trees without fruit.”

Another lesson that we learn from this great philosopher is that, in the ebb and flow of history, “knowledge is a shield against the blows of time”. It dispels “the torment of ignorance” and nourishes “peace to blossom forth in the soul”. ”

**Mawlana Hazar Imam, Speech at the Foundation  
Ceremony of the Ismaili Centre,  
Dushanbe, Tajikistan, 30th August 2003**

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***If you seek knowledge, go to the  
gate of the City of Knowledge!  
There, the glint of its fortune will  
enlighten your heart***

(Nasir Khusraw's words etched in marble in the Garden  
of Light at the Aga Khan Centre, London)

# INTRODUCTION

This handbook provides an overview of the waezeen training programme, together with details on the application process, the eligibility criteria, the Foundation Course, the residential and non-residential programme components, a list of modules taught, and a calendar for the 2020–2022 cycle.



Participants are expected to complete the training programme by 2022. However, practice opportunities are available to the participants to learn the art of articulation and public speaking from the beginning of their training. The IIS provides all learning resources and teaching faculty through the entire trajectory of the programme. Participants are also assigned a personal mentor who works individually with each candidate throughout the course of the programme.

The first residential episode of the programme in 2020 is anticipated to take place at The Institute of Ismaili Studies which is situated in the iconic facility of the Aga Khan Centre (AKC), London. With its several gardens and courtyards, the

Centre is a place for education, knowledge, cultural exchange and insight into Muslim civilisations, which resonates with the objectives of this programme.

*We are proud to open here a new home for two important educational institutions associated with the Aga Khan Development Network and the Ismaili Imamat. One is the Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations of the Aga Khan University. The other is the Institute of Ismaili Studies. ... These institutions – through their teaching and research, their rich library and archival resources, as well as their tours and public programmes – will enrich the lives of people from the entire world.*

**Mawlana Hazar Imam, the opening of the Aga Khan Centre, London, 26 June 2018**



# BACKGROUND

Assisting the Ismaili Tariqah and Religious Education Boards (ITREBs) in their mandate to facilitate the religious formation of the Jamat, *waezeen* represent an important human resource for the transmission of knowledge and understanding of beliefs, traditions, histories and cultures of the Ismaili Jamat within the broader context of Islam. *Waezees* constitute an important mode of communication with the Jamat and are intended to inspire commitment to the principles and practices of the Ismaili *tariqah* as interpreted by the Imam-of-the-Time.

Responding to the needs expressed by ITREBs for knowledgeable and competent *waezeen*, the IIS has developed a structured, episodic training

programme designed to attract participants from Jamats across the world. The aim of the International Training Programme is to train individuals who can develop and deliver inspiring *waezs* and provide pastoral care to the Jamat. The programme includes training in content knowledge related to Islam and its Ismaili *tariqah* within the broader context of religious traditions and contemporary society as well as coaching in public speaking, critical thinking, and pastoral care skills. Faculty, primarily comprising scholars from the IIS and other academic institutions, has been enlisted to provide the necessary educational and intellectual stimuli to engender understanding of relevant intellectual perspectives and development of requisite skills.



# OVERVIEW OF THE WAEZEEN PROGRAMME

The International Training Programme is a joint endeavour of The Institute of Ismaili Studies, and the Ismaili Tariqah and Religious Education Boards worldwide. The Department of Community Relations at the IIS is responsible for developing the curriculum for this programme, as well as its implementation and subsequent continuing education initiatives. This ongoing objective to train waezeen assists ITREBs internationally in fulfilling their mandate to facilitate the religious formation of the Jamat. Under the aegis of the IIS, the waezeen training programme has completed two cycles between 2013 and 2016, training 57 waezeen globally. The third cycle is proposed to commence in 2020. The programme aims

to develop a cadre of volunteer waezeen to serve ITREBs. After successfully completing the programme, candidates will be eligible to be certified by their sponsoring ITREB to deliver waez.

*This opportunity has allowed me to grow on so many levels, both personally and spiritually. It has broadened my horizons and allowed me to connect with Jamati members across the globe. The ITP experience has shaped who I have become as a person, and I am so glad I had the honour to be a part of something so transformational!*

**Elyshah H Ibrahim, Clinical Radiation Oncology Physicist, USA, ITP Cycle 1, 2013-2014**

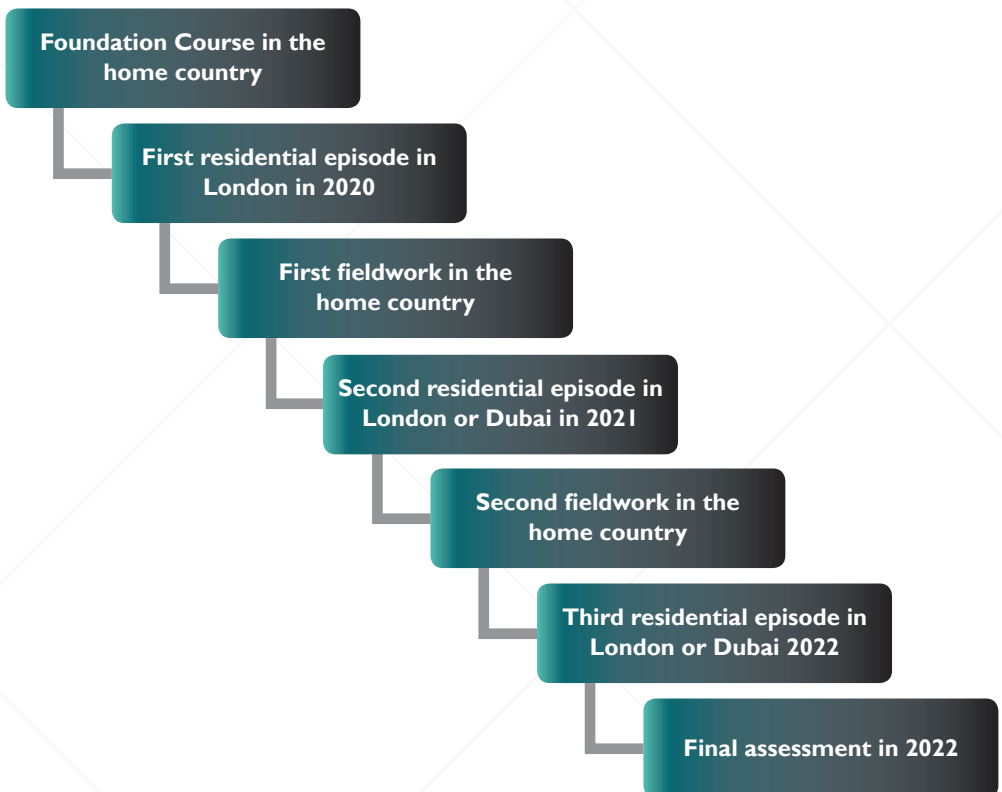


# LEARNING TRAJECTORY FOR 2020 – 2022 CYCLE

The ITP cycle and learning trajectory consists of the following stages. The selection of every cohort is preceded by a Foundation Course, which is offered through participating ITREBs locally. This self-study course is offered about six months before the first residential episode at the IIS. The structure of the waezeen training programme comprises three residential episodes of two weeks each. The residential episodes are separated by two inter-episodic periods of

eleven-months each, for local field work and assignments on topics of relevance to individual participants. The inter-episodic segment also includes components of practical training in the field.

The diagram below identifies the seven stages of the learning trajectory of the 2020-2022 programme cycle:



# FOUNDATION COURSE

## Overview

In order to ensure that each candidate who applies has the requisite study skills and an adequate familiarity with foundational knowledge about Islam and Muslim societies, all applicants are provided with a preparatory Foundation Course.

## Objectives of the Foundation Course

The Foundation Course serves as a primer to acquaint participants with an introductory understanding of Islam and the Ismaili Tariqah. It also familiarises them with the basic concepts and vocabulary they will encounter in the training programme.

The course assessment provides the ITP selection panel with an initial idea of the applicant's general comprehension, critical thinking and writing skills. Applicants are also assessed on their capacity to understand the issues of the day and whether they have the requisite attitudes and outlooks to deliver the types of waezs germane to the needs of the Jamat today.

## Structure of the Foundation Course

The Foundation Course is a self-study, distance-learning, component of the programme. The course materials are prepared centrally and provided to ITREBs for implementation. To qualify for the next step in the selection process, it is mandatory that the participants undertake this preparatory course and submit their completed assignments by the deadline to the IIS. This course is structured around five themes, with approximately 250 pages of reading materials, consisting of articles, accompanied by relevant exercises for analysis and reflection, on the following themes:

- ▶ The Qur'an al-Sharif
- ▶ Ismaili Imamat
- ▶ History and historical thinking
- ▶ Communities of interpretation in Islam
- ▶ The Muslim world: Islam and modernity

Applicants are expected to spend a reasonable amount of time in preparatory reading and internalising the issues raised by the authors.







The readings are followed by some questions that will assist candidates to analyse and revisit some of the key ideas that are part of the articles.

### **Assignments and assessment of candidates**

At the end of the Foundation Course, participants will be required to complete assignments which will be marked centrally. The outcome of the assignment will determine the candidates' eligibility for the next stage of the selection process. Those who advance to the next stage will be interviewed by the Assessment Team before a final decision is made. The assignments and the interview would enable the panel to assess the applicant's:

- ▶ Level of familiarity with concepts, histories, cultures and practices of Muslims
- ▶ Comprehension and critical thinking skills
- ▶ Understanding of the issues of the day and the requisite skills to grapple with them

Following the interview process, successful candidates will be invited to London, to participate in the first residential episode for two weeks in August 2020.

# RESIDENTIAL EPISODES AND FIELDWORK

## Overview

The overall aim of the residential episodes is to educate participants in the faith, histories, traditions and cultures of Muslims with a particular reference to the Shi'a Islam and its Ismaili Tariqah. The episodes also aim to ensure that the participants gain a balanced knowledge of the broader dimensions of Islam. The learning episodes adopt a student-centred approach and comprise interactive presentations, discussions, workshops and case studies relevant to the Ismaili Jamat's religious formation. The inter-episodic fieldwork gives participants an opportunity to apply their knowledge in their local contexts.

ITP opened up my mind to the Muslim world by guiding me in a journey from the past to the present. This journey went through various stations with exciting historical events that opened up the horizon of my thinking. Many of my questions got answered. Do not hesitate to participate in this exciting journey.

**Abeer Watfa, Executive Secretary, ITREB Syria,  
Salamiyah, Syria, ITP Cycle 2, 2015-2016**

## Approaches to the content and methodology

The curriculum for the programme is inspired by various curricular materials developed at the IIS over the years. To better address the needs of the global *ijamat*, particular attention has been



paid to matters of relevance to the various constituencies therein. The curriculum also takes into account the experiences of earlier waezeen training courses. The curriculum draws on modern educational and social science principles, incorporating new perspectives of learning about Islam as a faith, as an ethic, as a way of life, and as a global civilisation in the broader context of world history and contemporary times.

The curriculum content is divided between the residential episodes and the fieldwork in a balanced and integrated way, in order to maintain continuity and consistency in the messages conveyed to the participants throughout the programme. The residential episodes involve team teaching that include a primary presenter supported by mentors who are all graduates of previous IWTP/ITP cycles and of other IIS programmes.





The work of the waezeen encompasses a range of supplementary activities, including public speaking and basic counselling. As such, training in key skills such as knowledge management and organisation, waez preparation and presentation skills, interpersonal skills, and managing issues of counselling and referral, is also included as part of the curriculum. Lifelong learning is another area that is essential for the continuous development of waezeen. The educational process aims to address the following competencies amongst the participants:

- ▶ A strong grounding in general knowledge about Islam and Muslim societies, past and present, including familiarity with classical and modern Muslim discourse on themes of contemporary relevance;
- ▶ A nuanced appreciation of the beliefs, practices and spiritual underpinnings of the Ismaili *tariqah* in contemporary times. This understanding is intended to extend to the Jamat when the participants present their waezs;



- Capacity to access the Qur'an, *hadith* and teachings of the Imams as well as devotional literature and religious poetry, such as *ginans* and *qasidas*, and other literary resources in the course of their duties;
- Intellectual skills to internalise the information and capacity to give the content an expression that is relevant to the Jamat in the present time and context.

*The ITP experience was unforgettable and genuinely life changing. ... It stretched my imagination and desire to learn more about our faith but also to think deeply on how to put it into practice and transform faith into action. ITP enabled me to serve in so many ways than just delivering waezs. I have been able to support other institutions and local Jamats in establishing and growing their religious education programmes as well as individual Jamati members with their personal questions and struggles.*

**Fahim Dhalla, Mechanical Engineer, Switzerland, ITP Cycle 1, 2013-2014**

## Philosophical principles of the curriculum

**A humanistic, civilisational, and normative approach:** The curriculum for the waezeen training seeks to develop in participants, perspectives on Islam that engage with religion, ethics, thought and culture in Muslim societies within a broad intellectual framework. It addresses issues that are of critical significance to individuals, communities and societies today. The curriculum approaches the study of Islam in general, and the Ismaili tradition specifically, from humanistic, civilisational, and normative perspectives. These aspects are approached from historical and comparative viewpoints as they evolved in general Muslim and Ismaili history. The training is intended to cultivate in waezeen a broad-minded outlook, that enables them to be grounded in their own Ismaili tradition while also being educated about the wider historical and cultural contexts in which this tradition has been expressed.





**Engaging with diversity:** Nurturing a pluralistic mind-set, participants progress through the selected modules, and become acquainted with the rich diversity of expressions in Islam – religious, cultural and material – that have manifested themselves in Muslim societies. They learn about the historical interpretations of Islam that led to the development of the key traditions, Shi'a and Sunni, as well as common issues, responses and perspectives that have cut across these traditional divisions. The historical context provides important material for the humanistic, civilisational and normative study of Islam in the curriculum. Waezeen are encouraged to analyse the contemporary situation with a view to reflecting on the social and ethical challenges and opportunities that will arise in the emerging future.

**A multi-disciplinary enquiry:** The thematic areas identified for the waezeen curriculum are approached from the Ismaili normative perspective, as well as through the application of a range of disciplines in the human and social sciences. The curriculum therefore seeks to bridge areas that link the religious component with social, scientific, literary, and philosophical perspectives. Within this outlook, religion is viewed as manifesting itself in human history and societies in its multi-faceted connections with other dimensions of human life. Equally, religion is not reduced to being simply a social manifestation, but waezeen are progressively led to reflect on the place of the sacred in human culture. Bridging the religious and the secular, waezeen are guided to explore the links that might not otherwise emerge from divided instruction. This approach seeks to be true to



the complex world in which the Ismaili Jamat finds itself, where no neat divisions exist between different spheres of human experiences.

## Modules taught

### Modules on Islamic Studies

- ▶ Perspectives on Muslim history and historical thinking
- ▶ The Qur'an and its interpretations
- ▶ Conceptions of authority in Muslim contexts
- ▶ Faith and practice in Muslim traditions

- ▶ Intellectual traditions in Muslim contexts
- ▶ Faith and culture in Muslim contexts
- ▶ Mystical traditions in Islam
- ▶ The contemporary Muslim world

### Modules on Adult Learning

- ▶ Adult Learning: Modes and theories
- ▶ Critical reading, thinking and writing
- ▶ Philosophical thinking



## Modules on Skills Development

- ▶ Waez preparation
- ▶ Public speaking and waez delivery
- ▶ Basic counselling and referral of life issues

*ITP has been an invaluable and unparalleled learning expedition for me. The unique blend of coursework, lectures, workshops, practicums and fun activities alongside the highly qualified faculty provided an atmosphere of abundant learning, much like the experience of Muslims of the past who spent time in learning at institutions in Cordoba and Cairo. The faculty and mentors kept a close eye on each and every student and helped us grow while inviting questions and explorations. And the most interesting aspect of this journey was that I was able to engage with the intellectuals from all over the world.*

**Karim Amin Muhammad, Software Engineer,  
Pakistan, ITP Cycle I, 2013-2014**

## Balance between theory and practice

The participants will spend considerable time on learning skills of waez preparation and its delivery. They learn how to prepare frameworks, critically review them and prepare scripts. In groups, the participants also deliver waezs and learn the art of critiquing waezs of their peers in order to gain skills of self-evaluation.

## Long term learning objectives

Intellectual inquiry on an ongoing basis is critical for waezeen in order to keep up with

new knowledge. At every level of the course, participants are introduced to appropriate reading materials, relevant audio-visual resources, and intellectual tools that would be essential for their long-term intellectual growth.

Over the course of their stay in London, participants are also encouraged to visit museums, attend plays, and partake in the myriad cultural opportunities afforded by this unique location.

## Faculty and guest lectures

The programme is taught by a well-qualified faculty comprising scholars from The Institute of Ismaili Studies, the Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisation (ISMC), and from other academic institutions. Some of the faculty who taught during previous cycles include: Dr Aziz Esmail, Dr Shainool Jiwa, Dr Shiraz Kabani, Dr Tazim Kassam, Professor Hanna Kassis, Dr Farouk Mitha, Professor Azim Nanji, Dr Farid Panjwani, Dr Reza Shah Kazemi, and Dr Farouk Topan.

*ITP not only offers a great platform of learning from leading scholars in the field, but also provides an environment of experiencing the real taste of diversity and the spirit of pluralism within the community. The programme is meant to deconstruct rigid approaches and expose one to a lifelong learning experience.*

**Ferdous Farouk Amiry, Director of Human  
Resources, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs,  
Afghanistan, ITP Cycle I, 2013-2014**





# APPLICATION PROCEDURES

- ▶ Please apply online by clicking <https://iis.ac.uk/events/international-training-programme>
- ▶ If you are unable to apply online, you may request a paper application form from your ITREB or by sending an email to [itp@iis.ac.uk](mailto:itp@iis.ac.uk)
- ▶ The deadline for online applications is Sunday, 29 December, 2019. Should you choose to apply with a paper application form, please submit your completed application form to your ITREB representative by the deadline of Sunday, 29 December 2019
- ▶ For further information, please contact your local ITREB representative or write to: [itp@iis.ac.uk](mailto:itp@iis.ac.uk)



# EXPECTED PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS



The training programme is open to members of the Jamat who are interested in the vocation of waezeen, with the following eligibility criteria:

- ▶ An undergraduate degree (e.g., BA, BSc, BCom, etc.) or equivalent from a recognised university or college
- ▶ Proficiency in the English language
- ▶ Willingness to commit to at least three years of service through ITREB after successful completion of the training
- ▶ Capacity to devote time to learning, including through attendance at residential episodes and working on assignments
- ▶ Sponsorship by ITREB of their home country

# EXPECTATIONS

While the programme intends to provide every possible opportunity for learning, each participant is expected to:

## In regard to their learning

- ▶ Strive to learn from each session, understand and internalise the main ideas involved, and exert extra effort to follow up the key messages with additional self-study;
- ▶ Be actively engaged in discussions with classmates and be responsive to the faculty's call for reflections on pertinent topics;
- ▶ Follow up and complete each assignment on time with thoroughness and attention.

## In regard to their personal qualities:

- ▶ Keep attendance to 100% (except for emergency situations);
- ▶ Respect programme guidelines and values which include striving for excellence, commitment to ongoing learning, and exemplifying moral values;

- ▶ Take maximum benefit from this unique learning opportunity and work hard to achieve the highest standards;
- ▶ Be ready to assist others in their learning;
- ▶ Respect and be patient with the faculty, mentors, peers and participants who come from diverse backgrounds, and others associated with the programme;
- ▶ Be ready to share their knowledge and expertise with the community and aspire for lifelong service to the Jamat.

*ITP for me has been a phenomenal experience. Being exposed to world-class faculty and coming into contact with a global and diverse group of participants was just the icing on the cake. This experience has truly opened my eyes to a multitude of perspectives and has fine-tuned my critical thinking skills. It has also created many wonderful opportunities to serve, where the gaining is so much more than the giving.*

**Faisal Ali, Architect, United Kingdom,  
ITP Cycle I, 2013-2014**

# CALENDAR AND USEFUL DATES

**29th December 2019**

Deadline for the application

**6th January to 2nd March 2020**

Foundation Course reading period

**2nd March 2020**

Foundation Course assignments submission

**31st March to 30th April 2020**

Candidate interviews

**15th May 2020**

Confirmation of candidates

**15th May to 10th August 2020**

Pre-episodic preparation time

**10th to 25th August 2020**

First residential episode

**September 2020 to August 2021**

First inter-episodic fieldwork

**August 2021**

Second residential episode

**September 2021 to August 2022**

Second inter-episodic fieldwork

**August 2022**

Third residential episode

**August 2022**

Final assessment

**December 2022**

Graduation

# CONTACT DETAILS



**International Training Programme for Waezeen:**

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