

SECONDARY

TEACHER

EDUCATION

PROGRAMME



PROSPECTUS 2026

STEP

Tomorrow's Teachers



The Institute of Ismaili Studies

Message from the Director of IIS

For almost 50 years, The Institute of Ismaili Studies has made significant strides in fostering and promoting scholarship on Muslim societies and cultures. Our mission is to preserve and study the intellectual and literary heritage of those traditions, with a focus on both the contemporary and the historical.



The Institute of Ismaili Studies



Our students contribute towards the extension of a living faith tradition and help to shape and deliver on our mission.

IIS offers two postgraduate programmes: the **Secondary Teacher Education Programme (STEP)** and the **Graduate Programme in Islamic Studies (GPISH)**.

STEP welcomes students who will teach the interdisciplinary Secondary Curriculum, also developed by IIS, to young Ismaili students around the world. It is delivered in close collaboration with SOAS University of London, and culminates in a Master's degree (MA) awarded by SOAS.

The MA is designed to provide an in-depth study of Islam and Ismaili heritage within the broader dimensions of Muslim societies and civilisations. It offers a coherent teacher education programme that supports participants to become skilled classroom practitioners.

Our students gain knowledge and confidence that they take with them into the classroom and their work with young people. I am sure you will find the programme dynamic and rewarding, and I look forward to welcoming you to London and IIS.

PROFESSOR

Zayn Kassam

Director

The Institute of Ismaili Studies



*Message from the Director of SOAS
University of London*

SOAS University of London is the only higher education institution in Europe specialising in the study of Asia, Africa and the Near and Middle East.

With our knowledge of and expertise in our specialist regions, we are uniquely placed to inform and shape current thinking about the economic, political, cultural, security and religious challenges facing our world.

We are delighted that our long relationship with The Institute of Ismaili Studies (IIS) has led to a formal validation partnership. SOAS has similar aims. We both want to inspire our students to influence and shape the world in which we live. The STEP programme is of the highest standard and we are pleased to be able to award a SOAS degree to those who complete it successfully.

PROFESSOR

Adam Habib

Director
SOAS University of London



STEP

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A transformative three-year teacher-education journey that supports committed individuals in developing as holistic educators, mentors and emerging educational leaders equipped to inspire young people and contribute meaningfully within their communities across diverse contexts.

STEP is a unique three-year, fully funded teacher-education programme delivered in partnership with SOAS University of London.

The programme is designed to prepare aspiring educators to teach within the Ismaili Religious Education Centres (RECs) worldwide. It offers an intellectually meaningful and integrated pathway that blends: rigorous academic study, immersive, practice-based teacher training, global exposure, including a purposeful year of contextual immersion in home contexts.

STEP supports its student teachers in developing the knowledge, skills, and confidence needed to grow and contribute meaningfully as secondary-level educators in diverse contexts and to serve the needs of Ismaili communities worldwide.

STEP culminates in a Level 7 postgraduate degree awarded by SOAS University of London:

The Master of Arts (MA) in Muslim Societies and Civilisations (with Year Abroad)

This bespoke MA is designed and delivered by The Institute of Ismaili Studies and features a structured second-year, home-context placement. The programme offers a single, integrated pathway that brings together the study of Ismaili traditions within the broader context of Muslim societies and civilisations, and education theories and teacher training practice.

It is tailored to the needs of Secondary educators, the Ismaili Tariqah and Religious Education Boards (ITREBs) that employ them, and the communities they serve. STEP encourages curiosity, reflective practice, and lifelong learning, enabling graduates to continue developing as educators throughout their careers.

The MA supports student teachers in developing:

- In-depth subject knowledge that explores Ismaili traditions within the broader mosaic of Muslim civilisations across time and geographies
- Critical engagement with scholarship, enabling clear, analytical interpretation and communication of complex ideas
- Understanding of educational theories and contemporary discourses relating to curriculum, pedagogy, identity, pluralism, and the role of education in Muslim contexts
- Insight into the philosophical and pedagogical foundations of the IIS Secondary Curriculum
- Integrated professional skills that link academic study with reflective practice and classroom experience
- Context-sensitive approaches to teaching and learning across diverse communities.

Alongside academic study, the programme includes well-supported teaching placements, enabling student teachers to apply their learning in real classrooms and educational environments.



STEP nurtures reflective thinking, builds confidence in teaching, and inspires a commitment to ongoing professional growth, encouraging curiosity and lifelong learning.

What Makes STEP Distinctive

Integrated Learning, Immersive Practice, Global and Contextual Readiness



World-class learning, rigour, and diversity

STEP offers a world-class educational immersion enriched by the diverse perspectives, traditions, and experiences students and faculty bring to the classroom. As an IIS flagship programme validated by SOAS, which is renowned for excellence in Islamic Studies, the humanities, and the social sciences, STEP provides a rigorous environment for academic and professional growth.

Students develop:

- Broadened outlook
- Academic depth through sustained, rigorous study
- Critical engagement with diverse scholarly perspectives
- Nuanced understanding of Muslim societies and civilisations, with special reference to Ismaili traditions

What Makes STEP Distinctive

Integrated Learning, Immersive Practice, Global and Contextual Readiness



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An integrated academic and professional pathway

STEP develops the capacity to:

- ▶ Develop integrated, multidisciplinary expertise across Islam and Muslim societies, including Ismaili traditions
- ▶ Build strong pedagogical content knowledge that blends disciplinary depth with effective teaching practice
- ▶ Teach the IIS Secondary Curriculum with confidence through robust curriculum competence and contextual awareness
- ▶ Context-responsive teaching grounded in learners' lived traditions, realities, and contextual sensitivities

What Makes STEP Distinctive

Integrated Learning, Immersive Practice, Global and Contextual Readiness



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A structured teaching practice journey, including a year abroad

A defining feature of STEP is its sustained, immersive professional experience, which significantly enhances graduates' readiness to teach in diverse educational environments.

The pathway includes:

- ▶ Full year of supported placements in UK RECs
- ▶ A second year of placement in student teachers' home contexts
- ▶ A third year focused on alternative modes of delivery (camps, episodic teaching, online/hybrid formats, and asynchronous environments)

This structured progression enables student teachers to apply theory to practice, build confidence in real classrooms, and develop contextual sensitivity while strengthening the ability to teach effectively across varied cultural and educational environments.

What Makes STEP Distinctive

Integrated Learning, Immersive Practice, Global and Contextual Readiness



Mentorship that builds confidence and professional identity

STEP's mentorship model is collaborative, developmental, and empowering, nurturing reflective practitioners committed to excellence and able to navigate diverse educational settings.

It provides:

- Guided practice alongside experienced REC educators
- Co-creation of learning experiences for secondary learners
- Structured feedback cycles
- Modelling of effective, context-sensitive pedagogy
- A supported journey toward self-directed, confident teaching



A fully funded scholarship

STEP removes financial barriers so that student-teachers can focus entirely on their growth.

The scholarship covers:

- Tuition fees
- Accommodation
- A living allowance

Should you apply for STEP?

If you are *new* to teaching

STEP will build on the teaching-related experiences you already bring, whether from academic, volunteer or professional settings. It offers in-depth subject knowledge, builds strong pedagogical foundations, and inculcates the practical skills required to teach effectively. Working closely with experienced faculty members at IIS and with classmates who bring rich practical insights from varied global contexts can be highly stimulating and supportive.

If you are an *experienced* teacher

As an experienced teacher, STEP will provide you with a unique and exciting pathway to deepen and broaden your professional expertise. You will explore principles of learning within and beyond the classroom, strengthening your capacity for leadership-focused roles later in your career.

You will re-engage with contemporary issues in education, enhance your understanding of student learning, whilst contributing to the overall development and revitalisation of religious education and school systems.

The MA further enriches your journey by offering rigorous engagement with the historical and contemporary dimensions of Islam and the Ismaili tariqah (path). Through modules grounded in the humanities and social sciences within an integrated approach where subject knowledge, educational theory, and teaching practice come together, you will strengthen your skills as an educator.



*STEP graduates
have gone on to:*

- ▶ Pursue leadership roles in education
- ▶ Specialise in specific education-related areas such counselling or educational research
- ▶ Serve as teacher-trainers for primary-level educators
- ▶ Work in the further development of STEP at IIS or its sister institutions, including the Aga Khan Schools
- ▶ Conduct research in education or related fields.

Employability and Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

STEP is designed for practising and prospective teachers committed to teaching the IIS Secondary Curriculum at Ismaili Religious Education Centres. Upon successfully completing the academic programme in London, STEP graduates are guaranteed a minimum of four years of employment with their home Ismaili Tariqah and Religious Education Boards (ITREB), unless agreed otherwise. Because employment is secured before studies begin, student-teachers can focus fully on their learning and preparation for a smooth transition into a stable professional role.

The Institute continues to support STEP-trained educators well beyond their time in London. A detailed multi-pronged approach to Continuing Professional Development (CPD) informs the continual upskilling of these Secondary educators, supporting their growth and development that includes:

- ▶ Ongoing individualised mentorship including IIS-facilitated CPDs
- ▶ Professional Learning Communities
- ▶ Access to online and physical resources

Once graduates have fulfilled their contract with their ITREB, they are eligible for opportunities such as:

- ▶ Applying for funding for research
- ▶ Secondment to other countries

Progression opportunities

For those interested in deepening their academic journeys, IIS offers a limited number of doctoral scholarships for research in areas central to Islamic Studies within The Institute's mission. Those include areas such as Ismaili Studies, wider Shi'i Studies, Qur'anic Studies, Islamic Ethics, Education and Manuscript Studies.

In addition, scholarships are also open to any area in which Islam and Muslims can be analysed through its historical, theological, philosophical, legal, educational, ritual, or cultural dimensions. STEP graduates are eligible to apply for the doctoral scholarship once they have completed their ITREB contract, opening pathways to academic leadership and scholarly contribution.





11 reasons to join STEP

1. Engage yourself in the academic study of Muslim societies and civilisations, with special reference to Ismaili traditions.
2. Prepare for a meaningful teaching career, blending theory and practice.
3. Learn collaboratively and teach with purpose, developing reflective practice and real educational impact.
4. Become a change agent in education, ready to lead and innovate.
5. Study with diverse, cross-disciplinary faculty and peers from across the world.
6. Immerse yourself in London, one of the world's most diverse and inspiring cities.
7. Broaden your horizons through flexible electives and auditing options.
8. Conduct action research in real educational settings.
9. Visit one of the Muslim contexts as part of an educational field visit.*
10. Earn an innovative integrated MA, gaining a world-class qualification from SOAS.
11. Enter a clear professional pathway supported by ongoing development and a global alumni network.

* Students are responsible for obtaining their visas for all international excursions. Your educational experience and well-being remain our top priorities; therefore, if unforeseen global travel restrictions arise, alternative arrangements will be provided in the UK or online.



“STEP is not just a programme; it is a journey — a journey that becomes a part of who you are. It is a journey of self-discovery, carefully curated to nurture confidence, personal growth, and professional development. Throughout this journey, I have discovered new parts of myself, challenged my own limits, and grown in ways I never imagined.”

Shejan Virani

C18, INDIA



MA in Muslim Societies and Civilisations (with Year Abroad)

The MA in Muslim Societies and Civilisations offers students a systematic, critically engaged multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary exploration of Muslim histories and cultures, including Ismaili traditions, educational discourses and teacher training within an integrated learning experience.

Through this approach, the Programme provides the academic depth, professional formation, and contextual awareness that support student-teachers in growing as holistic, reflective, and community-minded educators.

The MA enables learners to

1. Develop a systematic, critical, multidisciplinary understanding of Muslim societies and civilisations, with particular attention to Shi'i, including Ismaili, traditions explored through societal, civilisational and humanistic approaches, among others.
2. Build the capacity to engage rigorously with scholarship and research across Islamic Studies, Education, and cognate fields, using appropriate methodologies and communicating your insights with clarity and academic integrity.
3. Deepen your understanding of the IIS Secondary Curriculum, including its philosophical foundations, content, and pedagogical aims, and situate it within diverse educational, cultural and global contexts.
4. Develop the pedagogical competencies needed to deliver the IIS Secondary Curriculum with confidence, adaptability, inclusivity, and contextual awareness across varied learning environments.
5. Strengthen the ability to critically assess and apply educational theories to practice, drawing on reflective practice, critical pedagogy, and learner-centred approaches that support transformative and ethical teaching.
6. Foster your awareness and critical evaluation of current issues, global educational trends and developments affecting Muslim, including Ismaili, learners and communities, enabling you to respond with creativity, collaboration, and solution-focused thinking.
7. Cultivate critical and ethical awareness, empathy, leadership, and professional responsibility, enabling you to contribute meaningfully within community and educational settings while upholding principles of equity, inclusion, diversity, and pluralism.

Upon successful completion of the MA, student-teachers develop a series of subject-specific knowledge, intellectual skills, and practical and transferable skills grounded in their academic and professional learning.



The MA curriculum is comprised of the following modules

Total 300 credits

YEAR 1

Teaching and Learning I:
Theory and Practice

Core, 30 credits

The Emergence of Muslim
Societies and Civilisations
in the Mediterranean and
West Asia, 7th-10th Centuries

Core, 15 credits

Education, Globalisation,
Migration, and Social
Transformation

Core, 15 credits

Muslim Societies Through
Time and Space, 1000-1500

Core, 15 credits

The Qur'an and Its Interpretations

Core, 15 credits

Muslim Societies Through
Time and Space, 1500-1850

Core, 15 credits

Faith, Practice, and Living
Muslim Traditions

Core, 15 credits

YEAR 2

Teaching and Learning II:
Leading Learning in
Community-Based Settings

Core, 30 credits

YEAR 3

Teaching and Learning III:
Transitioning to Professional
Practice: Teacher as Community
Educator and Lifelong Learner

Core, 30 credits

Traditions of Enquiry

Core, 15 credits

Transformations in Muslim
and Global Contexts, 1850
to the Present

Core, 15 credits

Aesthetic Expressions in Muslim
Societies (with Field Trip Abroad)

Core, 15 credits

Literature for Educators

Core, 15 credits

Ismaili Texts in Focus

Elective, 15 credits

Mystical and Messianic
Expressions in Muslim Traditions

Elective, 15 credits

The Lived Qur'an

Elective, 15 credits

Muslim Heritage and
Cultural Memory

Elective, 15 credits

Being Inclusive

Elective, 15 credits

MA Dissertation

60 credits



Teaching Practice

Teaching practice is central to the programme's approach to teacher development and provides students with an opportunity to develop and apply their teaching and reflective skills within the classroom.

The integrated MA programme comprises 300 credits, primarily distributed across the first and third academic years. The second year is dedicated to teaching practice in students' home contexts, where they work directly with learners in their communities. While immersed in these field-based experiences, students continue their academic progression through selected online modules that support ongoing learning, MA research, and the integration of theory with classroom practice.

A core thread running across all three years of the programme is the sequence of Teaching and Learning modules, which guide student -teachers from foundational teacher development to advanced professional practice. These modules run alongside all other academic modules, ensuring that subject knowledge and pedagogical growth remain fully integrated throughout the degree. Each module considers the IIS Secondary Curriculum, strengthening the connection between academic study and meaningful classroom application.

- **In the first year**, students begin developing as reflective teacher-educators within the UK context, supported by REC-based practicum experiences.
- **In the second year**, students deepen their development through field-based teaching practice in their home contexts, applying their skills within their own community settings while engaging in practitioner inquiry and MA research.
- **In the final year**, students grow into curriculum authors and adaptive educators, exploring alternative delivery models and IIS SC approaches.

Together, the Teaching and Learning modules form a coherent, practice-embedded professional formation, supported by UK and home-context practicums and enriched by lesson-planning tutoring, mentorship, observations, peer learning, modelling of practice, and Professional Learning Communities (PLCs).

Throughout the programme, student-teachers compile a Portfolio of Work documenting their development as teachers and reflective practitioners. This professional record captures their teaching experiences across the UK and home-context placements and is assessed as part of the Teaching and Learning modules.

This integrated approach ensures that STEP student -teachers build confidence, develop versatility, and gain readiness to thrive as educators across diverse educational contexts.



Meet our Faculty

Our faculty comprises scholars, teacher educators, and curriculum writers who contribute to innovative research in their respective fields. Teaching and learning on the programme are enriched by both core IIS faculty and visiting scholars from leading international academic institutions. For a complete list of our faculty members, please visit the IIS website.

Dr Fayaz Alibhai

Muslim ethics; philosophy of religion; contemporary issues in Islamic thought.

Dr Omar Ali-De-Unzaga

Qur'an; Qur'anic exegesis; tafsīr.

Dr Hasan Al-Khooee

Arabic public oratory in the early Muslim period.

Dr Yahia Baiza

Education in Muslim contexts; history and politics of modern Afghanistan; comparative and international education.

Dr Karen Bauer

Qur'an and its interpretive tradition (tafsīr); gender in Islamic history and thought; emotions and emotional rhetoric in Islamic history.

Dr David Bennett

Islamic theology; Arabic philosophy; philosophy of mind; history of religions.

Dr Stephen Burge

Hadith studies; hermeneutics; Qur'anic exegesis; literary theory.

Dr Alessandro Cancian:

Shi'i and Ismaili thought; Qur'anic exegesis; modern and contemporary Islamic intellectual history.

Dr Maria De Cillis

Islamic philosophy; Shi'i studies; Islamic theology.

Dr Dagikhudo Dagiev

Regime transitions in Central Asia; democratisation; nationalism and Islam; Shi'i and Ismaili studies.

Dr Aliyyah Dattoo

Anthropology of education; youth, identity, and belonging; Muslim educational contexts.

Dr Zamira Dildorbekova

Islam in Central Asia; Ismaili studies; curriculum development; research methods.

Dr Nadia Eboo Jamal

Islamic studies; Persian history and culture during the Mongol period.

Dr Hakim Elnazarov

Central Asian studies; history; culture; religious education; endangered languages; intellectual traditions

Dr Nausheen Hoosein

Islamic art and architecture; visual and material culture of Al-Andalus (Islamic Iberia); curriculum development; Teacher Education.

Mr Faheem Hussain

Sensory history; state policy and history textbooks; adolescent moral development.

Ms Sunita Irfan

Teacher education; professional practice; mentoring; classroom-based pedagogies.

Dr Karim Javan

Modern Muslim intellectual thought; Muslim literature and literary traditions; poetic expressions of religion and culture.

Dr Shainool Jiwa

Ismaili history and thought; Fatimid studies.

Ms Heena Jiwani

Religious education; mentorship; curriculum implementation; learner-centred pedagogies.

Dr Toby Mayer

Muslim philosophy; esoteric scriptural exegesis; mysticism; Qur'anic hermeneutics.

Dr Orkhan Mir-Kasimov

Shi'i Islam; Islamic mysticism; messianism.

Dr Gurdofarid Miskinzoda

Shi'i Islam; early Islam; Muslim historical and literary traditions.

Dr Daryoush Mohammad Poor

Shi'i intellectual history; Ismaili philosophy; contemporary political theory.

Dr Wafi Momin

Islam and religious traditions of South Asia; Ismaili history and thought; literary and manuscript cultures; Muslim civilisation.

Dr Nourmamadcho Nourmamadchoev

Persian and Central Asian Ismaili manuscript traditions; textual studies; intellectual history.

Dr Aslisho Qurboniev

Knowledge transmission in Arabic and Persian; Ismaili manuscript traditions; Fatimids; Islamic West and East.

Dr Maryam Rezaee

Shi'i studies; women and development; cultural studies; gender; social policy; research methods.

Mr Riaz Rhemtulla

Teacher education; religious education; curriculum development and implementation.

Dr Amier Saidulla

Islam in China; Ismaili communities of Xinjiang; histories and cultures of Chinese Muslim societies.

Ms Reeshma Akbarally Shah

Educational practice; curriculum development; assessment for learning; inclusive pedagogies.

Ms Qudsia Shah

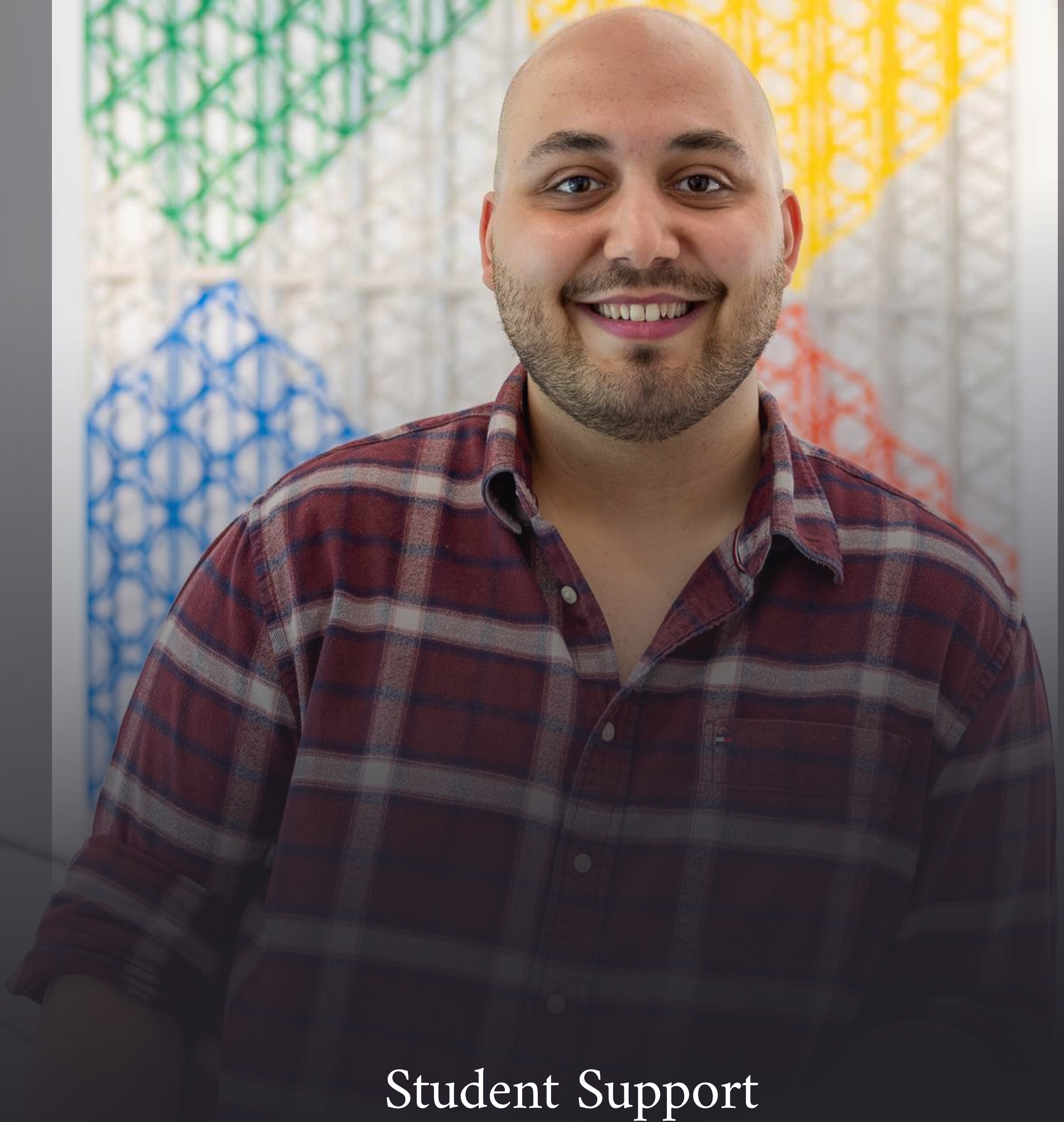
Ismailis of Northern Pakistan; environmental studies and climate change; musical and cultural expressions.

Dr Roy Wilson

Applied language studies; international English language teaching; academic literacy.

Ms Maha Yaziji

Ismaili traditions in Syria; faith and practice; applied linguistics and language-related pedagogy.



Student Support

Throughout their time at IIS, students are provided with support for their academic, personal and professional development and to help them get the best out of their experience.

Pre-sessional and In-sessional Academic Skills Support

Some pre- and in-sessional academic skills sessions will be timetabled for all students during the Induction period at IIS. These sessions deepen students' understanding of the academic conventions of postgraduate study and strengthen key skills ahead of their first assignments. Additional support may be offered by the Preparatory Programmes and Preparatory Programmes and Academic Skills Team as needed or upon request.

In-house Support

In-house support includes one-to-one sessions with individual Academic Advisers, module leaders, lecturers and the Preparatory Programmes and Academic Skills Team at IIS. All students are allocated an Academic Adviser at IIS, who is available to provide constructive guidance and support in academic and personal development across the programme of study, supporting them on their journey to become professional teachers. Academic Advisers also review students' wider academic progress.

Students who need additional support will be able to meet regularly with the IIS's Preparatory Programmes and Academic Skills Team, who will work with students to identify the type of support they need. This support covers academic skills and some language-related needs. Students may request academic skills classes or workshops, or one-to-one tutorials and consultations, in which a team member will provide guidance on their academic work. Students may also email assignments for feedback on their writing. This service is available to all students throughout their studies at IIS, subject to availability.

Conference Fund

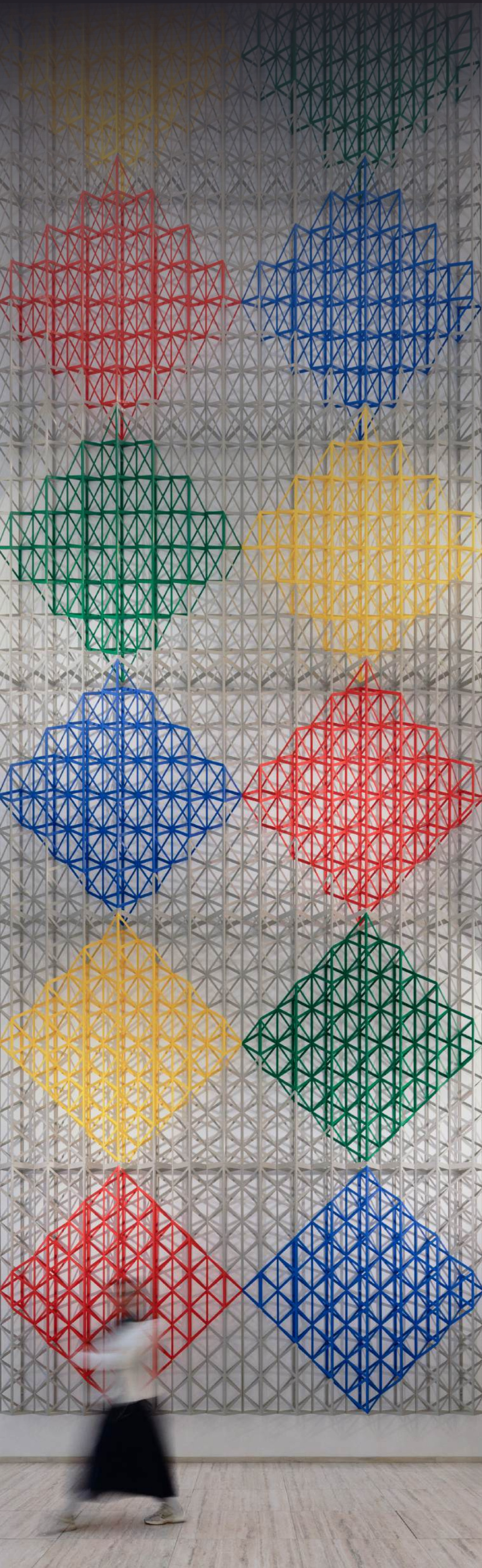
To support students' academic growth and development, they are actively encouraged to participate in conferences, which the Department aims to facilitate through the dedicated Student Conference Fund.

IT Facilities and Support

Students are provided with facilities that support both Mac and PC equipment, free internet access, and high-quality printing and photocopying facilities. They receive an IIS email address and Office 365, which enables them to download MS Office on up to five devices for free, and they can also take out a loan to purchase IT equipment.

IIS Student Services

The Student Services team oversees non-academic matters across the entire student journey, from recruitment through to programme completion. The areas covered by Student Services include admissions, immigration, accommodation, student welfare, travel, and graduation. Student Services also organises arrival and orientation activities, field trips, and runs a programme of exciting social and wellbeing events throughout the year. The dedicated Student Services team operate an open-door policy and is on hand to offer advice, guidance, and support to help students make the most of their student life in London.



Disability Support

Students with disabilities will be supported in achieving equality of opportunity to engage in their studies. We can provide advice and guidance for all students with disabilities. Students are encouraged to discuss their needs with Student Services and the Preparatory Programmes and Academic Skills Team prior to arrival to ensure their needs are recognised and accounted for; all discussions are in complete confidence. If you identify as having additional needs, please email inclusivelearning@iis.ac.uk to arrange a discussion about the support available to you.

Counselling Services

IIS has a service agreement with Only Connect 2, a private counselling service, specialising in student well-being. Students have access to professional, experienced counsellors who are accustomed to working with people from diverse backgrounds and cultures. Students may discuss anything that is bothering them in confidence, from an inability to study, homesickness, anxiety, depression, to relationship problems and bereavement.

IIS also now offers the opportunity to receive counselling with a therapist in your native language. IIS will reimburse up to the equivalent cost of an Only Connect 2 counselling session with a selection of accredited counsellors, whose list will be provided by Student Services at the start of your programme.

Libraries

Aga Khan Library, London

The Aga Khan Library holds over 55,000 volumes focusing on Islamic Studies in general and Ismaili, Shi'i, and Qur'anic Studies in particular. The Library actively collects materials on Muslim civilisations, past and present, and Muslim diasporas around the world, as well as on a broad range of research topics including religions and philosophy, history, social sciences, art and architecture, literature, and education.

As part of its commitment to becoming one of Europe's most prominent Islamic studies libraries, the collection includes books in English and in several other European, Asian (Gujarati, Sindhi, Tajik, Urdu) and Middle Eastern (Arabic, Farsi, Ottoman Turkish, Turkish) languages. The library houses the largest collection in Europe for the study of Ismaili communities, their history and their beliefs. The library is supported by a dedicated team of six professional librarians to provide expert guidance and research support to students and scholars.

The Library is continually expanding its resources in both print and electronic formats. Its digital collection now provides access to over 90,000 ebooks and countless electronic resources, including journals, databases, and reference works, to support research and teaching.

The Aga Khan Library Digital Collections platform has been developed to make many titles from its rare and special collections freely available online. These unique collections comprise manuscripts, artworks, out-of-print publications, photographs, and maps produced across different periods and regions of the Muslim world. They are invaluable for the study of Muslim communities and the history, politics, customs, and beliefs that have shaped them.

Beyond written texts, the Library has built a collection of documentary and feature films covering a wide range of themes and regions of the Muslim world, including Afghanistan, Central Asia, Egypt, Iran, Morocco and Tunisia, as well as Muslim diaspora communities in Europe and North America. It also holds a unique collection of audio recordings of Qawwali music from the Indian subcontinent, Sufi music from Iran and Turkey, and Gnawa music from North Africa and sub-Saharan Africa.

To learn more about the Aga Khan Library's collections and services, please visit its website at www.agakhanlibrary.org.

Libraries

Ismaili Special Collections

The Institute of Ismaili Studies holds a significant repository of special collections related to the heritage of Ismaili communities and other Muslim traditions. The Ismaili Special Collections Unit (ISCU) was established in 2013 to systematically preserve, develop, digitise, and catalogue the Institute's heritage collections, and to undertake, facilitate, and support research on them.

These collections include nearly 5,000 manuscripts in Arabic, Persian, Indic, and other languages; coins, glass weights, medals, and other historical artefacts; photographs and audio-visual materials; rare and special printed materials (including periodicals and magazines); and archival collections. The ISCU Online Catalogue (special-collections.iis.ac.uk) includes information on about 4,000 items from the special collections housed at IIS. The Ismaili Special Collections Unit regularly provides guidance and support to students and alumni in accessing and researching heritage material.

SOAS Library

The SOAS Library is one of the world's most important libraries for the study of Asia, Africa and the Middle East, and one of only five National Research Libraries in the UK. The library attracts scholars from all over the world to consult its holdings and advance their research. The Library houses over 1.3 million volumes on the SOAS campus at Russell Square in central London, together with a major collection of archives, manuscripts, rare books and special collections, an expanding Digital Library and a growing network of electronic resources.

The background image shows a modern building interior. On the left, there are balconies with glass railings and blue-tinted glass panels. The right wall is covered in a large, intricate geometric sculpture made of white, green, blue, and red wireframe cubes. The floor is a light-colored, polished surface.

Application and Admissions Procedure

Entry Requirements

A UK 1st or 2nd Class (2:1 preferred) Honours Degree or recognised equivalent. Applicants will be expected to meet SOAS postgraduate entry criteria. Please see the following link for information: www.soas.ac.uk/study/postgraduate/entry-requirements-postgraduate. Applicants can contact UK ENIC to check country-specific requirements at the [UK ENIC homepage](http://www.ukenic.ac.uk)

English language test requirements: Applicants must submit an IELTS Academic score with their application, which must have been taken no more than two years before the proposed start date of the programme being applied for. The minimum requirements for English language proficiency are as follows: An overall band score of 6.5, with a minimum score of 6.0 in each component in an IELTS Academic test certificate.

Alternatively, applicants can submit scores from the following English language tests: TOEFL iBT with an overall score of 92 and a minimum of 24/30 for Reading & Writing, and 20/30 for Speaking & Listening; PTE Academic with an overall score of 62 and a minimum of 59 in Communicative Skills Papers; Cambridge English CAE/CPE with an overall score of 176 and a minimum of 169 in each sub-test; and Trinity ISE III with a Standard in all sub-tests.

In accordance with UK visa rules, IIS exempts candidates from the English language requirements if they are nationals of, or have completed undergraduate studies taught in, the following countries: Antigua and Barbuda, Australia, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Canada (only if you are a national), Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Ireland, Jamaica, New Zealand, St Kitts and Nevis, St Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. In order to qualify for exemption based on prior study, you must have completed your degree on campus (not via distance learning) and no earlier than the summer two years prior to the proposed date of enrolment (i.e. Summer 2025 for a 2027 enrolment).

Minimum of one year's experience teaching in a Religious Education Centre that falls under the ITREB jurisdiction of any one of the following countries: Afghanistan, Angola, Australia and New Zealand, Bangladesh, Canada, Democratic Republic of Congo, Far East, France, India, Iran, Kenya, Madagascar, Mozambique, Pakistan, Portugal, Syria, Tajikistan, Tanzania, United Arab Emirates, Uganda, United Kingdom, or the United States of America.

To enter a contract-bound commitment of a minimum of 4 years to work as a teacher within the ITREB network, with opportunities for career progression within the wider Aga Khan network of institutions.

The Secondary Teacher Education Programme (STEP) has been developed to support and promote the need for professionally trained secondary-level teachers who can teach the IIS Secondary Curriculum within the Ismaili religious education system; therefore, candidates are recruited from the Ismaili community only.*

Please note that we are currently not accepting applications from candidates from the ITREB Tajikistan or ITREB Afghanistan jurisdictions.

Shortlisted applicants will be required to undertake a six-week teaching placement at their local religious education centre (REC), which will be facilitated by the local ITREB. Applicants will also be required to undertake a timed essay examination and participate in an interview, which will be conducted by IIS and ITREB.

* Country-specific marketing may apply

Student Route Visa Requirements

In accordance with UK visa rules, IIS exempts candidates from the English language requirements if they are nationals of, or have completed undergraduate studies taught in, the following countries: Antigua and Barbuda, Australia, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Canada (only if you are a national), Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Ireland, Jamaica, New Zealand, St Kitts and Nevis, St Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, the United Kingdom and the United States of America.

It is the applicants' responsibility to provide authentic and verifiable evidence of qualifications. If you are found to have submitted fraudulent documents, your application will be automatically rejected.

Please note that as of January 2024, overseas students will no longer be able to bring dependents to the UK unless on a postgraduate research course.

Fees

STEP is a fully funded scholarship programme. Successful applicants receive housing in London, as well as a living allowance. Programme-related fees and travel costs are also covered. Students who wish to contribute towards their fees may make an unconditional donation to IIS via the Aga Khan Foundation offices in their country of residence.



“Stepping into STEP after a six-year gap in education, and as a new mum, leaving behind my 9-month-old child in a different country, felt daunting at the beginning. However, the academic and well-being support the Institute offered throughout this journey turned my fears into growth. Looking back at where I started, all the sacrifices, sleepless nights, and early morning tube rush seem worth it.”

Rozeena Shaheen

C18, PAKISTAN

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)

It is a statutory requirement of the Home Office that any individual who will be teaching in a UK school or works with children or young people must be in receipt of a satisfactory Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) certificate.

The DBS checks will be arranged in line with the UK regulations. The cost of the DBS and getting your ID documents checked at a Post Office will be covered by IIS.*

Teaching practice places students in a 'position of trust', as set out in the Exceptions Order to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (ROA) 1974. If you have lived, worked, studied or travelled in any single country outside of the UK for six continuous months or more, in the last five years, you will be required to obtain a Certificate of Good Conduct/Police Check from the relevant country/countries prior to your arrival to UK. The cost of this check varies by country and is payable by the student. More information on how to obtain these is available on gov.uk.

This document should contain details of any cautions, convictions, reprimands, warnings or bind-overs recorded against the student's name, or confirm that there are none. If this information is not in English, students will also need to supply an official certified translation of the document. The cost of this check varies by country and is payable by the student.

For more information about the DBS application process, please contact the IIS Admissions team, at admissions@iis.ac.uk. Failure to submit a satisfactory criminal record check will jeopardise a student's teaching practice if their clearance remains outstanding at the time of enrolment.

* This information is published a long time in advance of enrolment, and it is subject to change.

Equal Opportunities

IIS and its partners are firmly committed to equal opportunities for all students, regardless of sex, sexual orientation, marital or civil partnership status, ethnic origin, race, colour, nationality, political beliefs, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, disability and age. If you have a disability that might have an impact on your studies, please do let us know so we can ensure reasonable adjustments, if needed, can be made. If you have not already disclosed your disability during the course of your application, please contact inclusivelearning@iis.ac.uk.

[Please see SOAS' Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy](#)



How to Apply

Please complete the online application form via our website. You will need the following to complete your application:

- ▶ Your personal statement
- ▶ Official transcripts from all undergraduate and postgraduate study
- ▶ A copy of your degree certificate(s)
- ▶ Academic English Skills certificate (if applicable)
- ▶ Reference letters: two academic, one professional and one ITREB reference
- ▶ A copy of your passport

Deadline

Completed applications, with all relevant documents, must be submitted online or postmarked (if sent by post) by **12 noon on 21 October 2026**. If you would like to make a postal application, please contact admissions@iis.ac.uk to request an application pack.

Terms and Conditions

The terms and conditions of the STEP scholarship can be found on the IIS website.

Complaints

For complaints about the admissions process, please refer to the Complaints policy on the [IIS website](#)

Additional information

For further information on studying and on international student recruitment in the UK, please refer to the following sources:

British Council

www.britishcouncil.org

UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA)

www.ukcisa.org.uk

UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI)

www.gov.uk



Disclaimer

This prospectus contains information about the STEP programme that The Institute of Ismaili Studies (IIS) in collaboration with SOAS University of London intend to run for students. The Institute has made reasonable efforts to ensure that the information provided is both helpful and accurate.

In order to ensure quality, the Institute regularly reviews the modules offered and, when deemed necessary, may change or withdraw a module or add a new programme.

SECONDARY

TEACHER

EDUCATION

PROGRAMME

PROSPECTUS 2026

STEP



The Institute of Ismaili Studies