

BEING A MUSLIM IN OXFORD

THE OFFICIAL OUISOC GUIDE



OXFORD UNIVERSITY
ISLAMIC SOCIETY



INFORM - INFLUENCE - INSPIRE

OUISOC



OUISOC Access

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MEET THE COMMITTEE

OUISOC's committee for 2020/2021

Asalaamualaykum! The ISoc committee is the annually elected team that organises all the events and services run by the society. Being on committee is a great way to give back to the vibrant community that makes Oxford so enjoyable. On behalf of the whole team, you are more than welcome to reach out to any one of us if you have any questions - that's why we're here!

Presidential Team



AbdurRasheed Sadiq

PRESIDENT

3rd Year, Physics, Keble College



Ameerah Latif

FEMALE VICE-PRESIDENT

3rd Year, Biomedical Sciences, St. Hilda's College



Bilal Alim

MALE VICE-PRESIDENT

3rd Year, Geography, St. Hilda's College

Committee

Executive Committee

Secretary	Yusuf Hassan
Treasurer	Bilal Syed
Graduate Chair	Imaan Wallace
Communications Chair	Muaz Nawaz
Student Affairs Chair	Iman Awan
Access Director	Rashma Rahman

Operational Committee

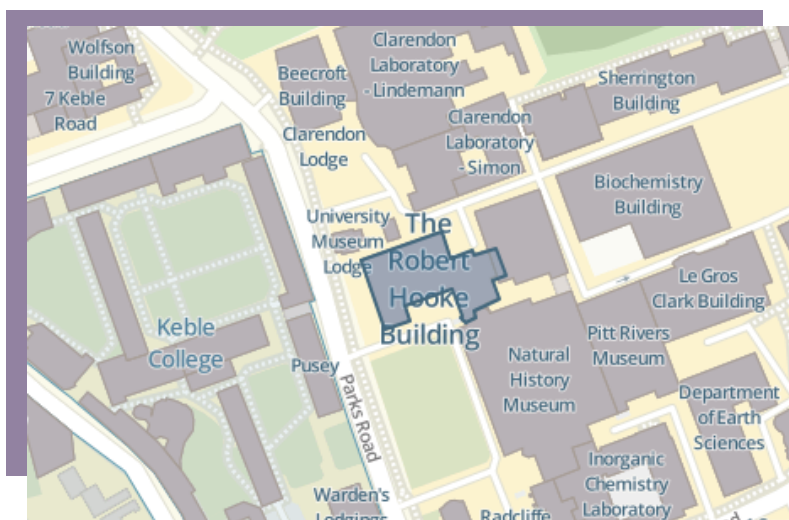
Brothers' Welfare & Social Officer	Ahnaf Farabi
Sisters' Welfare & Social Officer	Aisha Sadiq
Graduate Welfare Officer	Fatima Zahrah
Religious Education Officer	Yousef Elkerm
Community Officer	Tayiba Sulaiman
Islamic Awareness Officer	Ibrahim Al-Hariri
Politics Officer	Bilal Qureshi
Alumni Chair	Maryam Amer
Media Officer	Basim Khajwal
Graduate Events Officer	Hira Javaid
Returning Officer	Minahil Mujahid
Events Officer	Abdul Lateef
Disabilities Officer	Sophie Thomas
Graduate Affairs Chair	Ibrahim El-Gaby



WHAT WE DO

Our ISOC is a student-run body that serves as the focal point for Muslims in Oxford, holding a reputation for being among the University's most vibrant and active societies. Whether it's enjoying an interfaith formal dinner, sitting with a scholar teaching from a classical Islamic text, grabbing a late-night kebab with friends, finding academic guidance, or just having a community to break your Ramadan fasts with, there is something here for everyone. We are open to all Muslims and are a community free of judgement. Wherever you perceive yourself to be along your own religious journey, whatever cultural background or religious group you're from, whether you're a graduate or undergraduate, as a society we form one community, united in the way of Allah SWT.

Prayer Room



The ISOC has its own prayer room located in the Robert Hooke building.

This is open 24/7 to all students and many events throughout term will also be hosted here. To request the entry code, just ask a current student or contact us.

Robert Hooke Building
Parks Road
Oxford
OX1 3PR

Jumu'ah Prayers

Everybody is welcome to attend. We have two Jumu'ah Khutbas every week in the prayer room, the first one at 1:10pm aiming to finish by 1:40pm and the second at 1:50pm aiming to finish by 2:20pm. Everyone is therefore reminded to come in good time in order to avoid missing any of the Khutbah.

Afterwards, join us for a bite of food and some post-Jumu'ah socialising. This is a great opportunity to catch-up with friends and meet new brothers and sisters.





OUR EVENTS



The ISOC does a lot more than just organise weekly Jumu'ahs! We host a wide variety of events throughout the year, ranging from educational events to weekly sports sessions and socials. We also host a variety of dinners, games nights and much more, all aimed at helping the Muslim community of Oxford to become stronger, meet new people and just have a great time! The next few pages give you a glimpse of just how much goes on during the year.

Social Events

Our social events offer the perfect opportunity to relax and have fun in a friendly and welcoming environment. With so much going on, there is never a dull moment!

Brothers' Socials

Brothers' Socials are a great chance to have a laugh and get rid of some energy after a busy week. They're a really good way to forget about your studies and just chill with the brothers and we often have various activities on offer too, from FIFA, table tennis, pool, even ice skating and mini golf!

Sisters' Socials

Sisters' Socials are a great way to de-stress and relax with fellow sisters. One role of the ISOC is to provide a home away from home, so whether you're in need of some sisterly advice, some sugary treats, or just want to let your hair down, the Sisters' Socials have it all!

Brothers' Football

The beautiful religion meets the beautiful game every Friday at the University Sports Club. This is not only a great opportunity to show off your ability to perform roulettes and nutmegs, but also to socialise and get to know brothers both inside and outside of the University who attend this fun weekly event.

Sisters' Sports

Regardless of whether you're a sports pro or just a beginner, Sisters' Sports lets you try new things and meet loads of new people, making it the perfect end to the week. From karate to kickboxing to rounders, there's plenty to get involved in whilst having lots of fun.



Fresher's Week

Fresher's week can be daunting for Muslims coming to university, but ISOC runs an alternative freshers' fortnight which runs in parallel to help you settle down. We run social events for both brothers and sisters, ranging from ice cream meetups to quiz nights, sports games to ice-skating – as well as the annual Freshers' Dinner. There really is something for everyone, and regardless of what the activity is, the most special thing about them is the way they bring people into the society and facilitate friendships that will outlast your degree. In cases where college events largely rely on drinking, many find comfort in attending ISOC events instead, which run for two weeks into term, lessening some of the pressure to meet everyone in the space of 7 days.

ISOC Welfare Reps

Reps are there to help at any opportunity and will be a guiding light in the chaos of freshers, so treasure them! Any worries or questions you have can be sent in their direction – and without a doubt, there are countless others within Oxford's Muslim community willing to provide support and advice when you need it.



ISOC Buddy and College Reps

You can be paired with a Buddy studying the same subject in a year above, who can offer academic advice.

ISOC College Reps can support you in settling into college life. Even if your college does not have a rep, one of the welfare reps or neighbouring college reps will be nearby.

www.ouisoc.org f @ouisoc @OXFORDUNI_ISOC @OXFORDUNI_ISOC



Religious Education

Our religious education events offer a wonderful opportunity to learn and discuss religious topics with like-minded individuals, or to simply enlighten yourself in a non-judgemental and supportive environment.

Q-Club (Quran Club)

These are Informative yet informal classes, offering a chance for you to engage with the meaning (Tafseer) of various Surahs of the Quran at your own pace.

Discussion Circles

Engage in informal discussion with your fellow students on various Islamic topics in an open and inclusive environment. Learn new things and gain different perspectives from others on a wide variety of topics, ranging from Islam to capitalism.

Talks

We have hosted many high profile speakers such as Sheikh Yasir Qadhi, Yvonne Ridley, Yahya Ibrahim, Ustadh Nouman Ali Khan and Jonathan Brown covering many topics including mental health, gender relations and the legacy of our Prophet (pbuh).

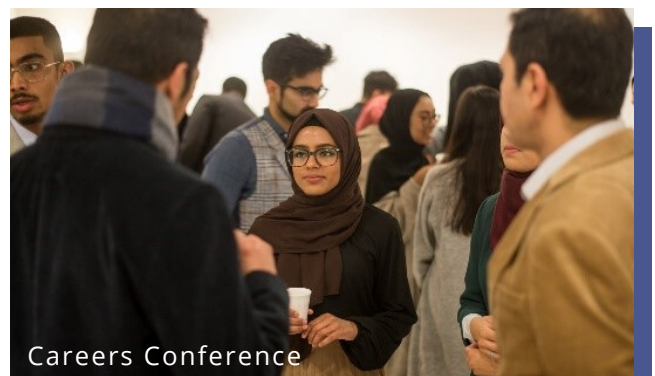


Special Events

We host a number of events throughout the year that engage with our local communities and offer opportunities for non-Muslims to find out more about our religion.

Careers Conference

At the annual Careers Conference, we've been privileged to host inspiring Muslims professionals in fields including finance, law, medicine, education and technology. Their guidance is extremely useful, and the discussions give real insight into the opportunities and challenges that we may face as young Muslims entering the workplace.



Careers Conference

Ramadan

We host free term-time iftaars every day during the holy month of Ramadan, followed by Taraweeh. These Iftaars are the backbone of the Muslim community in Oxford, providing a space for everyone to come together and share a meal each night.



Prayer room iftaars

Oxford Muslim Research Conference

The OMRC aims to attract Muslim students and academics from Oxford and universities from all over the UK. Presentations and discussion sessions led by experienced academics provide insights into research across many disciplines from Chemistry to Islamic studies.



Campaigns

We host a number of events throughout the year that engage with our local communities and offer opportunities for non-Muslims to find out more about our religion.

Charity Week

With Charity Week in Michaelmas term, we put on many events including a movie night, Charity Dinner and the annual Charity Bake Off to raise money for amazing causes. Throughout the year, there are also opportunities for regular volunteering.



Discover Islam Week

A week of informative talks and engagement with the wider community to teach people more about Islam and what it's about, giving non-Muslims an insight into the religion and the opportunity to ask questions to clarify understanding. We also host our much loved annual cultural fair, showcasing the diversity of Muslims across the globe.



Rediscovering Emaan

The Rediscovering Emaan campaign in Hilary term aims to reconnect us with our faith as we traverse the challenges life (and Oxford) throw our way. From the chance to learn from learned scholars to countryside treks, there is a wide array of events for people to get involved in and benefit from.



NAVIGATING THE OXFORD UNI PROSPECTUS

Now that you have a taste of what it's like being Muslim in Oxford, we would like to suggest a few things to consider whilst reading the official Oxford University prospectus.

Choosing a college

The prospectus outlines the different Colleges in Oxford and applicants always struggle to pick one. Our best advice would be to look through the prospectus, college websites and attend college open days to really gauge whether or not you'd envisage yourself in a particular college. For accommodation, take a look at how many years the college will provide accommodation for. Some colleges offer onsite accommodation for all three years, but at some colleges you might have to live outside of college and rent privately for one year. For college rooms, room sizes and room costs vary among and between colleges. Also, you may want to consider the kitchen facilities, especially if you are keen to cook. An increasing number of colleges offer Halal food (see table on the right). Oxford has many halal restaurants and butchers within walking distance. Location is also an important consideration; whether it's proximity to the city centre, your academic department or the prayer room, check this out if it's important to you! The ISOC has representatives in numerous colleges so if you have questions about life at a particular college these are the people to ask: ouisoc.org/college-reps Remember, if you don't have a particular preference for a college you can always make an open application and you'll be randomly assigned to one for interviews. Also, during the interview process you might be sent to different colleges as well as your first choice. In the end, you'll make fantastic memories wherever you end up!

COLLEGE	PROVISION OF HALAL MEAT	PROVISION OF EN-SUITE IN 1ST YEAR
Balliol	No	On request
Blackfriars	Yes (in-house events, most meals at Regent's Park)	Can request on faith grounds (limited)
Brasenose	Only formals (on request)	Can request on faith grounds
Christ Church	Yes (on request, all meats)	On request
Corpus Christi	Yes (chicken, lamb, beef, turkey)	Can request on faith grounds
Exeter	Yes (on request, meat and poultry)	On request
Harris Manchester	No	Yes
Hertford	Yes (chicken and lamb)	No
Jesus	Chicken at formals on request	On request
Keble	Yes (on request)	Rarely, but most bathrooms are one between two
LMH	Yes (chicken and lamb)	Can request on faith grounds
Lincoln	Only formals (on request)	Yes
Magdalen	Only formals (on request, chicken)	No
Mansfield	No	Yes (mostly, may need to request to make sure)
Merton	Only formals (on request)	Can request on faith grounds
New	Yes (on request)	Yes (most rooms en-suite, can make request to be sure)
Oriel	Yes (on request with sufficient notice)	Can request on faith grounds
Pembroke	Yes (on request)	Yes
Queen's	No	Yes (mostly, may need to request to make sure)
Regent's Park	-	No
Somerville	No	No
St Anne's	Yes (on request)	No
St Benet's Hall	Yes (on request, chicken)	No (can request low usage bathrooms)
St Catherine's	Yes (on request)	No
St Edmund Hall	Yes (on request)	Can request on faith grounds
St Hilda's	Sometimes	No
St Hugh's	Only formals (on request, chicken)	Can request on faith grounds
St John's	Yes (lunch and formal dinners on request)	No
St Peter's	No	No
Trinity	No	On request
University	Yes (on request, not regularly)	No
Wadham	Yes (on request)	No
Worcester	Yes (on request)	Down to luck, but most are en-suite so chance high



Choosing a course

This is very much a personal decision but there are few things you might want to bear in mind. Tutors here want to teach students who are seriously interested and passionate about their subject - the interviews essentially explore this, seeing how engaged you are and if the tutorial system would suit you. Oxford really is a great place to study and explore a subject in depth so if there's one thing you should do when deciding on your subject, it's make sure that you are truly interested and passionate about it! Speaking to current students attending open days, doing work placements and attending the Oxford Muslim Access Conference are examples of ways to make an informed decision.

Muslim Chaplain

The university also has a Muslim Chaplain, Sheikh Ibrahim Amin, who is available to answer any of our welfare concerns and questions one may have regarding their faith. He can be reached by email at ibrahim.amin@oxcis.ac.uk and is also a frequent presence within the ISoc if you would like to speak to him in person!



Aisha, Sisters' Welfare and Social Officer

What has been the highlight of your time with ISoc?

The highlight of my time with ISoc has to be the last few days of Hilary term! I finished my exams and my lovely isoc friends were there to trash me and we celebrated and then had mocktails that evening which was an amazing way to end the term!! It was honestly one of the best days of my life haha and it's all thanks to the incredible friends I've made from ISoc.

Best food in Oxford?

Hassan's hummus salad and falafel wrap with chilli sauce and yoghurt mint... or half price wasabi!



Farabi, Brothers' Welfare and Social Officer

What advice would you give to incoming students?

Try to find a group of brothers who will motivate you and keep you grounded in your deen. You'll come to spend a lot of time with them and choosing friends that usher you to salah or to the remembrance of Allah is so key in an environment like Oxford.

Best food in Oxford?

ATS' mango chutney panini! Also, big love to Dosa Park, they're a local Asian restaurant who donate food to use every Ramadan for iftar.



Iman, Student Affairs Chair

What would be your top tips for any prospective students?

Aim high, try your best, and put your faith Allah. And have a bit of faith in yourself too! It's easy to have doubts during the application process (Will I be good enough? Is Oxford for me?) but remember that plenty of us here were thinking the exact same thing a couple years ago – and we managed ok! Whatever the outcome of your application, remember that Allah truly knows what is best for you.

Best food in Oxford?

Bodrum. It's a Turkish restaurant down Cowley that we go to most times my family visit.



Fatima, Graduate Welfare Officer

What are you most looking forward to this year?

I'm really looking forward to seeing everyone in person again! Our fortnightly grad socials have been such a great way for us to take a break from our work to check in with each other and catch up over great food. Insha'Allah we will have even more exciting events planned this year including potlucks, picnics, hiking and daytrips!

Best food in Oxford?

You'll most likely find me eating a Subway, but Antep Kitchen on Cowley is amazing when you want to treat yourself.



EXPERIENCES OF OXFORD



Noor, History
2nd year

My experience of Freshers' Week was mostly positive, even if it did feel a little overwhelming at times! I didn't really know what to expect and was suddenly thrown into an environment with all sorts of different people from various walks of life. At first, I wasn't entirely sure about going to ISoc events either but looking back now, I can honestly say that I'm really glad I chose to. It was nice to be able to experience something other than the college environment and to talk to people who were of a similar background. I'm grateful that I was able to find something of a balance between college life and ISoc events – I think it's important to go into Freshers' Week with an open mind while at the same time holding true to yourself and your principles.



Bilal, Geography
3rd year

The Oxford application process can be stressful. There's the early UCAS deadline, entrance tests, interview prep, and deciding what college to apply to, all while trying to get the predicted grades you want. But most of the pressure is what people put on themselves. The best advice I was given was to be myself and not to worry too much about the outcome while I was applying. Just do the best you can and make du'aa. If it's the best thing for you, you'll get it - if not, you'll get something better in the long run.



Ameerah, Biomedical Sciences
3rd year

Oxford can be a very high-stress environment but in colleges and societies like the ISoc there are really good welfare systems in place to tackle it. Just talking about what's worrying you is really helpful because older students are full of great advice and can reassure you that it's completely normal to be stressed! The best thing to avoid stress is being organised and doing work as soon as possible so it doesn't pile up. Most importantly just remember you can cope with any hardships or Allah (SWT) wouldn't have placed you here!



Yusuf, Chemistry
3rd Year

One of my favourite parts of ISOC are the fantastic campaigns we organise throughout the year. In the first term, we hold an annual Charity Week, raising money for Islamic Relief projects worldwide. Alongside the charity dinner and auction, the most recent edition also featured a bake-off, a games night and a spoken word event. I really enjoyed being involved in the 'Devotion' themed Discover Islam campaign this year: it was a great opportunity to showcase the lives and beliefs of Muslims to people outside ISOC. This campaign included a wide range of events, including ones on the Quran, Islamic art and a theatre performance. It was really enjoyable to see non-Muslim friends and local people engaging with ISOC events during this period, whilst asking perceptive questions. A new campaign we introduced this year was Rediscovering Emaan. I found it really valuable as it focused on ways that we can improve on our connection with Islam.

Ibrahim, Medicine
5th year

Coming to Oxford as a medical student, academic research was never a top priority to me. However, being at a consistently world leading academic centre gave me a new found appreciation for just how much academia can influence virtually every aspect of both our daily and professional lives. With such a profound effect on society, It also became apparent that as Muslims, we collectively have a responsibility to make our voices and perspective present in such an influential sphere. Attending the annual Oxford Muslim Research Conference, organised by students in the Oxford University ISoc, I met and listened to Muslim academics contributing to fields ranging from Medical Ethics and Cancer research, to Economics and Aeronautical engineering. I now appreciate how sincerity of intention in seeking the pleasure of Allah SWT when producing work that permeates all aspects of peoples lives, makes Muslims and their Islamic grounding of unique value to humanity through academic research. And there aren't many better places to begin such a journey than Oxford, where both a thriving Muslim community and academic atmosphere co-exist!



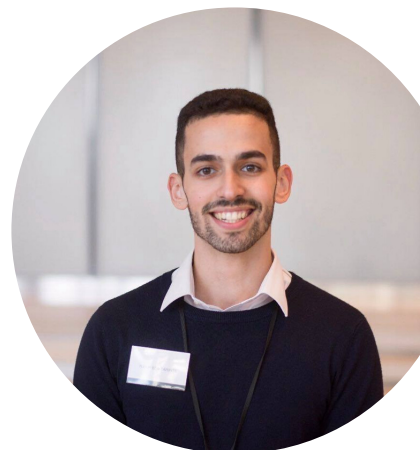
Amna, Law
Graduated

It can be difficult as a student to plan time for spiritual development, but one of the best things about Isoc is that it plans it for you. From short talks before iftaar by members of the Isoc, biweekly beginner fiqh classes and talks from leading scholars on pertinent issues, there really is something for everybody. Having available thoughtfully planned events and a supportive Muslim community has provided an amazing safe space for us to all grow spiritually.



Yusuf, Medicine
3rd year

There is a huge diversity of extra-curricular activities to get involved in at University; these are called clubs/societies. University is what you make out of it. You have the opportunity to get involved in as many or as little societies as you would like; it's completely your choice and down to your time management. For me, the Islamic Society has been a friendly, dependable support and social network. The African-Caribbean Society has been responsible for some of my fondest moments including the ACS Cultural Ball. Breaking my PBs at competitions with the Powerlifting Society has been so rewarding.



Hiba, Chemistry
4th year

Oxford is a wonderful city. With its gorgeous, historic architecture and unique traditions, living in Oxford often feels like you've stepped back in time, but thankfully, with all the luxuries of the modern world. Unarguably, one of the best things about the city are its people – everyone I've met here has been incredibly kind, welcoming and so very interesting to talk to! Moreover, despite being a relatively small city, there's never a lack of things to do in Oxford – from punting and picnics with friends to talks by world-renowned speakers, there's always something exciting to look forward to. All in all, living in Oxford has been a dream come true – its old-school charm and beauty is unparalleled and I honestly can't think of a more inspiring city to study in!





Ikra, Geography
3rd year

In first year, you spend most of your time in college. Sometimes it can be a daunting and lonely place, but the best thing about college life is meeting a range of people with some similar and some very different backgrounds and experiences compared to you. I am at Mansfield College, known for being incredibly friendly and having a majority state school student body. I have been so well supported by the staff and my fellow students, which made living away from home a fulfilling and rewarding experience. Remember to have an open mind, to not be afraid to try new things, and to be unapologetically you!



Basim, Mathematics and Computer Science
3rd year

The daily Iftaars attract a warm welcoming community of over 100 people daily and, with leftovers from Iftaars, a small number of us would gather again to have Suhoor in the prayer room too. Cycling through Oxford at 3am daily was a serene experience, the quiet streets, devoid of cars and people, were a complete contrast to the same streets bustling with tourists and students during the day. This nocturnal lifestyle brought a significant change in my daily routine and pairing this with the usual barrage of work in Oxford and upcoming exams was a challenge. Having always had the support of my family, I was privileged to have ISoc Iftaars fill this gap for me. I never had to worry about finding hot food and, after each Iftaar/Taraweeh, I felt recharged to be able to work again. Overall, this Ramadan has been my most memorable to date and something to look forward to during your time in Oxford.



Supti, History
Graduate

Making the decision to move away from home and live in halls was really difficult and hard to adjust to at first. When studying at Oxford, it is easy to fall into the trap of isolating yourself, especially in critical periods of your degree such as exam season. In times like this, make sure you have a core group of reliable friends that can help you through periods of stress, visit them in their rooms, go out for coffee walks. Always reach out to people you trust for advice, your friends, your tutors, even friends in older years who probably have gone through the same periods of stress. The most important advice I can give to anyone, is to find a space in the university that works for YOU. The place where you feel most comfortable to just be yourself and voice any stresses and concerns to those around you.



Ibby, PPE
Graduate

Trying to put into words what the ISOC has been for me is an impossible task. Through ISOC I have met friends who I can say I genuinely love. The ISOC is full of the most amazing people with amazing stories and journeys who I will never forget and have really left their mark on me. For me, Oxford was an opportunity to develop both personally and academically, and to make friendships which I hope to last a lifetime.

CONTACT US

Starting out in Oxford, let alone going through the application process, can be a daunting experience. It can be easy to feel overwhelmed, but know that the ISOC is here to help! All of us on the committee as well as general members of the society are ALWAYS willing to talk to you and help with any questions or concerns you may have, whether it be about applying or what it's like as a Muslim here - all questions are welcome.

Join our Mailing List



Sign up to our access mailing list to keep up to date with our latest access and outreach events found on our website: **ouisoc.org/omac**

Social Media



www.facebook.com/ouisoc



www.youtube.com/OUISoc



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Keep updated
by following us on our
social media accounts!
We regularly share
information on upcoming
events and post photos to
go with them.

Contact the Committee

You can also directly contact any member of our committee by email found on the OUISOC website:
ouisoc.org/ouisoc-committee