

Moving to South Australia
Centre for Islamic Thought and Education

Mohamad Abdalla

Asalamu 'alikum all (peace be upon you)

Many of you may have heard by now that I will soon be moving to South Australia. I wanted to give you an update and also inform you of the rest of the team.

Before I do that I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to all of the people that I have known and engaged with over the last 25 years or so. I have had a most wonderful, fruitful and fulfilling experience working with you all. It is very sad to leave Brisbane for it and the people I have worked with have become a part of who I am.

I want to particularly thank all the wonderful people who supported the establishment of the Griffith University Islamic Research Unit (GIRU). They were few in number having believed in the project in 2005 makes them visionary people. I will not name them here because they have always wanted to remain anonymous. Their reward is with Allah Al-mighty.

Establishment of GIRU and National Centre of Excellence for Islamic Studies

In 2005 I approached I held a meeting at Griffith University for community members to convince them of the need to establish an Islamic studies centre. Around 25 people attended and about 5 people pledged to fund the project. All the money raised went toward supporting 3 PhD scholarships for three years each, with the aim of graduating local scholars who understand Islam and the Australian context. Ten years later we have graduated more than 10 such scholars, who are all know doing great work in their fields. Many of them have also been great ambassadors for us.

In 2008 we went on to establish the National Centre of Excellence for Islamic Studies (NCEIS) in partnership with the University of Melbourne and the University of Western Sydney. In doing so we became leaders in Australia in Islamic studies, and established a Major in Islamic Studies at the three universities. Since then we have taught many subjects such as Islamic Law in a Changing World; Great Empires of Islamic Civilisation and Islamic Banking and Finance. At Griffith University alone we probably have an annual enrolment of 400 students (+-) in all of our Islamic studies courses.

Additionally, the centre at Griffith became a reference point for media, government organisations and non-government organisations. Importantly, we also worked very closely with Australian Muslims at the local and national levels. There were many academic publications in the form of books and journals articles, we held international conferences and so on.

Essentially, with the support of key community philanthropists, and the unbelievable support of my dear wife, I was able to establish Islamic studies as a discipline at Griffith University. I thank Allah for this great bounty!

Griffith University has been extremely helpful and supportive and for this I want to thank its Vice Chancellor Professor Ian O'Connor and a dear friend and colleague the Pro-Vice Chancellor Professor Paul Mazerolle.

I also want to thank all of my colleagues who were students and colleagues (now expert academics (Dr Mahmood Nathie, Dr Nada Ibrahim, Dr Halim Rane, Dr Nezar Faris, Dr Nader Al-Kahtib, Br. Emad Soliman, Shaykh Muhammad Abdullah (Sydney), and the rest of the team).

As our work increased and there was a need for expansion (especially in terms of staff capacity) it was time to move on.

With my departure for Griffith University, I'm afraid there will no longer be a Griffith Islamic Research Unit (GIRU) or a Centre of Excellence for Islamic Studies (NCEIS). Frankly, I don't know what will happen at Griffith University in terms of Islamic studies.

The Centre for Islamic Thought and Education (CITE)

This is when a great offer came from the University of South Australia to establish and run the Centre for Islamic Thought and Education (CITE).

The new will bring together researchers specialising in Islamic psychology, ethics and business, leadership and management, finance, education, and sociology. The centre is set to become one of the largest research concentrations in Islamic studies in Australasia.

Drawing on many years of research and teaching in Islamic studies, coupled with extensive engagement with the Australian Muslim and wider communities, the Centre of Islamic Thought and Education aims to serve as a global knowledge hub for community empowerment through research, education and engagement.

CITE's Vision, philosophy and mission

Our vision is a revival in Islamic thought and scholarship that facilitates interconnectedness and empowerment for local, national, regional and global communities.

Our philosophy is to promote empirical research informed by Islamic methodologies, philosophies and pedagogies, cognisant of the unique Australian context.

It is our deep conviction that academic research and teaching must positively impact on external engagement with community, media, government and NGOs. This is at the heart of CITE's philosophy.

The CITE strives to be a voice of expertise, enriched by a deep understanding of the Islamic faith and Muslim peoples within an Australian context, to empower the community to meet the many challenges and challenges with strength, dignity and wisdom.

The CITE will actively engage with government, NGOs and media to enrich both dialogue and positive partnerships with Australian Muslims, informing policies pertaining to them, and inform reporting of Islam and Muslims in the media.

The CITE will genuinely engage with, and benefit from, members of the Australian Muslims communities: the youth, women, and the religious and administrative leadership, giving them a voice and ownership to issues that affect their lives in Australia.

The team

Professor Mohammad Abdalla, Centre Director.

Dr Nada Ibrahim, Academic Staff. Dr Ibrahim is an expert in domestic and family violence with particular emphasis on the Australian Muslim community. Her research interests include intimate partner violence, family relationships, community development, Islamic psychology, mental health, Islamic family law, disadvantaged Muslim women's issues, and broader Islamic issues.

Dr Nezar Faris, Academic staff. Dr Faris is a scholar in Management and Leadership with a focus on the context of Muslim organisations in the West. His research interests include Leadership processes, power procedures and transitions, ethical leadership, sense making and cultural complexity.

Dr Mahmood Nathie, Academic staff. Dr Nathie is a scholar and practitioner of Islamic Finance. He has lectured and written extensively on Islamic finance and presented papers at international conferences. He holds a number of posts associated with charitable and community work.

Mr. Dylan Chown, Academic staff, holds a Master of Education (Leadership) and is completing his PhD in Education. His research interests include Islamic research methodology; Islamic philosophy of education and worldview; Islamic pedagogy and teacher training.

Hafsa Khan, PhD candidate, is a Lawyer by qualification and is currently a PhD Candidate focusing on cultural and traditional norms relating to marriage practices in the Pashtun Muslim majority province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) in North Pakistan. Her research aims to investigate the interplay between culture and Islamic law in order to determine the role culture plays in upholding practices that may contradict Islamic legal principles.

Muhammad Abdullah (Sydney), PhD candidate: Muhammad is currently Chief Examiner of Aboriginal Studies, and Supervisor of Marking in NSW. Abdullah is currently completing a PhD on a ground breaking project titled 'The Formulation of a Pedagogical Framework for Islamic Schools in Australia.'

Nadia Selim, PhD candidate: Nadia is a lecturer of Arabic and has been tutoring Arabic at the Institute of Modern Languages at the University of Queensland since 2012. Nadia's PhD will examine the teaching of Arabic at Islamic Schools in Australia.

Once again, thank you all for your support and I promise to keep in touch and visit Brisbane on a regular basis.