

Master of Science in Islamic Art, Architecture and Urbanism

كلية الدراسات الإسلامية
College of Islamic Studies

جامعة حمد بن خليفة
HAMAD BIN KHALIFA UNIVERSITY



Master of Science in Islamic Art, Architecture and Urbanism

In light of contemporary developments in the integration of Islamic art and its reformulation in modern architecture, there is a growing need for experts who are able to combine heritage with contemporary techniques and trends by providing innovative architectural and urban design solutions.

The Master of Science (MS) in Islamic Art, Architecture and Urbanism is a multidisciplinary program that aims to equip future designers, curators, and historians with a critical and informed understanding of Islamic art and architecture across centuries, spanning from Andalusia to Central Asia into the present era.

This program encourages research towards safeguarding Islamic heritage by examining the diversity and the contextual history of Islamic material culture. In addition, graduates will investigate notions of rapid urbanization, designing civic spaces, spatial humanities, migration and urbanism, cross-cultural art influences, heritage preservation, and more, qualifying them to pursue careers in Islamic art history, contemporary mosque architecture, sustainable urbanism fields, and related career pathways.

Program Focus

The MS in Islamic Art, Architecture and Urbanism program is unique in focus, structure, and content, with no similar program offered in the Islamic world.

The program focuses on the critical construction, acquisition, dissemination, and application of art history, architecture, and urbanism to international institutions in general, and more specifically to diverse Islamic societies.

This comprehensive program delves into the art, architecture, and urbanism of a wide range of Islam-influenced civilizations. It offers specializations that aim to develop critical tools for the analysis of buildings and public spaces at different scales, and advanced skills for their application in architectural design projects.

Another track endeavors to develop expertise in the study and display of historical objects and the deep understanding and appreciation required to exhibit such artifacts.

The program utilizes creative platforms outside the traditional classroom, such as collaborative workshops by international figures in the field; provides opportunities to explore a different country in the Islamic world every year; and helps expand the student's network through encounters with specialists and specialist institutions based locally and abroad.

Curriculum

A 36-credit degree program taught over two years in English that includes:

Seven core courses (21 credits)

- ▶ Ahkam al-Bunyan: Building Ordinances
- ▶ History of Islamic Art and Architecture I (650-1250)
- ▶ History of Islamic Art and Architecture II (1250-1900)
- ▶ Independent Project Modelling
- ▶ Interpreting Environments: Habitat Values and Sustainable Practices in Islam
- ▶ Research and Design Methods
- ▶ Survey of Architectural Typologies of the Islamic World

A choice of three specializations (6 credits)

- ▶ **Specialization I: Islamic Arts: History and Cultural Display**
 - ▶ Islamic Objects and Manuscripts
 - ▶ Museum and Exhibition Studies
- ▶ **Specialization II: Contemporary Mosque Architecture**
 - ▶ Islamic Architecture and Urbanism in the 20th and 21st Centuries
 - ▶ Mosque Architecture Design

- ▶ **Specialization III: Sustainable Cities of Muslim Societies**

- ▶ Contemporary Cities for Muslim Societies
- ▶ Globalization, Cities, and Urban Policies

A choice of one elective out of four options* (3 credits):

- ▶ Sustainable Islamic Urbanism: Past and Present
- ▶ Urban Interventions in Historic Islamic Cities
- ▶ Physical Spaces and Spatial Humanities in Digital Societies
- ▶ Types and Typologies of Domestic Architecture

Thesis (6 credits)

*Students can also select an elective course from other specializations within the program.

Core Courses

Code	Credits	Course Title	Description
IAA 600	3 credits	Independent Project Modelling	This is an advanced-level course promoting practice-based learning and the development of problem-solving techniques, critical thinking skills, and innovative practices to serve cultural institutions, governmental organizations, or businesses. It offers students an opportunity to work autonomously on a project of their choosing related to their chosen specialization. Students may choose a topic, art object, or theme of relevance to cultural issues and societal needs, to be devised with the approval of their supervisor. This may involve engaging with industry or cultural organizations to deliver small-scale tailored projects to suit their needs; the detailed investigation of a single object at the Museum of Islamic Art, using knowledge acquired in other parts of the program; or the creation of a display based on object replicas or images in the atrium of the College of Islamic Studies, with a view to disseminating their knowledge to the broader HBKU community.
IAA 610	3 credits	Research and Design Methods	This course offers a comprehensive understanding of basic principles of research techniques and writing in architecture. Emphasis is placed on methodological and presentational aspects of architectural and built environment research. Fundamental aspects of communicating research are introduced, including writing and presenting research findings and concluding statements. It also involves understanding of differentiating between research, reports, articles, and critical essays, an investigation of various methods for descriptive, analytical, explanatory, and critical research. Research projects focus on applying research techniques and tools in visual, social, and technical terms. An integral component of the course involves the development of a thesis proposal, where students utilize selected research tools and techniques in shaping their research proposals.
IAA 611	3 credits	History of Islamic Art and Architecture I (650-1250)	This course is an introduction to the art and architecture of the Islamic world from the emergence of Islam in the 7 th century until the Mongol invasion of Iraq and Iran in the mid-13 th century. It focuses on major monuments and developments in the arts, such as calligraphy, mosaics, and ceramics, under the Umayyad Empire, the Abbasids, and their successor states in the vast regions between North Africa and the Iranian world. In each context, objects and buildings are studied both in relation to each other and as witnesses of the social life and cultural sensitivities of their time, using insights from textual sources. Issues of interpretation are critically considered.
IAA 612	3 credits	Ahkam al-Bunyan: Building Ordinances	This course delves into influential Islamic texts, exploring works like Kitab al-l'lan bi Ahkam al-Bunyan, fatawa of Ibn Abd al-Rafi, and Al-Wansharisi's al-Mi'yar al-Mughrib. It examines how Islamic jurisprudence intersects with urban planning, analyzing the historical impact of Quranic and Sunnah principles on land use and legal disputes. Students gain a deep understanding of Islamic urbanism, fostering critical thinking and preparing them for challenges in architecture and urban development by bridging theoretical knowledge with practical application.
IAA 613	3 credits	Interpreting Environments: Habitat Values and Sustainable Practices in Islam	This course explores how Islamic teachings relate to contemporary environmental issues and sustainable practices. It covers sustainability, land use, and Islamic perspectives on natural resource management and environmental ethics. Students gain insights into historical and theological foundations of environmental stewardship in Islam, addressing modern challenges like resource depletion and pollution. The course encourages critical thinking on applying these principles to current environmental problems, fostering responsibility in fields like urban planning and architecture for sustainable development and ethical decision-making.

Core Courses (continued)

Code	Credits	Course Title	Description
IAA 623	3 credits	History of Islamic Art and Architecture II (1250-1900)	This course is an introduction to the art and architecture of the Islamic world from the Mongol invasion of Iraq and Iran in the mid-13 th century until the fall of the Ottoman and Qajar empires in the early 20 th century. It investigates such topics as the emergence of a new synthesis under the Ilkhanid and Timurid dynasties in Iran and Central Asia; the art and architecture of the Mamluk Sultanate in Egypt and Syria; and the three early modern empires of the Ottomans in the Mediterranean world, the Safavids in Iran, and the Mughals in India. In each context, objects and buildings are studied both in relation to each other and as witnesses of the social life and cultural sensitivities of their time, using insights from textual sources. Issues of interpretation are critically considered.
IAA 625	3 credits	Survey of Architectural Typologies of the Islamic World	This course aims to instill in the student a broad awareness of the diversity and the main achievements of Islamic architecture and the various typologies developed from the beginnings of Islam. It offers a chronological development of art and architecture in selected notable regions. The wide surveys highlight the development of architectural designs of the Islamic world from the 7 th through the 19 th centuries, utilizing a wide spectrum of materials and production. The course examines the built form, functions, and activities relevant to the social, historical, and cultural contexts, patterns of use, and evolving meanings attributed to buildings by their communities.

Thesis

Code	Credits	Course Title	Description
IAA 695	6 credits	Master's Thesis Hours	This course gives the student an opportunity to produce and defend a thesis. Thesis students are asked to consider potential topics for research- or project-based work, preferably related to the core research themes within the chosen concentration. Students eligible for undertaking a design-based project of a similar standard or length to a research thesis may have varying requirements according to the chosen topic. Students are allocated a supervisor early in the third semester and develop their thesis proposals by the end of the semester as part of their research methods class. They are expected to have undertaken significant preliminary research on the topic by the end of the fourth semester. The thesis is expected to conform to appropriate standards of scholarship.

Specialization Courses

Code	Credits	Course Title	Description
IAA 631	3 credits	Islamic Objects and Manuscripts	This course offers students an opportunity to build skills specific to key media in Islamic art, such as manuscripts, textiles and carpets, mosaics, woodwork, ceramics, metalwork, and glasswork. It involves hands-on sessions with objects at the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha. Students gain direct exposure to different types of objects and knowledge of published resources to aid their rigorous analyses.
IAA 632	3 credits	Museum and Exhibition Studies	This course equips students with critical and practical skills to approach the display of Islamic objects in the context of museums. Issues related to the politics and socio-cultural context of display will be combined with aspects of exhibition planning, management, and public interaction. This course provides academic exposure to the mechanisms of objects and art display in museums and exhibitions. The aim of the course is to explore and synthesize aspects of exhibition planning, management, and public interaction for either physical or virtual museums. The course covers systems and techniques of critical writing for exhibitions and displays of Islamic arts and objects. Students gain the methods for organizing galleries and teaching spaces; this includes mounting displays and techniques and requirements for evaluating museum events and visits.
IAA 633	3 credits	Mosque Architecture Design	This course introduces the architecture of mosques in different regions including Andalusia, North Africa, Middle East, Far East, and contemporary mosques in Western cultures. Different aspects of old and contemporary mosques are introduced, highlighting the mosque as a building type that became a symbol that functions as a point of reference and provides an umbrella under which people of a common belief may unite and interact for legitimate human activities. This course develops design propositions from a close and critical engagement with significant built and unbuilt architectural and mosque exemplars. Working with changing and enduring values and associated questions of style, longevity, and contemporaneity, students design a mosque project that anticipates future needs and responds to existing built fabric. Reflective and analytical drawings of precedents inform the production of projects that engage with cultural and disciplinary histories. Constraints for designing mosques are discussed with supporting cases that address typological issues, detailed design, ornamentation, and the impact on the surrounding community.
IAA 634	3 credits	Islamic Architecture and Urbanism in the 20 th and 21 st Centuries	Connecting the architecture of the Arab world to various interrelated issues such as Westernization, modernization, and the relationship between the architect and the state, this course discusses the evolution of architecture in the eastern Arab world during the 20 th and 21 st centuries. Its geographic scope emphasizes Egypt, the Arabian Peninsula, and the Fertile Crescent. The course examines the production of certain works of architecture in the region as creative undertakings that address specific functional programs and physical givens ranging from technological conditions to climatic factors. It also presents the architecture of the region within the context of prevailing social, cultural, economic, and political forces while taking into account the urban transformations that took place in the 19 th century worldwide and in many Islamic cities, as well as issues of East-West interactions, modernity, tradition, and heritage. The course links architecture to the volatile conditions that have defined the evolution of the region during the period under consideration, and that have given the region considerable (and some would argue disproportionate) weight within the context of international politics.

Specialization Courses (continued)

Code	Credits	Course Title	Description
IAA 635	3 credits	Contemporary Cities for Muslim Societies	This course offers a series of positional interpretations and discussions of contemporary architecture in Muslim communities. It addresses the irony of identity, tradition, and modernity by critically outlining a number of aspects related to the status of architecture in selected Muslim cities, including Aleppo, Cairo, Doha, Dubai, and other cities. Through a reading of trends that emerged over the three decades, students are introduced to the concepts of Pan-Arabism, Mediterranean-ism and Middle Eastern-ism, post-traditionalism, postcolonialism, globalization, post-globalization, and the space of flows and their implications on the shaping of architectural identity in Muslim communities.
IAA 636	3 credits	Globalization, Cities and Urban Policies	Middle Eastern and Gulf cities currently seem to be heavily under construction and rapidly globalizing. Some Gulf cities have been at the forefront of developing into postmodern cities, and other cities in the region have been presenting themselves as attractive locations and global hubs. While some are considered port cities, they are outstanding examples of integration into global networks. Evidently, economic ambitions—from fostering trade and production to stimulating tourism, sports, and leisure industries—are important factors behind this. However, this brave new world is not without new ruptures, deepening fractures, and increasing inequalities. Thus, this course deals with manifold dimensions of contemporary urban development in the Middle East, with a specific focus on the cities of the Arabian Gulf, including economic aspects and social consequences. To situate and interpret these case studies, the course also engages in understanding and debating theoretical and conceptual approaches and recent interdisciplinary findings from comparative perspectives.

Elective Courses*

Code	Credits	Course Title	Description
IAA 641	3 credits	Urban Interventions in Historic Islamic Cities	This course provides a comprehensive discussion of the changes in urban land use and the socio-economic structure of urban settings in Muslim countries. Goals, plans, and operations of adaptive reuse and regeneration of traditional as well as modern districts are discussed. Case studies from historic Middle Eastern and European cities are analytically presented. The course involves a theoretical basis for the understanding of design in the built environment, and an appreciation of the evolving integration of aspects of design and regeneration in different types of environments. The theoretical material includes consideration of aesthetics, urban morphology, rural settlement, design methods, and sustainable development, and encourages multidisciplinary and critical perspectives on these aspects.

Elective Courses* (continued)

Code	Credits	Course Title	Description
IAA 642	3 credits	Physical Spaces and Spatial Humanities in Digital Societies	Since the development of various digital gazetteers, physical environments and spaces have been involved in digital humanities studies to examine people’s interaction and the viability of spaces in digital forms. This module explores this new phenomenon from a dual standpoint: (1) attention to how our perception of physical and digital spaces evolved over the last years following the massive adoption of digital tools and platforms in our daily lives, and (2) the course studies how digital technologies interact with a spatially enabled database to retrieve and display results, and how they can add map-based interactive elements to various digital platforms. In this course, students study how geographic information from history, archaeology, and cultural heritage is organized using the appropriate digital tools in relation to place-making and consumption. By using spatial data, students elucidate people’s behavior and interactions toward physical environments and help in reshaping viable places to suit societal needs and traditions. In order to reach successful and reliable results, the course looks at the basics of digital imaging, Geographic Information System (GIS), Space Syntax Analysis, and ‘Volunteered Geographic Information,’ which underpins the maps on our tablets and smartphones, and considers how geography features in digital literary and textual analysis.
IAA 643	3 credits	Types and Typologies of Domestic Architecture	This course explores the domestic sphere in an Islamic context. It aims to familiarize students with the history, structure, and social use of residential forms in areas that are now part of Arabia, North Africa, Egypt, Greater Syria, Iran, Iraq, Turkey, and the Ottoman Balkans. The course involves an overview of the ways these spaces have been imaged and imagined in art, literature, films, and scholarly texts. This course starts with the development of an aspirational design brief that accurately registers the culture and needs of existing and/or potential users. Skills are developed in the respectful apprehension of cultural and physical diversity and in the effective deployment of domestic architecture. Methods of communication that are accessible to lay audiences and experiential qualities are employed at all stages of the design process in order to know how domestic architecture in Islamic societies contributed to the understanding of typological processes, urban fabric, and organisms.
IST 621	3 credits	Sustainable Islamic Urbanism: Past and Present	This course offers a contemporary understanding of the Muslim city. It draws heavily on the writings of key scholars and the way in which each has developed his or her thoughts on the role of Islam in shaping the urban form, and the overall built environment. The course covers issues that pertain to Islamic perspectives of urban spatial structures, the physical aspects of the urban form, and the role of socio-cultural factors and legal system in the formation of Muslim cities.

Faculty

Dr. Akel Ismail Kahera	Program Director, Professor of Islamic Architecture and Urbanism
Dr. Emine Filiz Kolmek	Assistant Professor of Sustainable Urbanism
Rayan K. Khalil	Research Fellow

*Students can also select an elective course from other specializations within the program.





Admission requirements

Applicants seeking admission to the Master of Science in Islamic Art, Architecture and Urbanism should have a bachelor's degree with a strong academic record (minimum 3.0 GPA out of 4.0) from a recognized institution in the related fields of Art History, Archaeology, Interior Architecture/Design, Architecture, and Urban Planning.

Please refer to the following table for a summary of the admission criteria:

Program	MS in Islamic Art, Architecture, and Urbanism
Required Field of Study	Art History, Archaeology, Interior Architecture/ Design, Architecture, and Urban Planning
Language Proficiency	IELTS: 6.5 or TOEFL: 79 Further details about the language proficiency requirement and the process to seek exemption (where this is an option) are available on the website: admissions.hbku.edu.qa

Application requirements

A completed online application form:
admissions.hbku.edu.qa

Academic transcripts

Official electronic copies of transcripts should be submitted as part of the online application. Final transcripts and graduation statements are required for all previous university studies. All transcripts submitted should include an explanation of the grading system. For those who have not completed their current studies, transcripts must include results from the last completed semester of coursework. Transcripts in languages other than English or Arabic must be accompanied by an official translation. Applicants who are admitted to the program based on copies of or incomplete transcripts will be required to provide original transcripts upon enrollment in order to register for courses.

Standardized test results

Official copies (where required) must be sent directly to HBKU. Please refer to the institutional codes below:

- ▶ GRE: 7551
- ▶ GMAT: H6S
- ▶ TOEFL: 4981
- ▶ IELTS: No code required. Students should ask the IELTS center where they tested to send the IELTS TRF to HBKU

Applicants should also submit copies of their test scores with the online application.

Letters of recommendation

Applicants should submit two letters of recommendation, one of which must be from an academic referee. Applicants should include their referees' names and email addresses in the online application. Referees will receive an email requesting them to complete their references.



Personal statement of interest

Applicants should submit a personal statement as part of the online application. The statement should explain why the candidate is applying to the program, and how their studies will contribute to the achievement of their personal objectives, including information about the applicant's research interests and achievements (minimum of 300, maximum of 500 words).

Resume/Curriculum vitae

Applicants should submit a copy of their current resume or curriculum vitae as part of the online application.

This should include the following information:

- ▶ Academic Qualifications
- ▶ Professional Experience
- ▶ Publications
- ▶ Research Projects
- ▶ Academic Awards or Honors
- ▶ Conference Presentations

Identification document

Applicants should submit an electronic copy of their passport as part of their online application. Nationals and residents of Qatar should also submit their valid Qatar ID.

Student funding

The College of Islamic Studies provides opportunities for scholarships and funding on a competitive basis. Further information will be provided to applicants who are admitted to the program.

Tuition fees

Program	Master of Science in Islamic Art, Architecture and Urbanism
Total Program Tuition Fees	QAR 90,000
Tuition Fees per Credit Hour	QAR 2,500
Total Program Credit Hours	36
Program Duration	2

Contact Information

Admission inquiries

admissions.cis@hbku.edu.qa

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 [hbku_cis](#)

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 HBKU College of Islamic Studies

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