



ISLAMIC ONLINE UNIVERSITY

Civic Engagement Report: August 2015

ABSTRACT

The Islamic Online University is committed towards its civic engagement and realizes that universities should play a major role in creating a generation of individuals who are aware of their social responsibilities and would benefit their communities as responsible citizens.

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Introduction

The Islamic Online University (IOU) is an accredited affordable online tuition-free educational institution that offers intensive online graduate, undergraduate, diploma and certificate programs in English medium and believes that higher education should be for all and not privilege for some. The University has one of the most diverse academic and administrative staff, and it has registered students from 228 different countries of the world.

The IOU has an operational license in The Gambia and an MOU with the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education (MoBSE) of the Government of The Gambia. The IOU's degrees are accredited by the government of Somalia's Ministry of Higher Education. The University also has a Memorandum of Agreement with Guinea Bissau's Ministry of Education, Culture and Higher Education. The IOU is a full member institution of the International Council for Open and Distance Education (ICDE), the Association of African Universities (AAU) and the [Talloires Network](#). The IOU membership of ICDE and AAU can be verified [here](#) and [here](#) respectively. The University is an associate member of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE). The membership details can be seen [here](#). The University is also a member of the African Quality Assurance Network ([AfriQAN](#)).

The Islamic Online University currently has seven departments; Department of Education, Department of Islamic Economics, Banking & Finance, Department of Business Administration, Department of Information Technology; Department of Psychology, Department of Islamic Studies, and the Department of Arabic Language and Linguistics.

Civic Engagement

i. Being a Tuition-free Institution

Ever since its inception, the university has been actively engaged in civic roles and responsibilities. At the time of launching of the undergraduate programs at the IOU, a key decision was taken to make the program tuition-free. Only a very modest registration fee is charged per semester, which is based on the human development index and thus varies from country to country. Thereby, making the higher education easily affordable worldwide for the benefit of the individuals, their communities and humanity in general.

The fee structure of the various programs at the IOU are as follows:

Classification of Country	Undergraduate Program Fees	Postgraduate Program Fees
Low human development countries	60\$ USD	150\$ USD
Medium human development countries	80\$ USD	200\$ USD
High human development countries	100\$ USD	250\$ USD
Very high human development countries	150\$ USD	350\$ USD

The IOU undergraduate and postgraduate semester registration fees can be viewed in the following links:

- [BSc in Psychology](#)
- [Bachelor of Education](#)
- [BSc in Islamic Banking, Economics and Finance](#)
- [BA in Islamic Studies](#)
- [MA in Islamic Studies](#)
- [Diploma in Business Administration](#)
- [Diploma in Information Technology](#)



With just modest registration fees per semester, the cost of an Islamic Online University program is a fraction of the total cost of a comparable degree program from a public or an online university.

ii. Introducing Community Service as a Part of Graduation Requirement

The second major decision related to civic engagement was taken in March 2013 when community service was made a mandatory requirement for graduating from the undergraduate and graduate programs at the Islamic Online University. The result of this effort could be seen at the end of the Fall 2014 semester, which was in January 2015, when the IOU students completed their community service hours which came to a total of 39,769 approved hours.

The Community Service Hours Requirement at the IOU for [undergraduate](#) and [postgraduate](#) programs are as follows:

BA / BSc / BEd Degree Community Service Hours Requirement

To obtain a BA, BEd or BSc degree, a student needs to complete a total of 216 hours of community service.

2-year Diploma Program Community Service Hours Requirement

To obtain a 2-year accredited Diploma, a student needs to complete a total of 72 hours of community service.

Higher Diploma (postgraduate) Community Service Hours Requirement

To obtain a Higher Diploma, a student needs to complete a total of 108 hours of community service.

MA Community Service Hours Requirement

To obtain an MA, a student needs to complete a total of 144 hours of community service.

The students are required to complete 36 hours on an average per semester to achieve their required target before the end of their studies at the IOU. The projects are selected by the students themselves and they are required to submit a report attested by the organization where they carried out the community service work. This report serves as an evidence of their work and it is stored by the University in the student's academic record. It is evaluated critically by a designated Community Service officer at the Islamic Online University, to determine whether the submitted work can be considered as community service and whether it fulfills the university requirements or not.

lii. [Women Empowerment Course](#)

In 2013, the Islamic Online University conducted a 6-month long personal development course exclusively for women. Realizing the need for educating the women in underprivileged countries about personal development, the University raised 8,955\$ USD to offer over 100 scholarships to the deserving applicants.

In this personal development course, the instructor concentrated on the teachings of psychology to:

- Take immediate control of one's life (no matter what the circumstances are)
- Have a sense of purpose and set long term and short term goals to pursue what one wants from life
- Bounce back from setbacks
- Learn the art of decision-making
- Get rid of stress, anxiety and fear
- Lead a more productive, peaceful and fulfilling life



iv. Intensive English Course

In 2013 the Islamic Online University in collaboration with the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education (MoBSE) and the General Secretariat for Islamic and Arabic Education (Amanah) launched a pilot Intensive English language course at a very nominal fee for the madrasah graduates in The Gambia to meet the immediate needs of the students, enabling them to pursue higher education. Furthermore, 100 scholarships were provided by the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education (MoBSE) to facilitate the deserving students.

Among the most important issues hampering the development of several developing countries is the inability of their senior secondary and tertiary educational institutions to effectively utilize English as the main medium of instruction. Therefore, the IOU has taken the initiative to offer the Intensive English Course currently in three countries of Africa, namely, Somaliland, The Gambia and Guinea Bissau to give the young generation of Africa a chance at a brighter future. The University plans to offer this program in many other countries to cater to the needs of the underprivileged population throughout the world.

The fee scale is \$90 to \$125 USD per year, for the entire program.

v. IOU Prison Initiative

Due to the lack of Muslim support for the incarcerated, it becomes difficult for them to receive the correct guidance they often seek. Through this special initiative undertaken by the Islamic Online University, the incarcerated have the choice to study the general Islamic Studies Diploma courses or the Undergraduate programs at the University. Through this endeavor the University hopes to aid the rehabilitation process of the incarcerated, and assist in preparing them for a successful and productive life outside the prison.

In the beginning of 2014, the Islamic Online University took a step to educate the prisoners with Islamic education in the United States. The project started on a pilot basis with a donation campaign. The target amount of the campaign was \$5,000 USD, and \$7,235 USD was raised.

In December 2014, the University expanded the project and started the second donation campaign with the goal of raising \$25,000 USD. The campaign is still ongoing.

Among the highlights of this project are the following facts:

- Identified students at Federal and State Correctional facilities to enroll in the Diploma program. Currently 500 inmates are enrolled throughout the USA;
- Initiated course work in new institutions in Florida Dept. of Corrections, Georgia, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Connecticut, and New York;
- Continued production and distribution of course materials to registered inmates.

The University plans to introduce the program in other countries in the coming years in order to cater to the need of providing authentic Islamic Education to the incarcerated Muslim population in various parts of the world upon request.

vi. Young Leadership Development Program: YL360

In December 2014, the Islamic Online University offered a 3-months long course for the youth completely for free. The course was open for anyone above the age of 14 years. It was based on the ATD (Association for Talent Development) standards. Over 2500 students benefited from this program.

It was a comprehensive program aimed at taking the students through a transformational journey filled with self-reflection, application and improvement in every aspect of life.

The course consisted of 2-hour sessions twice per week for 3 months. The following techniques were used to maximize the learning:



- Self-reflection
- Personality Assessment Test
- Setting transformational goals, and tracking progress
- Assignment videos to watch and answer questions
- Competition
- Team Project

Among the topics covered in the course work were introduction to community service, launching a community project, time management, emotional intelligence, and vision and goal setting.

Not only the concept of community service was introduced in the course, but the students were required to carry out a community service project of their choice and submit the project report.

vii. [Muslim Youth Counseling Service for Free](#)

Due to the burning need, lack of knowledge and widespread ignorance about mental health and psychological well-being in the Muslim communities, the Islamic Online University offers Muslim Youth Counseling Service for free. No individual is prevented from benefiting from this service regardless of his or her ethnic, financial or social background.

viii. [Campaign for Collecting Funds to Provide Free Counseling Service](#)

The Islamic Online University offers a counseling service with very minimal charges to cater to the needs of the communities worldwide for the wellbeing of the body and mind.

Fees Structure

Introductory Session	Elementary Counseling	Regular Counseling	Intermediate Counseling	Intensive Counseling
30 USD	70 USD	90 USD	100 USD	110 USD

Realizing the fact that everyone cannot afford to avail the service even at these minimum charges, the University ran a campaign in 2013 to collect funds to provide completely free service to the deserving people. A total of 50 people were provided free counseling service as a result of the campaign.

In April 2014, the University started a new campaign in order to expand the counseling service for free to the deserving people once again. The campaign is still going on as of now, and the University aims to provide free counseling to over a hundred people with this campaign.

ix. [Conference to Create Awareness on Mental Health and Psychological Well-being](#)

In May 2015, the Islamic Online University conducted its first ever online conference on psychological well-being. It was a completely free and open for all conference aired live online.

The aim of the conference was to spread awareness of psycho-social issues in the community (with a focus on Muslim communities to a certain extent as there is a burning need for it due to ignorance) and provide practical solutions for change. Various topics were covered during the 3-day conference, for example, domestic violence, self-esteem, unhealthy relationships, marital conflicts, sexual abuse, effect of trauma on children, depression, and mental disorders.

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