

# ISLAMIC EDUCATION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK ANNUAL REPORT 2016/17

## WELCOME

The Warwick Islamic Education Project is a pioneering initiative inspired by a shared transformative educational vision between the Muslim community and the University.

### Our goals are as follows:

- ▶ To establish Islamic Education as a rigorous interdisciplinary field of research and teaching that opens up professional development pathways for practitioners.
- ▶ To empower Muslim communities across the UK, Europe and wider world through facilitating educational competence building, intercultural/interfaith dialogue and contributing to the public understanding of Islam within the wider society.
- ▶ To encourage research-based reflective practice among the community of practitioners in Islamic Education including faith leaders, teachers and community and youth workers.

In our first year, we've launched study programmes, begun developing a research strategy, raised awareness about the project and fostered strong connections with the relevant national and international stakeholders.

None of this would be possible without the support of the DCD Family Trust, whose generous donation helped us to establish a Readership in Islamic Education, to whom we are enormously grateful.

## MEET DR ABDULLAH SAHIN

**In 2016 we welcomed Dr Abdullah Sahin as our first Reader in Islamic Education. Thank you to the DCD Trust for their generous funding which enabled this.**

Dr Sahin is the author of the groundbreaking book, *New Directions in Islamic Education* and comes from an Islamic Studies, Theology, Educational Studies and Social Sciences background. He's led in-depth research into religious identity formation among British Muslim youth, and worked on educational strategies to address the impact of religious extremism within Muslim minority and majority contexts. His work has pioneered the creation of recognized professional development, taught programmes for diverse groups of Muslim faith leaders and educators in the UK.

Dr Sahin's work has already been invaluable for the project and he's led colleagues across campus to achieve significant results.

### Achievements so far

- ▶ We've started forming a postgraduate Islamic Education Research and Learning Community at Warwick through successfully launching the first research-based MA in Islamic Education within the UK university system and by setting up a highly popular Islamic Education Summer School.
- ▶ We've started attracting home and overseas research students, raised awareness through publications and participation in national and international conferences that all contribute to the creation of a hub of excellence in research on Islamic Education at Warwick.
- ▶ We've initiated a strong dialogue with grassroots Muslim educational organisations and other mainstream and faith-based community groups in order to collaborate on creating effective opportunities for educational inclusion and social and community cohesion. We ran our successful first Islamic Education Summer School (IESS) that has attracted both Muslim teachers and wider educational practitioners creating opportunities for exchange, cooperation and dialogue.



# GROWING OUR REPUTATION

It's been a busy year developing the project and recruiting students, but we've also begun to build our international academic reputation.

Dr Sahin has contributed to several European conferences exploring the role of education in general and Islamic Education in particular in bringing about peaceful coexistence within culturally and religiously diverse modern societies. He has given several public lectures such as addressing the Nuremberg Forum in Germany discussing the significance of serving 'common good' in Islam and its implications for achieving a just social integration in Europe. He's been invited to conduct workshops at universities in Malaysia and give a keynote address at an international conference on educational reform in Muslim Societies organised by UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, Indonesia.

Dr Sahin has produced several scholarly articles and book chapters actively contributing to the growing research reputation of Warwick Islamic Education Project and disseminating the research findings and the overall goals of the project to a wider community of researchers and practitioners. One of his recently published papers on the compassionate and transformative character of Islamic pedagogy was selected to be discussed at the forthcoming Oxford symposium on 'Compassion in Higher Education'.

## STARTING THE DIALOGUE

We've seen a growing recognition both nationally and internationally for the relevance of the Warwick Islamic Education Project.

We've talked to a wide range of stakeholders to understand the range of educational development needs within the community, including community leaders, educationalists, Muslim parents, researchers and interfaith activists. We've been welcomed by several foundations who share our values and wish to engage with the Warwick Islamic Education Project:

- ▶ The Lancashire Council of Mosques in Blackburn have diverse training needs for Muslim faith leaders in their organisation, which we are interested to learn about.
- ▶ The Jamiatul-Ilm Wal-Huda, the College of Islamic Knowledge and Guidance and one of the largest Muslim Seminaries in the UK, welcomed us for a visit where we met with the Principal, Teachers, and students.
- ▶ The Bolton Muslim Girls' School, has an inclusive Islamic education ethos. We benefited from meeting the Chair of the Trust Dilaver Valli, and the headteacher, teachers and students.
- ▶ The Abu Hanifah Foundation offers a pioneering model of early years Islamic Education, teaching Islam and nurturing faith through the medium of English, addressing the

distinctive needs of British Muslim children. We met with their CEO and Founder, Shaykh Imtiyaz Damiel to discuss collaborations.

- ▶ The Nida Foundation supports a wide network of Muslim teachers. Dr Sahin will be giving two public lectures and a workshop to this group.
- ▶ Dr Sahin has been cooperating with Aziz Foundation over its community-based educational projects and he will also be visiting Cambridge Muslim College pursuing potential collaboration.

Finally, we ran an extremely successful Islamic Education Summer School, and formed a European Islamic Education Research Network on the basis of it.

We're planning to hold the second summer school in September 2017, on the broad theme 'Teaching the Sacred'. Our goal is to find out the best way of facilitating the teaching of the Qur'an in today's diverse communities of learners. We'll look at traditional Islamic educational settings, mainstream schooling, religious education, higher education, and adult education sectors.





## LAUNCHING THE VERY FIRST MA IN ISLAMIC EDUCATION

Our first main course intake will start in September 2017. We've received over twenty applications, and we've offered eight places so far; three international students and five UK and EU students.

This strongly indicates that we'll achieve our goal of recruiting seven to ten students to the course this year.

It's been encouraging to see a strong international interest, with enquiries from mainland Europe, Gulf States, India, Pakistan, South Africa, Turkey and Malaysia. The quality of applications has been impressive too, with people applying from a diverse range of backgrounds in Islamic Education. Some are teachers or headteachers, some are already researchers, and others are facilitators of informal Islamic Education (maktabs and madrasas).

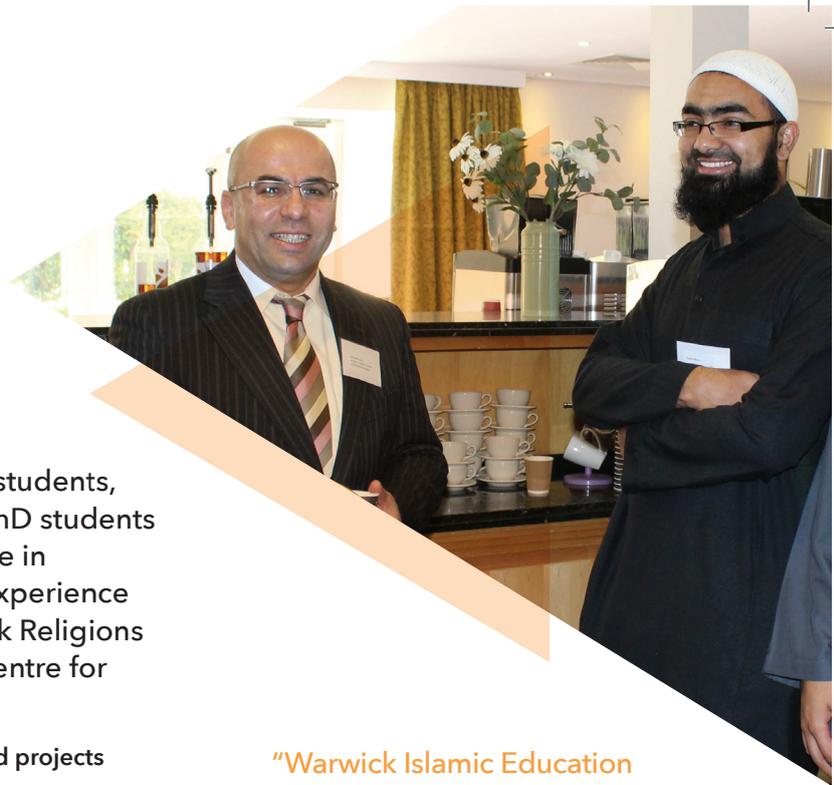
As predicted, there's a growing interest among the graduates of traditional Islamic Seminaries in the UK too. Some don't have the relevant qualifications to apply, but others are graduates or offer equivalent experience or studies. We're considering every application on a case-by-case basis, and we're especially interested in those in senior positions with established teaching experience.

# WELCOMING TOMORROW'S LEADERS

In addition to our already existing two doctorate students, we're looking forward to welcoming additional PhD students joining the Islamic Education research programme in September 2017. They'll have a huge wealth of experience to draw upon from academics here in the Warwick Religions and Education Research Unit (WRERU) and the Centre for Education Studies (CES).

You can already picture their potential impact with proposed projects like these:

- ▶ Investigating effective ways of improving the educational culture within early years Islamic Education provision (maktabs and madrasas) as well as Muslim higher education institutions in the UK, Europe and wider Muslim world.
- ▶ Examining the teaching of Islam and Muslims within different levels of mainstream schooling including curriculum and textbooks in the UK.
- ▶ Assessing the training needs of the Muslim faith leaders and issues affecting their personal wellbeing and professional practice while facilitating religious and spiritual leadership within the Muslim minority context of Britain and wider Europe.
- ▶ Investigating the impact of 'critical-reflective Islamic Education intervention programmes' on building resilience against religious extremism within the community and sensitive contexts such as the Prison Service.
- ▶ Discerning the holistic and transformative nature of education within Muslim core sources and wider Muslim intellectual and spiritual heritage.



"Warwick Islamic Education Project has created a unique academic space for Muslim educators like me who wish to conduct research in the field. I feel privileged to be part of this new exciting community of researchers."

PhD Student

"It was an experience of openness, real exchange, sharing and inspiring ways of dealing with Islamic Education in different contexts and countries."

An International Summer School participant

## LOOKING AHEAD

We look forward to building on our existing progress in the years to come: welcoming the exciting energy which our MA and PhD students will bring; promoting our work; building relationships; and creating a meaningful and lasting impact.

## OUR APPEAL TO YOU: COULD YOU HELP TO GROW THE IMPACT OF THIS PROJECT?

The appointment of Dr Sahin was thanks to a generous donation from the DCD Trust. It's vastly accelerated the growth of our project. Could you join them in helping us to do more and faster?

Among other projects, we want to establish dedicated scholarships which will enable students to share their energy and insight, and touch lives across the world. Could you donate to our work and help us welcome more scholars?

Every gift makes a difference, and the University can claim Gift Aid on eligible donations too. You can donate online at [www.warwick.ac.uk/supportWIEP](http://www.warwick.ac.uk/supportWIEP), or contact the fundraising team at [benefactors@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:benefactors@warwick.ac.uk) to find out more.