



# Oxford University Islamic Society Access Initiatives 2023/24

Part of



OXFORD UNIVERSITY  
**ISLAMIC SOCIETY**



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# Executive Summary

Access has been central to the work of the Oxford University Islamic Society (OUISoc) for many years, and we seek to take this to new heights in the upcoming 2023/24 academic year.

We have developed OUISoc Access with aims of expanding outreach; revitalising our media and resources; and continuing to offer access initiatives throughout the year.

Our work this year would build upon our existing access initiatives so that they continue to provide support for prospective Muslim students.

We also hope that this would strengthen the foundation ensuring the long-term sustainability of OUISoc Access.



[OMAC] really helped me understand what the interview/tutorials could be like and how to engage with prompts."

*OMAC 2022 Participant*

As a Society, we are dedicated in supporting Muslim students in a holistic manner: from the start of a prospective student's application; during their time at Oxford; and beyond university. We aim to show that coming to Oxford is an attainable goal, whilst at the same time where one develop their *deen* (faith).

We hope to deliver our flagship access event, the Oxford Muslim Access Conference (OMAC), later in the calendar year.



# Impact Summary

2022/23 was a hugely successful year for the OUISoc Access Team. An in-person OMAC was back following the pandemic with great reception.

- Over 100 prospective students participated in OMAC 2022.
- 95% and 77% of students found the sessions 'Oxford Explained', and 'Addressing Faith and Cultural Barriers' to be 'helpful' or 'extremely helpful', respectively.
- 88% of students 'somewhat agreed' or 'strongly agreed' with the statement "I understand the Oxford application process".

OMAC has continued to tackle common misconceptions of Oxford and worked to improve Muslim representation at Oxford.

Beyond OMAC, a virtual personal statement scheme was hosted in September for Year 13 students submitting applications for entry in 2023. This programme involved pairing applicants with a current Oxford student in the same subject area to provide them with feedback and advice on their draft personal statement via a 20-minute Zoom call.

An in-person Offer-Holder's Day was also hosted in February 2023 for students with conditional offers, during which students attended a series of talks and Q&A sessions delivered in collaboration with Jesus College, Oxford.

All these events were run parallel to our social media campaign, which has involved frequent posts sharing the role of OUISoc, personal statement tips, interview advice and subject-specific guidance.



# Who We Are

The OUISoc is a student society that oversees the social and spiritual welfare of the Muslim student community at Oxford. Beyond this, the OUISoc is committed to supporting prospective students in reaching their full potential and increasing Muslim representation at higher education institutions like Oxford. Our aim through access work is to demonstrate that coming to Oxford is an attainable goal for Muslim students, whilst at the same time an opportunity to strengthen one's faith.

OUISoc constitutionally has an Access Team that is dedicated to the delivery of access initiatives every year.

Although the proportion of BAME students at Oxford has recently seen a slight increase (from 18.3% in 2018 to 27.8% in 2022), Black African, Pakistani and Bangladeshi students remain three of the most underrepresented ethnicities of the Oxford student body. Uniquely, OUISoc traverses all three ethnicities as well as other minority ethnic groups, which presents a valuable opportunity for broadly targeted access work. Additionally, our position as a faith society enables us to address the various faith-related barriers that may prevent students from applying.

There are three critical aims of the access programmes hosted by the OUISoc:

**Inspire**

**Inform**

**Influence**

Many Muslims across the UK often come from minority ethnic, low-income backgrounds and are underrepresented. We aim to bridge the gap and inspire students, raising their aspirations and demonstrate that coming to Oxford can be a real attainable goal.

Through our various workshops, we hope students leave with a greater understanding of the application process and a realistic appreciation of what life is like as a Muslim at Oxford so that they can make an informed decision about applying to Oxford.

By representing current Muslim Oxford students as role models, we hope that prospective students too will be able to influence and bring about positive change to the people and society around them.



The prospect of coming to Oxford can seem daunting, many in the OUISoc community were in this position not that long ago. This is why there is a dedicated Access Team to work with schools and colleges to help students with applications, tackle common misconceptions and engage with parents. Every year, OUISoc elects an Access Director, and a sub-committee is appointed. Together they form the OUISoc Access Team. Here is the Team for 2023/24:



**Fahim Miah**  
Access Director

Assalaamu'alaikum! (Peace be upon you!) My name is Fahim and I am excited to deliver another year of impactful access initiatives. A lot of access schemes have helped me to be where I am today, and I wish to contribute back to our community through this role. Together we aim to help students to reach their full potential, support the Muslim community and contribute to wider society.

Salaam! My name is Farheen and this year's Access VP. I benefitted a lot from access schemes when I was thinking about applying to university, and my experience at Oxford has been very different to what I originally expected. The OUISoc community is a warm and welcoming environment, and our access programmes showcase what it is like to be a Muslim student at Oxford!



**Farheen Muhammed**  
Access VP



**Jubeda Salam**  
Events Manager

Salaam, my name is Jubeda and I will be this year's Events Manager! I was very blessed to have gotten involved with many access programmes when applying to Oxford and it really contributed to submitting a successful application.

Having gone through this process, I understand the significant impact access work has, and I would love to help prospective students achieve their full potential.

Salaam! I am Nabeeha, and this year's Applications Manager! This is my first year at Oxford as I'm studying for an intercalated master's course. Access has always been a huge part of my life - these programmes provided me with a welcoming environment to ensure I reached my aspirations. OUISoc Access is a way I can help those like me and the wider community. I'm looking forward to all the events that will take place in the coming year.



**Nabeeha Toufiq**  
Applications Manager

# Who We Support

Our aim is to demonstrate that coming to Oxford is an attainable goal, whilst at the same time a place where one can strengthen their *deen* (faith). As a faith group, we endeavour to show the religious and spiritual aspect of university in addition to providing support with the application process and moving in at Oxford.

We seek to help UK Muslims coming from sixth form/college regardless of their background or level of spirituality. This is a reflection of our diverse and open membership at OUISoc. It is often the case that these aspiring Muslims come from ethnic minority and low-income backgrounds. As a result, the Access Team is in a unique position where we have the opportunity to traverse these groups and extend our outreach work. Nevertheless, a lot of our resources and events are welcome to all prospective students.

Although the Access Team does not have official events for visiting/international students or those pursuing a post-graduate course, the wider OUISoc has an extensive network of students that are willing to help. We are able, therefore, to connect aspiring international or post-grad students with the existing OUISoc community.



[OMAC] was really inspiring."

*OMAC 2022 Participant*

# Our Impact

We have enjoyed much success and positive feedback with our access initiatives in the past year. 2022/23 saw the return of an in-person OMAC event following the COVID-19 pandemic, a virtual personal statement feedback session and the delivery of an offer-holder day for incoming students.

## Oxford Muslim Access Conference

We returned to an in-person OMAC event in December 2022 for aspiring Oxford applicants. OMAC 2022 was generously hosted by Clifford Chance and supported by Oxford University Admissions & Outreach, Aziz Foundation and COSARAF.

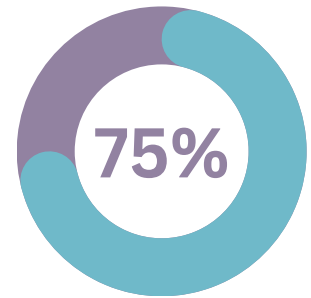


## Over 100

participants at OMAC 2022

## Guest Speakers

Marrium Khan, Senior Access Officer at the University delivered a talk on the application process; and Sheikh Ibrahim Amin, Imam of the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies led a discussion on tackling cultural and faith barriers.

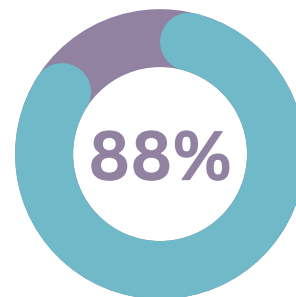


found the sessions 'Oxford Explained', and 'Addressing Faith and Cultural Barriers' to be 'helpful' or 'extremely helpful', respectively.

## Alumni Panel



discussion with four OUISoc alumni from different careers.



indicated they 'somewhat agreed' or 'strongly agreed' with the statement 'I want to go to Oxford' following OMAC 2022.



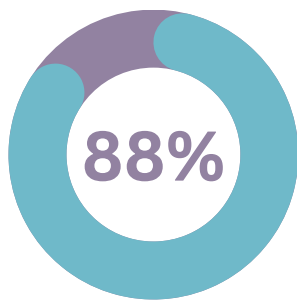


All the [OMAC] volunteers were very helpful, informative and friendly."

*OMAC 2022 Participant*

Furthermore, a virtual personal statement scheme was organised in September 2022 for Year 13 students. This included the pairing of applicants with current Oxford students of the same subject via Zoom to provide feedback and advice on their statements, and the other aspects of the application process (such as the interview and admission exams).

In February 2023, an Offer-Holder's Day was delivered for those with conditional offers. Students attended talks delivered by the OUISoc Access Team of 2022/23 in collaboration with Jesus College, Oxford.



indicated they 'somewhat agreed' or 'strongly agreed' with the statement "I understand the Oxford application process" following OMAC 2022, an increase from 22% before the event.

OMAC has been successful in tackling misconceptions with only 3% of respondents 'somewhat agree' or 'strongly agree' with the statement "You have to rich to go to Oxford", decreasing from 28% before the event.

For a more in-depth look, please look at our OMAC 2022 Impact Report available on our website.



# Access Initiatives 2023/24

The OUISoc Access Team offers a wide-range of initiatives to support prospective students at every step of the application process to Oxford and ease the transition to university. Through our various activities, we seek to promote our three core objectives: inform, influence and inspire.

The Access Team currently offers the following initiatives:

- School Visits
- Personal Statement Reviews
- Oxford Offer-Holder's Day
- Oxford Muslim Access Conference (OMAC)

## School Visits

We are able to facilitate school visits incomings (where schools come to visit Oxford), and outgoing (where the OUISoc Access Team goes to schools either in-person or virtually) throughout the year.

For outgoing school visits, the Access Team is able to visit schools either in-person or virtually. Our presentation covers the following:

- The role of OUISoc
- The Oxbridge system (breakdown of the application process; and tutorial system)
- Our 'Oxford Journeys' (our subject volunteers share their own personal experiences from the application process, moving in and settling in at Oxford)
- Q&A Session

Though the Access Team is not able to arrange and organise a full-day trip for incoming school visits, we do however reach out with the school's regional college and liaise between them to see if a visit can be arranged. Generally, such visits to colleges often includes:

- Tour of the college
- Presentation by the college's access team about the application process
- Presentation by the OUISoc Access Team, members and volunteers
- Q&A Session

In both instances, we can tailor our presentation to meet subject preferences, or whether to focus on the application process (any specific part) or the student life at Oxford as a Muslim. We also encourage parents/carers to get involved and we can engage with them too.



[OMAC] was really entertaining! Myth-busted a lot. It was a very cool idea."

*OMAC 2022 Participant*

## Personal Statement Reviews

Over the summer, we encourage Oxbridge applicants to submit their personal statements to gain feedback from our subject volunteers. Having gone through the process, our volunteers know what makes a strong Oxbridge statement.

Writing a personal statement can be a daunting task and we have specific Subject Guides created by students offering their top tips, and a more general insight to a subject.

## Oxford Offer-Holder's Day

In Hilary Term, we invite offer-holders to Oxford to ease the transition to university. This is a great way to meet incoming students, answer any questions they have, and allow them to feel comfortable at Oxford.

Generally, our Offer-Holder's Day includes the following:

- Tour of the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies
- Tour of the Muslim Prayer Room
- Session on finances
- Meet and greet with OUISoc members and students

“

[OMAC] was very well organised and everyone was very friendly.”

*OMAC 2022 Participant*



## Oxford Muslim Access Conference

The Oxford Muslim Access Conference (OMAC) is our flagship annual event, tailored to supporting ambitious, young Muslim students who are considering applying to Oxford and other elite universities.

Since our first event in 2018, the aim has been to provide a stronger, realistic and honest reflection about Oxford to boost the confidence of prospective students.

OMAC is a full-day event that has the following:

- Breakdown of the Oxford application process (delivered by a senior access officer of the University)
- A discussion in tackling cultural and faith barriers (led by Sheikh Ibrahim Amin, the Imam of the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies)
- Breakout sessions where current students share their experiences living at Oxford
- Alumni panel discussion to explore various career paths beyond university

For this upcoming year, the OUISoc Access Team seeks to work upon our access programmes and develop stronger ties with Oxford colleges to help expand our outreach.

### Expanding outreach

A key goal for us is to extend our outreach beyond London and the south-east.

One way we are achieving this is through greater collaboration with Oxford colleges. Each college is linked to a region where they focus their access initiatives.

By opening lines of communication between the OUISoc Access Team and colleges, offering support with our activities, we aim to expand our outreach and increase general awareness of the OUISoc and the Access Team.

### Revitalisation of OUISoc Access

This year, we are focusing in revitalising our access programme. With a new logo and branding, we have updated our webpage online to offer a greater insight to the variety of support provided by the Access Team.

We have uploaded additional Subject and Admission Exam Guides, all of which have been created by current students to bring the most effective and useful advice for prospective students.

Our Subject Guides include the requirements for a course, the modules included, advice on personal statements and recommended reading to get started. Our Admission Exam Guides provide an overview of the exams, advice on how to answer certain sections and recommended preparatory work.



## Over 15

Subject Guides available

## 8 Guides

available covering most  
Admission Exams to  
Oxford



### OUISoc Access Social Media

Our Instagram @ouisoc\_access has seen a recent update as well. Shifting from primarily focusing on posting student blogs, the page now offers a wider range of subject-specific guidance, personal statement advice and interview tips. Our social media is one of the key ways to engage with our target audience.

The expansion of our outreach and collaboration with Oxford colleges, and the revitalisation of OUISoc Access aims to increase the awareness of the Access Team with students, teachers and parents. This would also lay down a solid foundation for the long-term continuation and development of the OUISoc Access Team.



# With Thanks To



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for their continued support with OUISoc Access.



# Contacts

If you have any questions about OUISoc, our Access Proposal or would like to support us, please email [outreach@ouisoc.org](mailto:outreach@ouisoc.org)

Visit our website for further information on the variety of access initiatives we offer, including our Subject Guides and Admission Exam Guides, at [ouisoc.org/outreach](https://ouisoc.org/outreach)

Special thanks to:

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