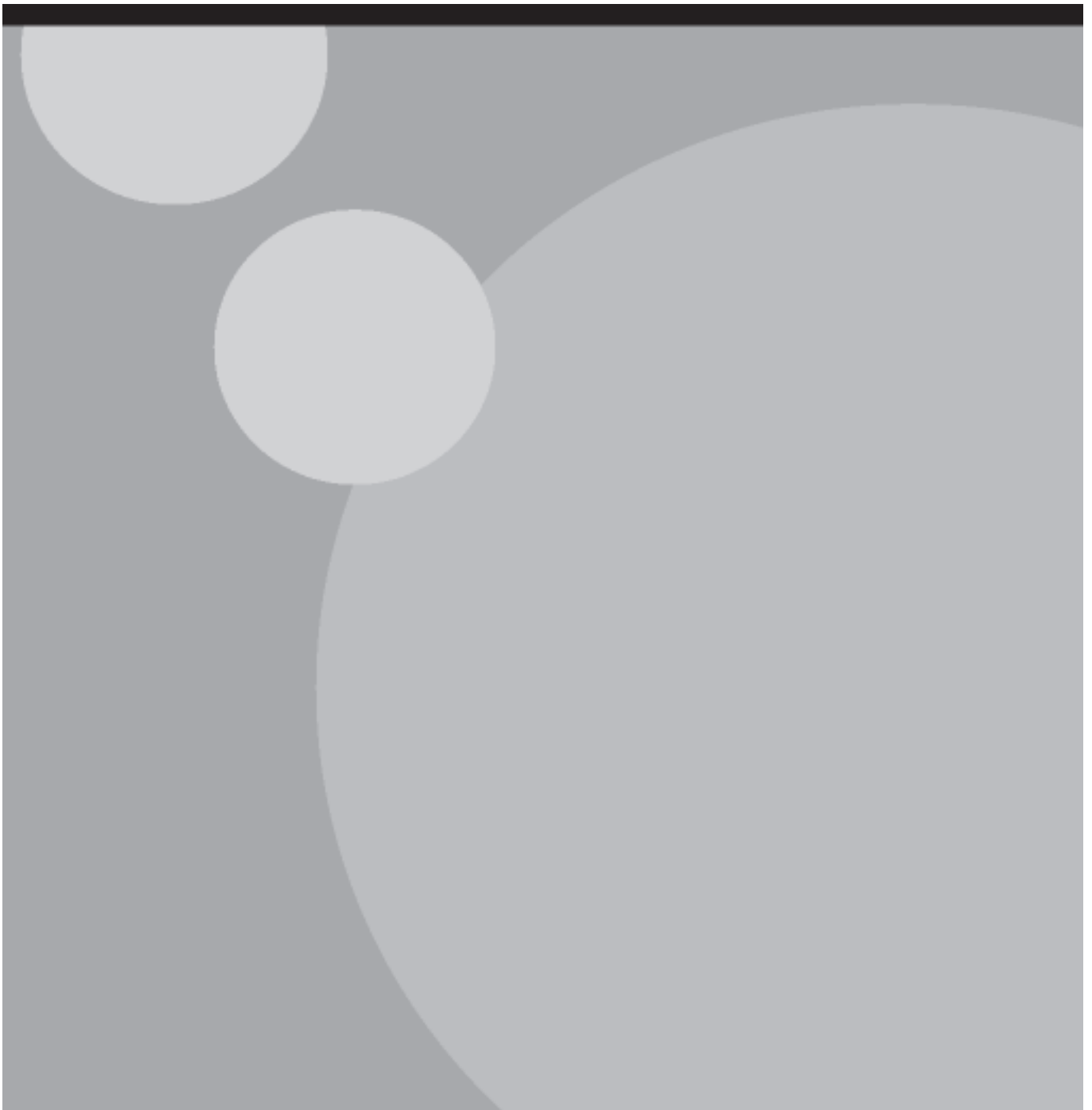




# The training and development of Muslim Faith Leaders

## Current practice and future possibilities



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October 2010

ISBN: 978-1-4098- 2584-5



# The training and development of Muslim Faith Leaders

## Current practice and future possibilities

Mohamed Mukadam and Alison Scott-Baumann,  
with Ashfaque Chowdhary and Sariya Contractor  
Muslim Community College Leicester and University of Gloucestershire  
for the Department for Communities and Local Government  
October 2010

**THIS PROJECT WAS COMMISSIONED UNDER THE PREVIOUS  
ADMINISTRATION.**

**THE FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS ARE THOSE OF THE AUTHORS  
AND DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT THOSE OF THE DEPARTMENT FOR  
COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

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# Acknowledgements and authorship

## Advisory group

The advisory group for this project was set up by the Department for Communities and Local Government under the previous administration. It was chaired by **Dr Anas Al-Shaikh-Ali CBE** and for some or all of the group's lifetime the other members were:

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Asgar Halim Rajput  
Maulana Shahid Raza OBE  
Dr Ataullah Siddiqui  
Shahien Taj MBE  
Mushfique Uddin  
Canon David Whittington

## Institutions visited

Acknowledgements are due to the 28 institutions which were visited as part of the review, and to the many individuals in them who gave generously of their time and expertise.

## Community researchers

Jahangir Akbar, Dr M D Iqbal, Khalid Miah, Yusuf Seedat, Shazad Mohammed, Ahmed Hussain took part in the visits to institutions and assisted with the collection of data.

## Others

Others who provided advice, information and editorial assistance include Dr Stephen Bigger, David Coles, Qari Muhammad Ismail, Dr Malcolm MacLean, Dr Debra Marshall, Dr Gareth Nutt, Canon Dr Mike Parsons, Robin Richardson, Jane Robinson, Mohammed Abdul Aziz, Dr Alex Ryan and Dr Ian Thackray.

People who took part in consultative interviews, discussions and correspondence are listed in Appendix B.

## Responsibility

Views expressed or implied in this report are the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of any of the individuals mentioned above or in Appendix B, or of their institutions. Nor do they necessarily reflect the views of the Department for Communities and Local Government.

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- Dr Alison Scott-Baumann is Reader Emeritus at the University of Gloucestershire and a member of the *Conseil Scientifique* for the Ricoeur Foundation, Paris. She has been a school teacher, an educational psychologist and a university lecturer, and has run research projects for the Department for International Development and the Teacher Development Agency. In 1996 she set up and ran for three years, with Akram Khan Cheema, a teacher education course for Muslim women at Markfield. She now teaches research methods and supervises doctoral students. Her research interests lie in philosophy and the application of philosophy to social justice projects, and in this connection she has worked in recent years with Markfield Institute of Higher Education, Al Mahdi Institute, the Al-Khoei

Foundation and Ebrahim Community College. She was a member of the working party for the Siddiqui Report on Islam and Universities in Britain (2006-7) and sits on the Higher Education Academy Advisory Board for Islamic Studies. Her recent publications include articles about the hijab, curriculum models for Islam in higher education in Britain, translation from one language to another as a model of tolerance, a study entitled *Ricoeur and the Hermeneutics of Suspicion* (2009) and, as co-editor, an anthology of essays about the moral philosophy of Iris Murdoch (2010).

- Mr Ashfaque Choudhury is a qualified headteacher and Ofsted trained inspector. He has been vice chair of the Association of Muslim Schools and in recent years has helped develop key services on school improvement partners and encouraging Muslim headteachers to achieve qualified head teacher status. He is also a registered leadership trainer with the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) and is chair of Muslim Supplementary schools UK, and chair of education for the Association of Muslim Scholars UK. He has travelled extensively across the Middle East and has initiated the Fair Literacy Campaign working to provide English medium education for darul uloom students in Bangladesh.
- Dr Sariya Contractor recently completed her doctoral thesis *Demystifying the Muslimah*, exploring perceptions of young Muslim women living in Britain. Her research juxtaposes the religious Muslim woman's voice with feminist-pragmatist philosophy, thus bringing together religious and secular standpoints. By bringing Muslim women's life stories to audiences from other backgrounds, her work facilitates discourses about inter-community dialogue, social diversity and syncretic British identities. Her recent academic publications include articles about identity politics and migration, the hijab and online Sufism as experienced and expressed by young people on the internet. She has also written a number of articles on the persona of Prophet Muhammad for internet audiences. She is currently the associate chaplain for Muslim students at the University of Gloucestershire.



# Executive summary

## Background and aims

*“Our consultations with Muslim communities, emphasise the importance of the training of imams. The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government will be announcing an independent review to examine, with the communities, how to build the capacity of Islamic seminaries, learning from other faith communities as well as from experience overseas.”*

**Prime Minister Gordon Brown  
speech to the House of Commons  
autumn 2007**

Shortly afterwards the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) set up an advisory group to steer the review to which the Prime Minister had referred. Terms of reference were drawn up and the University of Gloucestershire, working in partnership with the Muslim Community College Leicester, was commissioned to undertake the review. There were three broad aims:

1. To research and evaluate the current training provisions for imams and scholars provided by seminaries and other imam-training institutions in the UK; to explore the strengths and weaknesses of current provision; and, in particular, to identify any gaps in the training of faith leaders that need to be addressed.
2. To explore the different models and methods employed for training faith leaders and to identify elements of best practice for wider dissemination.
3. To explore the possibilities of collaborative initiatives between the providers of Muslim faith leadership training and mainstream further education and higher education institutions and the possibility of attaining additional knowledge and skills leading to higher education qualifications and better employment prospects.

## What the review involved

Each of the three broad aims was broken down into more specific objectives. In order to meet the full range of the review’s aims and objectives, the review team engaged in a wide range of activities involving both quantitative and qualitative research, and much reflection and deliberation.

The activities complemented, informed and enriched each other and included fieldwork – visits were made in 2008–09 to 28 institutions; in-depth interviews with many individuals; focus groups and workshops; study of relevant research and scholarly discussion; attendance at a range of specialist seminars and conferences; and discussions and correspondence with members of the advisory group.

On the basis of the diverse activities in which they engaged, the review team compiled a draft research report. This final report was then written on the basis of further consultations and discussions.

## Structure of the report

The report asks and discusses three sets of questions:

- What are the principal leadership roles in Muslim communities, and what therefore are the principal training and development needs? (Chapter 2)
- What kinds of training and professional development opportunities are currently provided? (Chapter 3)
- What kinds of training should be provided in the future and how could they be achieved? (Chapter 5)

In addition, there is an introductory chapter outlining why and how the review was undertaken (Chapter 1) and a chapter about leadership training in other faiths and in other countries (Chapter 4).

There is further information about each chapter below:

### Chapter 1 – Introduction

Chapter 1 explains the rationale for the review and in this connection notes that for many years there have been discussions within and between Muslim communities in Britain, and amongst non-Muslim observers, about the roles, training and career development of Muslim faith leaders. Already in 1984, for example, an academic survey noted that British Muslim communities were increasingly aware that familiarity with the English language and society were useful and indeed necessary attributes for an imam and that there was a developing trend to recruit imams trained in Britain.<sup>1</sup>

In 1997 it was reported that ‘there is an increasingly widespread perception in Muslim communities that imams are not equipped by their own training to help young British Muslims cope with issues such as unemployment, racism and Islamophobia, drugs, and the attractions of western youth culture’.<sup>2</sup> More recently, a report for the Muslim Council of Britain stated that ‘there is a feeling that not enough imams are being developed from Britain and the existing training is inadequate or has serious shortcomings’<sup>3</sup> and it has been claimed that graduates from British seminaries are ‘without sufficient communication skills, without leadership skills and without a good understanding of British culture’.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Daniele Joy(1987) *Making a Place for Islam in British Society: Muslims in Birmingham*, University of Warwick: research papers in Ethnic elations no 4.

<sup>2</sup> Runnymede Trust: *Islamophobia: a challenge for us all*, 1997, p. 17.

<sup>3</sup> Shafiur Rahman and co-authors, 2006, p.1.

<sup>4</sup> Dr Musharraf Hussain, quoted in *The Times*, 7 January 2008.

Chapter 2 also describes how the fieldwork for the review was structured and carried out and cites most of the questionnaire items which were used.

## Chapter 2 – Faith leadership in Islam

Chapter 2 starts by explaining why from the very onset of the review the term *Muslim faith leaders* was chosen in preference to the term *imams*. The term imam has different meanings and implications in Shia and Sunni Islam, and in Sunni Islam most Muslim faith leaders known as imams are based full-time or part-time at a mosque. Faith leadership is exercised not only at mosques by people known as imams, however, but also at schools, universities, courses and conferences, and in youth settings, and by a wide range of religious scholars (alims and alimahs), teachers, instructors, youth workers, chaplains, writers and opinion leaders, including many women. To focus only on imams would be to miss the important leadership roles exercised by many others. The term *Muslim faith leaders* is substantially more inclusive.

Broad distinctions may be drawn between the leadership roles and tasks of:

- mosque-based imams
- chaplains
- thinkers, scholars and academics
- teachers and instructors
- youth workers and mentors
- trustees, managers and mosque committee members.

Chapter 2 outlines the principal tasks and expectations of these roles and considers the qualifications that are generally considered desirable.

The creation of Muslim chaplaincy roles in hospitals, prisons, universities and the armed services is a particularly significant development of recent years. Such roles do not necessarily require training as an imam; are undertaken by women as well as by men; often involve membership of a multi-faith team; require the exercise of pastoral, listening and counselling skills; and usually involve giving advice to the managers and leaders of the institution where the chaplain is based. The concept of chaplaincy has not hitherto been known in the Muslim world and in consequence a new kind of Muslim religious professional is emerging. There are practical implications for the training and development of other Muslim faith leaders as well, including imams.

In relation to all forms of Muslim faith leadership attention needs to be paid to the perspectives and experiences of women. Chapter 2 continues and concludes by emphasising this point in particular.

## Chapter 3 – Current provision and planning

Chapter 3 begins by reviewing present provision and aspects of current thinking and planning, under three broad headings:

- **secondary education** – provision for the 11–19 age-group in Muslim institutions, principally in Sunni institutions known as darul alooms
- **further and higher education** – courses provided in or through universities, colleges and Muslim institutions, mostly leading to the award of certificates, diplomas, foundation degrees and honours degrees
- **continuing professional development** – provided partly by institutions of higher and further education, both Muslim and non-Muslim, and partly by specialist organisations, agencies and professional associations; and including not only accredited courses leading to a certificate or diploma but also top-up or refresher short courses, evening classes, modules and one-day events.

It is important to note that in Muslim institutions the distinctions between secondary, further and higher education are not always hard and fast, since students at 11–19 institutions sometimes stay on for up to three further years for more advanced studies.

## Chapter 4 – Comparisons

Chapter 4 briefly considers aspects of faith leadership training in other religious traditions, particularly the Church of England, Judaism and Roman Catholicism, and current developments in Muslim faith leadership training in other countries, both in Europe and throughout the world.

There is a certain reassurance in knowing that questions about faith leadership in relation to modernity and multiculturalism are being asked and explored in other religions besides Islam, and that questions about Muslim faith leadership in contemporary society are being explored in other countries besides Britain. Points of interest include:

- an abiding tension between faithfulness to tradition on the one hand and discernment of, and sensitivity to, contemporary contexts and realities on the other
- an increasing concern with professionalisation, and in this connection with specifying in some detail the skills, attributes and knowledge which faith leaders need
- suspicion of managerial approaches to faith leadership in so far as these appear to de-emphasise the importance of spontaneity, and of personal faith and spirituality
- the importance of pastoral skills and counselling, and of theological reflection on contemporary events and issues

- the importance, after initial training and qualifications, of continuing professional development
- the need for faith training courses and programmes to be externally validated through the award of publicly recognised degrees, diplomas and certificates
- the need for greater sharing of experience and reflections between and within different faith traditions, and internationally as well as within each individual country
- the valuable roles which can be played by national governments and their agencies in encouraging and facilitating contacts and collaboration between religious organisations and publicly-funded institutions in the education sector.

## **Chapter 5 – Reflections and conclusions**

Chapter 5 summarises the key messages from the report and repeats the principal action points which have been suggested in previous chapters. The key messages are as follows:

### **Summary of key messages**

#### **1. A sound basis for further developments**

There is much good practice in Muslim faith leadership training in Britain at all levels – secondary education, higher and further education, and continuing professional development. There is, however, an urgent and acknowledged need for further development of educational provisions for Muslim faith leadership training in Britain.

#### **2. Diversity of tasks, roles and denominations**

Faith leadership in Muslim communities is exercised not only by mosque-based imams but also by chaplains, teachers, instructors, scholars and youth workers, among others. Programmes of training and development need to bear this diversity in mind and also, therefore, that faith leadership in Muslim communities is exercised by women as well as by men. Further, programmes must bear in mind that there is great diversity in Islam with regard to traditions, denominations, points of view and schools of thought.

#### **3. Part of the solution, not the problem**

The Muslim Faith Leadership Training Review was set up within the context of concerns about security and social cohesion. The review shows that, in the overall task of improving mutual trust and confidence in modern Britain, providers of Muslim faith leadership training are part of the solution, not part of the problem.

#### **4. Sharing of experience**

Sharing of experience is of critical importance – not only within and between Muslim communities in Britain but also with Muslim communities in other countries, and with providers of faith leadership training in other faiths.

## **5. Integration of theory and practice**

Programmes of initial training and continuing professional development need to include not only theology and spirituality but also reflection on practical experience, counselling and pastoral skills, and contextualising Islam in contemporary society.

## **6. Accreditation**

There would be substantial advantages if programmes of Muslim faith leadership training were to be validated in accordance with the levels in the national qualifications framework (NQF). At present only a small number of mainly degree-level qualifications are validated and study at secondary school of the *dars-e-nizami* curriculum is not validated at all.

## **7. Pastoral care and counselling**

There is a need to expand and develop the courses, programmes and modules in Islamic pastoral care and counselling which already exist, and to integrate these with study of theological and spiritual issues. The relatively new role of Muslim chaplain in institutions such as in hospitals, universities, prisons and the armed services makes this development increasingly important.

## **8. The roles and perspectives of women**

Both as a faith and as a way of life Islam has a rich history of gender equality, and as teachers, chaplains and alimahs many Muslim women exercise faith leadership in their communities. They also have distinctive expectations and needs that all Muslim faith leaders need to address. In all planning of leadership training their needs, expectations and perspectives must be borne in mind.

## **9. Continuing professional development**

In addition to initial training, continuing professional development (CPD) is of essential importance for faith leaders in all religious traditions, as for managers and leaders in all other walks of life as well. It helps them to reflect on their own practice and changing circumstances, to respond to new realities and challenges in wider society, and to give guidance, advice and support to others.

## **10. The role of government**

Government has a key role to play in supporting the developments and improvements which providers of Muslim faith leadership training seek, as summarised above, and in facilitating closer partnerships and relationships between Muslim institutions and publicly-funded institutions.

## **Action points**

In the light of the key messages summarised above a wide range of action points is proposed. They are grouped under four broad headings, corresponding to five areas where deliberations need to take place and subsequent plans to be made: secondary education; Muslim communities and organisations (including continuing professional development); higher education and government. The box below contains a selection.

## Principal action points

On the basis of the Muslim Faith Leadership Training Review, consideration should be given to the following possible developments:

### Secondary education

- Developing a basic certificate in Islamic Sciences for the 11-13 age-range, equivalent to level 1 of the national qualifications framework (NQF); a general certificate for the 14–16 age group, equivalent to NQF level 2 (GCSE); an advanced certificate equivalent to level 3 (A level); and a three-year degree or diploma course leading to qualification as an *alim* or *alimah*, equivalent to NQF levels 4–6.
- developing a diploma in arts and humanities, within the national 14–19 diplomas programme, which would draw on, though not be wholly co-extensive with, the *dars-e-nizami* syllabus and its equivalents
- preparing and entering students for GCSEs and A levels in Islamic Studies and Muslim community languages
- improving the quality of the information, advice and guidance (IAG) provided to students in relation to their future careers, and to progression to further and higher education
- ensuring that teaching staff have access to high quality continuing professional development, for example through the programme developed by the Association of Muslim Schools UK in conjunction with the University of Gloucestershire through the assessment based option route (ABO)
- Standardising guidelines for terms and conditions of employment for teachers and other staff, so that they are comparable with those which obtain in secondary schools more generally.

### Muslim organisations and communities

- Introducing the idea of ‘trainee imam’ or ‘apprentice imam’ with the possibility of career progression to qualified imam status (QIS) through routes planned in partnership with institutions of higher education.
- Recognising the importance of CPD for faith leaders, and facilitating, encouraging and supporting participation.
- Helping to ensure that imams have access to high quality CPD programmes in pastoral skills and applied theology.
- Helping to ensure that women as well as men exercise faith leadership responsibilities and have access to relevant initial training and CPD programmes.
- Helping to ensure that the experiences and perspectives of women inform the design and content of initial training and CPD programmes.
- Facilitating the establishment of a European centre for excellence in relation to Muslim faith leadership training and development.



## Higher education

- Developing a three-year honours degree in Islamic Studies and Sciences which would build on, though not be narrowly dependent on, the traditional *Shia* and *Sunni* syllabi.
- Developing a two-year foundation degree, perhaps employment-based, in applied theology.
- Re-orienting Islamic Studies programmes at first degree and postgraduate level to make them more relevant for both male and female students who wish to undertake faith leadership responsibilities as teachers, chaplains and scholars.
- Setting up a senior fellowship or scholarship programme, enabling imams to undertake MBA and other masters level courses in areas such as community development, interfaith relations and social policy.

## Government

- Facilitating the formation of a working party to consider the practical possibilities involved in aligning education in Muslim institutions with the levels in the national qualifications framework (NQF).
- Facilitating a time-limited working party or task group consisting of Muslim community leaders, scholars, academics and interfaith practitioners to discuss, support, lead and implement next steps in the light of this report.
- Facilitating research to advance understanding of faith leadership roles currently undertaken by Muslim women, and to help design initial training and CPD programmes in the future.

## Concluding note

As shown throughout this report, the Muslim Faith Leadership Training Review involved a wide range of activities and a wide range of individuals and institutions. Also, it necessarily involved attention to many different traditions and points of view, and therefore much dialogue and deliberation. The purpose of this report is to help promote further such dialogue and deliberation, not only in Muslim communities and organisations but also throughout wider society.



# Chapter 1

## Background and introduction

### Concerns and issues – why this review took place

- 1.1 For many years there have been discussions within and between Muslim communities in Britain, and amongst non-Muslim observers, about the roles, training and career development of Muslim faith leaders.<sup>5</sup> Already in 1984, for example, an academic survey noted that British Muslim communities were increasingly aware that familiarity with the English language and society were useful and indeed necessary attributes for an imam and that there was a developing trend to recruit imams trained in Britain.<sup>6</sup>
- 1.2 In 1997 it was reported that ‘there is an increasingly widespread perception in Muslim communities that imams are not equipped by their own training to help young British Muslims cope with issues such as unemployment, racism and Islamophobia, drugs, and the attractions of Western youth culture’.<sup>7</sup> The same report commented that ‘by and large mosques do not provide educational activities for young people over the age of 14, and are thus not well placed to support them if and when they question, as many in their mid and late teens are inclined to do, the pedagogy which they encountered at the mosque school and the interpretations of Islam which were presented’. More recently, a report for the Muslim Council of Britain stated that ‘there is a feeling that not enough imams are being developed from Britain and the existing training is inadequate or has serious shortcomings’<sup>8</sup> and it has been claimed that graduates from British seminaries are ‘without sufficient communication skills, without leadership skills and without a good understanding of British culture.’<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Publications dealing directly with the role of Muslim faith leaders in Britain include Joly (1987), Birt (2006), Birt and Lewis (2010), Geaves (2008), Gilliat-Ray (2006, 2010), Hart Dyke (2009), Mumisa and Kessler (2008), Rahman and co-authors (2006) and Siddiqui (1995). There are also relevant discussions in Ahmad (2008), Change Institute (2009), Coleman (2009), Coles (2008), Lewis (2008), Commission on British Muslims (1997), Siddiqui (2007), and Suleiman (2009). Full bibliographical details are provided in Appendix E.

<sup>6</sup> Daniele Joy(1987) Making a Place for Islam in British Society: Muslims in Birmingham, University of Warwick: research papers in Ethnic elations no 4.

<sup>7</sup> Runnymede Trust: Islamophobia: a challenge for us all, 1997, p. 17.

<sup>8</sup> Shafiur Rahman and co-authors, 2006, p.1.

<sup>9</sup> Dr Musharraf Hussain, quoted in The Times, 7 January 2008.

- 1.3 However, as is shown in Chapter 2 of this report, Muslim educational institutions in Britain have been adapting and developing their syllabuses and pedagogical approaches in recent years and such criticisms are no longer as apposite as they may have been in the past. There is an increasingly strong basis for contextualising Islam in modern Britain, and in other European societies more generally, and for planning the training and development of Muslim faith leaders accordingly.<sup>10</sup> The key concerns and issues are summarised in Box 1.1.

### **Box 1.1: Key concerns and issues**

Muslims living in the West face two major challenges. The first is a challenge to religious faith in general and to the Islamic faith in particular; the second is a challenge to the ethical and social values enshrined in the Holy Qur'an and the Sunna. These challenges have been faced largely without the guidance of adequately trained scholars. In matters of religion, Muslim communities in the West have come to rely for religious leadership on imams and scholars whose training is mainly rooted in the cultural and educational environment of their countries of origin.

This training is not always sufficient to deal with the cultural environment of modern Western Europe and the United States, nor with problems arising from interaction with Western societies. With the growing number of Muslims living in Western Europe and the USA, and the accelerated movement of people and ideas across national and cultural borders, Muslims today are living an unprecedented experience of multiculturalism.

This widely recognised development in the nature of relations between religions and cultures imposes new theoretical as well as practical issues on Muslims whether in minority or majority situations. Western societies also face no less acute questions. A greater degree of mutual understanding cannot be to the detriment of either; Muslims both in the West and in the Muslim world stand to gain a great deal from such an enterprise.

Source: *Introduction to a current training programme*  
The Muslim College, London, founded by the late Dr Zaki Badawi

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<sup>10</sup> There is fuller discussion in *Contextualising Islam in Britain: exploratory approaches*, compiled by Muslim academics and activists who between them reflected a wide range of theological background, Centre of Islamic Studies, University of Cambridge (Suleiman, 2009).

- 1.4 As mentioned and emphasised in the statement in Box 1.1, the nature of Muslim faith leadership is an issue not only in Britain but also in many other European countries, where it is similarly the case that people of Muslim heritage live in non-Muslim contexts.<sup>11</sup> Further, it is of current concern in most Muslim-majority countries as well, for also in these contexts new understandings of leadership are developing in response to globalisation, pluralism and societal change, and to the increasing need for different worldviews, traditions and cultures (both religious and non-religious) to live in partnership and cooperation with each other.
- 1.5 A further contemporary development is the influence of communications technology. Satellite channels, the blogosphere, websites and online social networking forums promote and facilitate new forms of interaction and lead to new notions of territory, nationality and community, and therefore of identity, influence and authority. One of the relatively new tasks of faith leadership is to help young people navigate their way through the plethora of comment, claim and competing interpretation available nowadays at the click of a computer mouse.
- 1.6 There are parallel discussions and deliberations about faith leadership and the challenges of modernity in other religious traditions, including the two which share the same Abrahamic heritage as Islam, namely Christianity and Judaism.
- 1.7 It was as a consequence of concerns raised by groups of British Muslims, and in the context of concerns about security, that in autumn 2007 the then Prime Minister commissioned a review of the training of Muslim faith leaders and scholars:
- “Our consultations with Muslim communities emphasise the importance of the training of imams—including English language requirements—and the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government will be announcing an independent review to examine, with the communities, how to build the capacity of Islamic seminaries, learning from other faith communities as well as from experience overseas.”<sup>12</sup>*
- 1.8 The review was intended to contribute towards key government objectives in relation to promoting social cohesion, and was based on concerns amongst British Muslims that to meet these objectives the role of faith institutions and leaders needed to be strengthened. Although supported by funding from the Department of Communities and Local Government (CLG), the review’s findings and recommendations would be wholly independent. It is not the role of government to train the ministers of any religion or religious community. Such training is entirely a matter for the faith communities themselves.

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<sup>11</sup> See, for example, Husson (2007), Drees and Koningsfeld (2008), Rudoph and co-authors (2009) and Hussain (2010).

<sup>12</sup> Hansard, column 671, 14 November 2007.

## Creating an advisory group and review team

- 1.9 To detail the scope of the review, CLG established a group whose membership was drawn from a cross-section of Muslim scholars and community leaders. A shortlist of candidates to lead the review was drawn up by this group. On the basis of its recommendations, CLG commissioned the University of Gloucestershire, working in partnership with the Muslim Community College, Leicester, to carry out the review. The review team was led jointly by Dr Mohamed Mukadam, chair of the Association of Muslim Schools UK, and Dr Alison Scott-Baumann, reader at the University of Gloucestershire. Other members of the team were Ashfaque Chowdhary, Association of Muslim Schools UK, and Dr Sariya Contractor, University of Gloucestershire. Community researchers recruited in due course for the fieldwork were Jahangir Akbar, Ahmed Hussain, Dr M D Iqbal, Khalid Miah, Shazad Mohammed and Yusuf Seedat. The fieldwork was carried out between summer 2008 and December 2009.
- 1.10 The smaller group was later expanded to become the advisory group whose members are listed on an earlier page. They represented between them a broad spectrum in terms of Islamic denomination and outlook, and included non-Muslim scholars with specialist academic knowledge of faith leadership issues.
- 1.11 Following the appointment of the review team, a first meeting was held on 3 July 2008 between the team and CLG officials. At this meeting it was agreed to change the terminology from *imams* to *Muslim faith leaders* since the latter term was considered to be more inclusive and more relevant in the British context. It was also agreed that the review team would work with a CLG community adviser to develop the proposal further and submit the amended proposal by 11 July 2008.

## Aims and objectives of the review

- 1.12 The revised proposal formed the basis of the contract between CLG and the University of Gloucestershire, working in partnership with the Muslim Community College in Leicester. The final proposal submitted to the CLG on 21 August 2008 had three broad aims and each of these then referred to specific details and objectives. The full statement was as follows:
1. To research and evaluate the current training provisions for imams and scholars provided by seminaries and other imam-training institutions in the UK; to explore the strengths and weaknesses of current provision; and, in particular, to identify any gaps in the training of faith leaders that need to be addressed; this to include:
    - a. curriculum, pedagogy and teaching resources, including quality of teaching staff, and their relevance to contemporary needs of British Muslim communities
    - b. the overall package of knowledge and skills, including vocational skills, and the experience of students, and whether this equips

- students to play a leadership role in building resilient and integrated Muslim communities
- c. gaps in access for significant groups, including gender and denominational groups
  - d. their contribution towards supplementary training and continuing professional development for imams and other faith leaders.
2. To explore the different models and methods employed for training faith leaders and to identify elements of best practice for wider dissemination; this to include:
- a. international models for training Muslim faith leaders
  - b. national models for training other faith leaders
  - c. the role of mainstream education and training institutions in the training of Muslim faith leaders.
3. To explore the possibilities of collaborative initiatives between the providers of Muslim faith leadership training and mainstream FE and HE institutions and the possibility of attaining additional knowledge and skills leading to higher education qualifications and better employment prospects; this to include possibilities for:
- a. alignment with mainstream education in the UK
  - b. increasing collaboration with UK further and higher education
  - c. extending the range of training providers for Muslim faith leaders
  - d. links between Muslim training institutions in the UK and abroad.

## Methodology and fieldwork

- 1.13 In order to meet the full range of the review's aims and objectives, as summarised above, the review team engaged in a wide range of activities involving both quantitative and qualitative research, and much reflection and deliberation. The activities complemented, informed and enriched each other and included those which are summarised in Box 1.2.

## Box 1.2 : The range of review activities

The review involved:

- discussions, meetings and correspondence with members of the advisory group
- in-depth interviews with Muslim scholars who have substantial experience over many years of issues relating to British Muslim faith leadership
- discussions with Muslim faith leadership practitioners – imams, alims, alimahs, Muslim chaplains – to understand their perspectives and needs
- interviews and discussions with non-Muslim scholars, including Christian and Jewish specialists in the training and continuing professional development of ministers of religion.
- interviews with Muslim individuals, including both women and men, people of all ages, converts, and from a range of denominational backgrounds
- focus groups and discussions with young people
- focused attention to the needs and experiences of Muslim women – the fieldwork visits included five institutions that are exclusively for girls and young women, and ten that are co-educational; in addition three focus group discussions were held with alimahs (female Muslim scholars) and prospective alimahs – these took place in London, Gloucester and Dewsbury
- compilation of a comprehensive list of Muslim institutions which state that they provide faith leadership training, as shown in Appendix A
- fieldwork – visits were made to 28 institutions where Muslim faith leadership training takes place; of these, 19 were school-type establishments (often known as seminaries or darul-ulooms) catering for the 11-16 or 11-19 age-ranges and the other nine were engaged in higher or further education
- analysis of questionnaire responses, following administration of questionnaires at the 28 institutions mentioned above

- study of relevant research and scholarly discussion relating to the training and continuing professional development of Muslim faith leaders in Britain and Europe, and in certain Muslim-majority countries
- observation of training procedures and practices during visits to India, Pakistan and Bangladesh
- attendance at a range of specialist seminars and conferences, including events organised by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), the Higher Education Academy (HEA), the British Academy and the Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD).

- 1.14 During all fieldwork and community consultation, the review team was sensitive to denominational variations in British Muslim communities – both Shia and Sunni and, within Sunni traditions, Barelvi, Deobandi and others. The advisory group played a significant supportive role in this.
- 1.15 Most of the individuals who gave assistance through interviews and discussions are listed in Appendix B. In addition to the activities listed above, an internet blog was developed to engage with young people. However, this was only partially successful, probably because ethical concerns to protect contributors resulted in a cumbersome process for accessing the blog which may have been discouraging.
- 1.16 On the basis of the diverse activities in which they engaged, the review team compiled a draft research report. This final report was then written on the basis of further consultations and discussions, and drawing on the assistance of an editorial consultant, Robin Richardson.
- 1.17 In much survey-based research an essential first requirement is to win respondents' trust, for they understandably need to be assured that information which they supply will be kept confidential, and will not be used in any way to their disadvantage. Such concerns and sensitivities were critically present from the onset in the research undertaken for this review, not least since it was established and funded within the context of the government's programmes for preventing violent extremism,<sup>13</sup> and of frequent negative coverage of Muslim organisations and institutions in the mainstream media. These factors made the research complex and sensitive. The review team was also aware of the need to sound out a wide range of opinions and perceptions, including those of women, converts and young people.
- 1.18 By maintaining trust and good will, the review team hoped to lay the foundations for further research in the future, and to increase the likelihood that the findings from their research would be given sustained attention by

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<sup>13</sup> The consequences of this label were described at length by the House of Commons Select Committee on Communities and Local Government, 2010.



those whom they most affect. The quantitative data from the survey was complemented by rich qualitative data. As mentioned above, the latter included in-depth interviews with many individuals, and much interaction with the project's advisory group.

- 1.19 The advisory group suggested that the survey of institutions needed to cover the following topics: student intake, curriculum, recruitment of teachers, pedagogy, linkages with mainstream education, course outcomes, career pathways and aspirations. In consultation with the statistical adviser at the University of Gloucestershire, the review team then drafted a questionnaire to explore these areas. After piloting and further consultations, the questionnaire was significantly modified.
- 1.20 One of the measures adopted by the review to win and sustain trust was to engage a team of six community researchers for much of the fieldwork. They contributed credibility in visiting organisations where they are already known and trusted, and their involvement meant that many more institutions were visited than would otherwise have been possible. They were senior schoolteachers selected for their expertise as school improvement partners (SIPs) employed by local authorities. They were trained to use the questionnaire and in principles and processes relating to confidentiality and objectivity, and the protection of anonymity.
- 1.21 Interviews and discussions groups were structured to elicit answers to the following specific questions.

### Background and size

- How would you describe the denomination of the institution?
- What is the size of student and staff populations at this institution?
- How many students take up each course every year?
- Is the institution only for boys or for girls or is it a co-educational institution?

### Students

- What are the main reasons for students wanting to come to an Islamic institution?
- What is the percentage of students who drop out?
- Why do students drop out?
- What is the approximate age when students join various courses?
- What is the approximate age when students qualify?



## Qualifications

- What qualifications do students receive?
- Is there a process for students to get Ijaza? How does this system work?
- How is course work monitored and evaluated?
- Do you have any quality assurance practices / policies in place for each course?
- What do students go on to do after passing out of this institution?

## Staffing

- Do you provide any ongoing training to teachers to enhance their skills?
- Do you think that the teachers teaching the alim course need to be provided with some professional development courses to help improve their teaching skills?
- What is the percentage of students who drop out?
- What is the process for recruiting teachers?
- What are the typical highest qualifications that teachers normally have?
- Do any of your teachers have formal teaching qualifications?

## Curriculum

- What different courses do you run?
- Do you teach any national curriculum courses like GCSEs/A Levels?
- Do you teach any vocational courses?
- What curricula and syllabi do you follow?
- Do you teach the dars-e-Nizami curriculum and has the institution modified it in any way?
- What is the language of instruction?
- Who validates your courses?
- Do you have any linkages with universities that affect your curriculum and what is the effect of such linkages?
- Does the programme of study include citizenship education?
- Does the programme of study take into account the need to develop better community relations?
- There are people who feel that Islamic institutions are not preparing students for life in 21st century Britain. What is your response to them?

## Community links

- In what capacity do alims and alimahs from this institution serve the community?
- What kinds of inter-community work do you do?
- How often do you organise inter-community events?
- What other communities do you engage with?

## General

- What are the challenges and constraints (including funding) that the institution faces?
- Do you receive any support from the government?
- Would you want support from the government?
- How do you deal with unfair media representation and Islamophobia?
- What are your hopes and plans for the future of the institution?
- What is your source of funding?
- What amount of fees is charged from the students per year for different courses?
- From what age do you have separate classes for boys and girls?
- Is there any collaborative work between various darul ulooms in the UK?

- 1.22 The questionnaire was filled in at 28 institutions altogether. At 12 of them, in addition, up to five interviews were held not only with management but also with teaching staff and students. The sample for this in-depth research consisted of five school-type institutions and seven HE-type institutions. Of the five schools, two described themselves as Sunni - one each for males and females; two described themselves as Barelvi - one for males and one co-educational; and one, for male students only, described itself as Deobandi. Explanations of these terms, for readers not familiar with them, are provided in Appendix C.
- 1.23 The seven HE-type institutions consisted of three Shia co-educational institutions, one Sunni Barelvi institution for young men and three which described themselves only as Sunni. Three HE-type institutions have courses that are validated by UK universities and, since validation is an important pathway for the future of Muslim faith leader training in the UK, particular attention was paid at these three to the frameworks that are used.
- 1.24 Some of the quantifiable data was not in fact available. For example, few of the school-type institutions had details readily to hand about the destinations and career profiles of their students after they had left. It was therefore not known whether, and in what ways and to what extent, their students had become involved in faith leadership in later life.

## Concluding note

- 1.25 As shown in this introductory chapter, the Muslim Faith Leadership Training Review involved a wide range of activities and a wide range of individuals and institutions. Also, it necessarily involved attention to many different traditions and points of view, and therefore much dialogue and deliberation. The purpose of this report is to help promote further such dialogue and deliberation. It describes the current situation relating to Muslim faith leadership training and discusses various possible developments in the future. First, though, it considers the nature of faith leadership in Islam and this is the subject-matter of the next chapter.

## Chapter 2

# Faith leadership in Islam

### Terminology and overview

- 2.1 In every religion the words used to refer to faith leadership responsibilities vary across the different denominations, traditions and communities. In the case of Islam, for example, different terms are current in Shia and Sunni traditions. Also, different words and understandings are current in the two largest Sunni communities in Britain, Barelvi and Deobandi.
- 2.2 The single term for Muslim faith leaders that is best known is *imam*, and this review was originally conceptualised as being to do, essentially, with ‘imam training’. (See, in this respect, the extract from a key speech by the Prime Minister quoted earlier at paragraph 1.7). However, it was soon realised that this term was insufficient to articulate the full range of issues and concerns requiring examination and review, not least since the term *imam* has different meanings in Shia and Sunni Islam. The concept of *faith leader* was chosen and used instead, and the focus was on formation and development as well as on the kinds of knowledge and skill implied by the more narrow term *training*. The term *faith leader* includes not only those who lead worship and other distinctively religious activities but also scholars (alims and alimahs), chaplains, teachers and instructors, youth workers and circle leaders. and those who in their own community may be known as, amongst other terms, *abla*, *ameer*, *ayatollah*, *khatib*, *moulana*, *mu'allim*, *mubaligh*, *mufti*, *qadhi*, *pir*, *sayyid*, *shaykh* or *ustadh*.
- 2.3 In its original meaning, the term *imam* simply means ‘in front of’, hence its use to refer to the person who stands in front of others when prayers are offered. In this basic meaning, every Muslim can in principle act as an imam. More usually, however, most Muslim faith leaders known as imams are based full-time or part-time at a mosque, and all are male. It is therefore relevant in the current context to note that leadership in Muslim communities is exercised by both men and women in several other kinds of institutional space as well, including schools, universities, courses and conferences, and increasingly nowadays in cyberspace, through websites and blogs. To focus only on people known as imams would be to miss major areas of relevant activity, particularly in relation to influences on the young, and to miss the importance of leadership exercised by women.

- 2.4 The summary in Box 2.1 is based on interviews with several different British imams in 2009.

### **Box 2.1 : What does an imam in Britain do?**

#### **What are a British imam's core duties?**

He leads the five daily prayers, conducts marriage and funeral services, preaches and teaches.

He advises on *fiqh* and *fiqh* issues, works for and with the mosque committee and writes reports for the committee.

#### **What do some British imams do in addition?**

They may train and line-manage other *masjid* staff, including the *muezzin* and junior teachers.

Community cohesion work - with schools and local government, mediates with the press and appears on local radio.

There may also be denomination-specific prayers and private functions.

He may take on a wide range of pastoral roles, such as visiting hospitals to provide pastoral and spiritual care for patients, setting up a football team or working with a local university to overturn prejudiced stereotypes, and may engage in interfaith dialogue and cooperation

#### **What training does he have?**

He may, but may not, already be an *alim* i.e. have undertaken the formal scholarly training in the form of the *dars-e-nizami*, *dars al-kharij* or the *muballigh* course. A minority of imams have UK degrees, even up to doctoral level. The main training is theological.

Source: interviews with several imams in Britain, 2009

- 2.5 The British imam's role and responsibility is considered by some to be given undue prominence by Muslims and non-Muslims alike. In consequence an idealised notion has developed that 'a good imam' is 'one who embodies civic virtues, interfaith tolerance, professional managerial and pastoral skills, possibly becomes involved in inner city regeneration, works as an agent of national integration (most importantly on behalf of his young unruly flock), and

wages a jihad against extremism'.<sup>14</sup> Such a person is an idealised 'super-imam' - a term used in some literature - who is expected to manage a range of varied tasks yet often not given the time, support (infrastructure and people) or training required to deal with problems as diverse as unsupportive mosque committees, divorce counselling, drug abuse and negative media coverage. Similarly unrealistic expectations of faith leaders are present in other religions as well.

2.6 The reality, of course, is that no single individual can do, or can reasonably be expected to do, everything that is required. Imams are not the only people, to repeat, who exercise leadership in Muslim communities. In the following paragraphs, broad distinctions are drawn between the roles and tasks of:

- mosque-based imams
- chaplains
- thinkers, scholars and academics
- teachers and instructors
- youth workers and other mentors
- trustees, managers and mosque committee members.

2.7 In particular there is discussion below of mosque-based imams (paragraphs 2.8–2.12) and of chaplains (paragraphs 2.13–2.18). The other leadership roles are touched on more briefly (paragraphs 2.18–2.20). With regard to each role it is relevant in the context of this report to note the principal tasks and expectations; the location of employment and sphere of influence; whether employment is full-time or part-time, and whether salaried or voluntary; and the qualifications and attributes that are generally considered to be desirable.

## Mosque-based imams

2.8 It is relevant to consider a pen-portrait of a Muslim faith leader (Box 2.2), to give a vivid sense of complexity and variety:

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<sup>14</sup> Yahya Birt (2006).

## Box 2.2 : A busy man

Abdullah is a busy man. He leads the prayers, gives the Friday sermon, teaches local children Islamic Studies and Arabic, and presides at weddings and other religious ceremonies – ‘the usual stuff’, as he puts it, that an imam is expected to do. But that’s not all he does, in fact he may even be called a super-imam. He visits local schools to talk to the children about Islam, he goes on the radio to talk about Islam, local politicians seek his advice on sensitive matters, and the list goes on. He is particularly concerned about the young people in his congregation. So during Friday sermons (sometimes to the dismay of the elders) he talks about matters like drug-abuse, gang crime and even bullying at school. During teaching sessions, he tries to make the subject-matter interesting and relevant to his students. He says that to engage with the youth ‘you must talk their language’. He frequently plays football with his boys.

He tries his best to balance his duties, but sometimes his wife complains about him not spending enough time with her and their two children. There is one more concern he has, he is not paid enough. There aren’t any formal frameworks in place that decide how much an imam should be paid. He nevertheless continues to be a dedicated football-playing imam, even though he has had other job offers.

Source: interview with Abdullah (not his real name), 2009

- 2.9 An imam leads the congregational prayers and gives the Friday *khutbah* (sermon); leads other major events at the mosque; conducts ceremonies in relation to births, marriages and deaths; provides advice on matters of *Fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence); guides spirituality; teaches the young how to read the Qur’an and how to perform the five daily prayers and discharge other religious duties; and may supervise a deputy or assistant imam. A distinction is sometimes made between an imam and a khatib. The latter typically plays a more senior role in mosque affairs and in particular is responsible for delivering the Friday *khutbah* (sermon). Both the imam and the khatib are hired and managed by the board of trustees of a specific mosque, almost always on a full-time and salaried basis.
- 2.10 It is considered essential in some Muslim communities that imams and khatibs should have an *alim* qualification from a Muslim institution, although many do not in fact have formal alim qualifications. The *alim* qualification involves many years study of Islamic theology, particularly *fiqh* (jurisprudence), *hadith* (teachings of the Prophet), and *tafsir* (commentary on the Qur’an) and some commentators consider it to be equivalent to first degree or masters level education. Ideally, a *khatib* should have several years experience as compared to an imam.

- 2.11 The purpose of the *khutbah* is to offer guidance to the congregation on matters of current concern. An imam or khatib needs therefore to be in touch with current community affairs at local, national and international levels. There is also an increasing expectation that he should be seen as approachable, particularly by young people, and that they should have good communication, counselling and pastoral skills, and that they should be able to help present Islamic perspectives to non-Muslims in pluralist British communities, for example in local and regional media. A desirable qualification may therefore be a certificate or diploma in applied theology, with particular emphasis on pastoral theology and contextualising Islam in modern societies.
- 2.12 In Shia Islam the key religious functions and giving of advice are adjudicated by the *marja-i-taqlid*, who is a grand ayatollah with the authority to make legal decisions within the confines of Islamic law for followers (*muqallid*) and less well qualified clerics. A *mujtahid* is someone who has studied to the level of *dars al-kharaj* (advanced independent studies) and thereby attained a degree of intellectual autonomy in the *hawza*. He has acquired the licence to engage in *ijtihad* from one or several ayatollahs, and is exempted from the requirement to follow a marja (a grand ayatollah). It should be noted, however, that *ijtihad* is not always comprehensive and so a *mujtahid* may be an expert in one particular area of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and exercise *ijtihad* therein, but follow a marja in other areas of *fiqh*.

## Chaplains

- 2.13 A significant development of recent years has been the creation of Muslim chaplaincy roles in public sector institutions such as hospitals, prisons, universities and the armed services. The concept of chaplaincy has not hitherto been known in the Muslim world and in consequence a new kind of Muslim religious professional is emerging. There are practical implications for the training and development of other Muslim faith leaders as well, including imams. Distinctive features of a Muslim chaplain's work may include the following:
- The work does not necessarily or inherently require training as an imam.
  - The role can be, and frequently is, undertaken by women as well as by men.
  - The key skills required are pastoral and counselling skills – the capacity to 'listen with moral attentiveness while not being judgmental'.<sup>15</sup>
  - Frequently, or indeed usually, the role involves membership of a multi-faith team, and therefore interaction and effective working relationships with religious professionals from other faith backgrounds.

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<sup>15</sup> Siddiqui (2007), page 10.



- The role is non-sectarian – it involves ministering to Muslims of all backgrounds and traditions, and sometimes indeed to people who are from non-Muslim backgrounds.
- The role often involves giving advice to the managers and leaders of the institution where the chaplain is based, and therefore requires not only sound knowledge of the institution’s protocols and organisational culture but also the capacity to ‘hold power to account’<sup>16</sup> and to be an institution’s ‘moral conscience’ (see Box 2.3).

2.14 In all these respects the forms of training and development appropriate for chaplains are also relevant for other faith leadership roles as well, including imams.

### **Box 2.3 : The moral conscience of the prison**

‘Someone who wants to be a prison chaplain must be able, first of all, to lead prayers and pronounce Arabic correctly (*tajweed*), secondly to be able to communicate fluently in English and deliver sermons that are appropriate for prison life, and beyond and thirdly, to have key strengths in pastoral care: being wise, calm and empathetic with positive body language, and be able to adjust to different and difficult settings that may arise, such as giving tragic news to prisoners in a sensitive manner. Then, at interview they need to demonstrate that they are able and willing to fit in with and work within a multi-faith team, even if, for example, it is led by a woman cleric. Also they need to demonstrate that they are not gullible in difficult matters such as security issues and can give wise, Islamic support and help to be the moral conscience of the prison.’

Source: interview with a prison chaplain  
Athsham Ali, 2009

2.15 A research project currently underway at the University of Cardiff is gathering detailed information about Muslim chaplaincy practice through evaluation of the texts, rituals, and actions that Muslim chaplaincy entails, with a view to establishing the extent to which practice is modelled on Christian templates, or whether a new model, based on Islamic traditions and scriptures, is emerging.<sup>17</sup> It is also investigating whether Muslim chaplains are becoming sources of expertise, leadership and guidance not only in their employing institutions but also in the wider British Muslim community. There is

<sup>16</sup> Fuller information and discussion in *Contextualising Islam in Britain: exploratory approaches* by Yasir Suleiman and co-authors, Cambridge: Centre of Islamic Studies, 2009 (see also note 10).

<sup>17</sup> Fuller information is available at:

<http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/share/research/centres/csi/research/muslimchaplaincyproject/index.html>.

recognition that the development of Muslim chaplaincy has been shaped by politics and power dynamics, and by the demands of institutional needs and structures. Box 2.4 illustrates some of the difficulties which chaplains in training encounter.

### **Box 2.4 : The path was difficult**

Zakia is a qualified alimah who works as a prison chaplain for female prisoners. She now has a satisfying job that gives her access to professional development and maybe to future career progression. However, the path to get there was difficult and full of uncertainties. She enjoyed her six year alimah course, though she had a little trouble adjusting to the boarding school environment. It was after completing her theological training that her situation became difficult, for she found it impossible to move forward in her career. She chose to carry on her struggle and continue her education while she worked for a very low salary in a local Islamic school.

Zakia has now completed her A levels by distance learning in English language, literature and Urdu and is studying for a psychology degree with the Open University. In addition to being a chaplain and teaching at the school, she also conducts classes for women at the mosque and a support session for converts to Islam. She feels that alimahs are valued within the Muslim community, though there are more support structures and career opportunities for alims than for alimahs. She wishes alimahs had more respect and recognition outside the Muslim community. If her qualifications had been validated and recognised, life would have been easier for her.

Source: interview with Zakia (not her real name), 2009

- 2.16 Chaplains are hired and managed by such institutions as a hospital, prison, university or branch of the armed services; may be full-time or part-time, and may be on a salaried or voluntary basis. Qualifications generally considered to be important include substantial knowledge of Islamic theology, as for khatibs (see above), but not necessarily as an *alim* or *alimah*; sound knowledge and appreciation of the ethos, customs and requirements of the institution where one is based; strong empathy with the people for whom one acts as a counsellor, mentor or adviser. Desirable qualifications include a certificate or diploma in applied theology or counselling, with particular emphasis on pastoral theology and contextualising Islam in modern societies.

2.17 The key skills and qualities required of chaplains have recently been itemised as follows:<sup>18</sup>

- commitment to providing pastoral care to members of all religious traditions or none, including staff, with the same commitment as if they were members of one's own tradition
- understanding and respect for diversity within a faith and between faiths
- understanding of problems which may be experienced by wider sections of the community e.g. domestic violence or abuse, forced marriage, gambling, alcohol, use of narcotics, mental health issues and ability to respond with empathy and sensitivity, referring on to other agencies and specialists either within the institution or other local authority and community support services as required
- ability to work with other faith chaplains and support services within the institution to deliver pastoral care
- understanding of the nature and limits of confidentiality of individual service-users and commitment to respecting the confidential nature of privileged information of an individual or institution
- ability to demonstrate good listening skills and empathise and connect with all service users and staff
- ability to demonstrate willingness and commitment in the provision of pastoral care
- commitment to respecting the rights of individuals to their beliefs and practices, especially those under one's responsibility, and to refraining from imposing one's own viewpoint.

## Other leadership roles

2.18 Other leadership roles include those of thinkers, scholars and academics. The principal task of such people is to contribute to the formation of public opinion, non-Muslim as well as Muslim. Employment is usually based at a university or other institution of higher education, but may be at a thinktank or research centre, or independent. Such people may also sit as members of a higher shariah or fiqh council or specialist board, for example the board of an Islamic finance house. They exercise influence through lectures, books, broadcasting, articles in magazines and journals, audio-tapes and podcasts, DVDs, websites and blogs, and participation in major public debates; they may be well-known not only locally and regionally but also nationally and internationally.

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<sup>18</sup> *The Role of Chaplains in Public Sector Institutions: experiences from Muslim communities*, by Fiyaz Mughal, 2010.

- 2.19 Then also there are teachers, instructors and youth workers, whose principal tasks, directly or indirectly, are to impart knowledge of Islam, and to give moral and spiritual guidance to the young. They are usually hired by and accountable to the management or governing board of a Muslim institution, a state school (either Muslim or non-Muslim), an independent school (either Muslim or non-Muslim), college or university; and may be full-time or part-time, and salaried or voluntary. Essential qualifications, skills and experience vary according to the requirements of the institution; in the case of state schools a recognised teaching qualification is usually essential and in the case of religious studies at Muslim institutions substantial knowledge of Islamic theology is usually essential.
- 2.20 Managers, trustees and mosque committee members play important leadership roles but are outside the terms of reference of this review. Focus group research for the Muslim Council of Britain in 2006 reported that the principal training priorities identified by mosque committee members were further Islamic studies; English language classes; management, health and safety law; employment law; and making applications for grants.<sup>19</sup> Managers and trustees also have crucial roles to play in the appointment and development of imams and other leaders and therefore, incidentally, in discussions of this report.

## Women's experiences and perspectives

- 2.21 Muslim women exercise faith leadership as chaplains in institutions such as hospitals, prisons and higher education (paragraphs 2.13–2.17 above); as scholars, thinkers and academics (paragraph 2.18); as teachers and instructors in madrassahs and study circles, and in independent and state-funded Muslim schools (paragraph 2.19); and in the management of mosques, often through a special women's committee (paragraph 2.20). The Mosques and Imams National Advisory Board has a standard for its members to promote the role of women in mosques.<sup>20</sup> Women may also lead prayers for women-only congregations, and play relatively informal but significant leadership roles in their families and communities, as illustrated in Box 2.5.
- 2.22 In all these respects most of the training and development needs of Muslim women are the same as those for Muslim men. These include the need for theological study to be combined with the acquisition of pastoral and vocational skills (for example, the pastoral skills and qualities summarised in Box 2.17), and the need not only for initial training but also for continuing professional development. Also, it is valuable for women as well as for men if award-bearing courses and programmes of study are validated by a publicly-funded institution. There is fuller discussion of the importance of validation throughout the next two chapters.

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<sup>19</sup> Rahman and co-authors, page 27.

<sup>20</sup> There are five standards altogether. They are listed and explained at: <http://www.minab.org.uk/essential-documents/standards>.

### **Box 2.5 : Sought after by family and friends**

Firdous, 25 years old, completed a seven year course in Islamic Studies to be an alimah. The rigours of living in a boarding school and seeing her family only once a week were difficult, but she coped because she had sisters who were studying with her. Also this was what she wanted - access to good level of education in English, Maths, Science and also Islamic texts. Islamic Studies would give her a voice against unfair cultural practices. Cultural practices concern Firdous, but she believes that times are changing - women are being given more choices in matters like working and choosing their marriage partners. After simultaneously completing her Islamic studies and her GCSEs, she went to a mainstream college for her A Levels.

Firdous was then offered a place at university to study for a degree in law but chose instead to do a masters course in Islamic Studies. As an alimah she is respected in society, though after she graduated some members of the community initially felt she had lowered herself by mixing religious and secular education. Now she is sought after as an alimah by her family and friends. 'They confide in me and ask advice, fatwa, Islamic side, not my own fatwa, not my personal opinion but what I know and have learnt.' Firdous is currently unsure about her career choices. She has chosen to help with teaching in the darul uloom at which she studied but is also considering pursuing a PhD and a future career in research.

Source: interview with Firdous (not her real name), 2009

- 2.23 In addition to the needs and experiences which Muslim women have in common with Muslim men, there are certain distinctive concerns which they have as women. In Britain, as in many other European countries, these include Muslim women being the targets of heated debates in the mainstream media connected to such issues as clothing, and attendant claims that all Muslim women are subjugated and submissive in their families and communities, and that all are essentially different from non-Muslim women. Further, women may be marginalised in aspects of mosque management and leadership and by cultural interpretations of Islam that are patriarchal towards women,<sup>21</sup> and may find that some male imams are insufficiently aware of and sensitive to women's distinctive experiences, concerns and issues. In relation to this latter point there are clear practical implications, of course, for the content and design of courses and programmes of study in which imams engage, both in their initial training and in continuing professional development.

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<sup>21</sup> Scott-Baumann (2003).

- 2.24 Both as a faith and as a way of life Islam has a rich tradition of gender equality, ensuring that women have the same legal, social, political and financial rights as men. In consequence, women have been integral to the development of Islamic thought and sciences right from Islam's inception. Khadija the wife of Prophet Muhammad, was the first convert to Islam and its first benefactor. In Britain, the first purpose-built mosque was built at Woking in 1889 using funds donated by a woman, Begum Shah Jahan, the ruler of Bhopal in what is now India. The struggles of many Muslim women are not, it follows, exclusively feminist or rights-based.<sup>22</sup> Rather, they are firmly grounded in Islamic theology.
- 2.25 Muslim women study Islamic theology for a range of reasons. Some wish simply to acquaint themselves with their faith, and do not necessarily want to become faith leaders. Others want to help ensure the perpetuation of Islamic *tarbiya* (nurturing, education and cultivation), *akhlak* (morals) and *adab* (manners) and in these ways to be better citizens. Within wider society many British Muslim women play leadership roles in law, medicine, science and education. It is within these contexts of inclusivity, engagement and theological underpinnings that Muslim women's experiences of, and opinions about, faith leadership training need to be considered.
- 2.26 Many Muslim women, including fully-qualified alimahs, have found ways to balance successfully their Islamic faith with a variety of social and professional roles. Such women may be able to inspire and guide future alimahs through their example and experiential knowledge, for the theological education they have received gives them religious authority and a degree of influence within their communities, particularly among other women. They are sometime unsure whether they can give religious advice in particular contexts, however, and may be constrained by social traditions that they respect and accept. Some of their difficulties and successes are captured by the story in Box 2.6.

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<sup>22</sup> This point is developed and emphasised in Sariya Contractor's research study (2010).

## 2.6 : Perceived as a qualified professional

Majida wants to be a teacher. 'I want to go ahead in my field and become a teacher, because I believe teachers play a good role in bringing up the nation. What we put into our children, we see in our next generation. So as a teacher I feel I would be a responsible person in the community.' As a young ambitious woman she would like to be perceived as a qualified professional who can work not just with the Muslim community but also in other communities, 'to create awareness about Islam and clarify misconceptions'. But she knows that, 'without recognition (validation) we are limited to the Muslim community'. She adds: 'What I really want, as well, is for somebody to come and tell us about the progress route, and how to achieve my goals.'

Source: interview with Majida (not her real name), 2009

- 2.27 The leadership development programme for women run by the Association of Muslim Chaplains in Education (AMCED) is an example of good practice that can give young Muslim women the opportunity and confidence to realise their potential. It is described briefly later in this report in paragraphs 3.43–3.44. Similarly the National Muslim Women's Advisory Group has undertaken a range of activities to ensure that Muslim women's voice are heard in social policy formulation and, more generally, in all aspects of British society. There is a need for more research that explores in detail the Islamic Studies curricula that are taught to girls and women, and for more alimahs and female scholars to be involved in processes of scholarly writing and curriculum development, with a view to there being more educational opportunities for women that are led by women.

## Concluding note

- 2.28 This chapter has explained why the term *Muslim faith leader* is considered to be more inclusive than *imam*, and has described the roles of a) mosque-based imams, b) chaplains, and c) other leaders, including thinkers, teachers and youth workers. It has highlighted that training for the relatively new role of chaplain has implications, both theoretical and practical, for the training and development of other leaders as well. Importantly, it has stressed that Muslim women exercise faith leadership in their communities as teachers, chaplains and alimahs, and that also they have distinctive expectations and needs that all faith leaders need to address, both in their initial training and in continuing professional development.
- 2.29 How are the training and development needs of Muslim faith leaders in Britain currently catered for? This is the subject-matter of the next chapter.



# Chapter 3

## Current provision and planning

### Overview

- 3.1 For the purposes of this review a broad distinction was made between initial training on the one hand and continuing professional development (CPD) on the other. The category of initial training was sub-divided into secondary education (the 11–19 age-ranges) and higher and further education (post-19). It is important to note, however, that in Muslim institutions the distinctions between secondary, further and higher education are not always hard and fast, since students at 11–19 institutions sometimes stay on for up to three further years for more advanced studies at higher or further education level. Such institutions are listed in Appendix A once only, according to their main function as judged by student numbers.
- 3.2 At the time of review there were 54 Muslim institutions in Britain providing initial faith leadership training, as listed in Appendix A. Thirty-eight were registered with the Department for Education as providing for the 11-16 age-range and state that they teach not only the national curriculum (core subjects as a minimum and often much more) but also a traditional syllabus, usually a form of the *dars-e-nizami* syllabus for Sunni Muslims. There is further information later in this chapter. Shia Muslims have their own syllabus. The *dars-e-nizami* syllabus and its equivalents prepare students to take faith leadership roles, if they wish, in later life.
- 3.3 The 38 institutions providing secondary education can be classified as follows.
- **In terms of region:** seven (three male, three female, one co-educational) are in Yorkshire, seven (three male, four female) are in Lancashire, 11 (seven male, three female, one co-educational) are in the West or East Midlands, 13 (seven male, two female, four co-educational) are in London and the South East.
  - **In terms of gender:** 22 schools are for males (approximately 46 per cent of all students at the schools under consideration), ten are for females (approximately 37 per cent) and six are co-educational (approximately 17 per cent).
  - **In terms of size:** One has over 400 students, four have between 300 and 400, nine have between 200 and 300 students, fourteen have between 100 and 200, and nine have fewer than 100. In the case of one institution the size could not be ascertained.
  - **In terms of when they were founded:** four were founded before 1990, 17 in the 1990s and nine since 2000. In the case of the others, the date of founding could not be ascertained at the time of this review.
  - **In terms of denomination:** of the 19 schools visited as part of this review, 18 described themselves as Sunni and one as Shia. Of the



Sunni institutions, nine described themselves as Deobandi, two as Barelvi and the rest only as Sunni.

3.4 Of the 16 institutions providing post-18 education, 15 were colleges and one specialised in distance learning. The college-type institutions can be classified as follows:

- In terms of **region**: five are in London, five in the Midlands, one in Scotland, one in Yorkshire, one in Wales. Two others are in Cambridge and Winchester.
- **In terms of gender**: eleven are co-educational, two are for men only, and one for women only. Data for one institution was not ascertained at the time of the review.
- **In terms of size**: of the 12 for which data is available, one has over 200 students, two have between 101 and 150, six have between 50 and 100 students and three have fewer than 50.
- **In terms of when they were founded**: six were founded before 2,000 and six since. Dates for the other three were not available at the time of this review.
- **In terms of denomination**: of the nine institutions visited as part of this review, four described themselves as Shi'a and five as Sunni (of which one Barelvi).

3.5 The summaries in paragraphs 3.3 and 3.4 indicate that a high proportion of initial faith leadership training for the 11–19 age-ranges is provided in Britain by the Deobandi community.<sup>23</sup> It is relevant in this regard to note that according to some reports at most a third of British Muslims of South Asian backgrounds belong to this community, and that the majority are associated with the Barelvi community.<sup>24</sup> The summaries also indicate that there are more male-only institutions than female-only or co-educational institutions. Overall, however, there is very little difference in terms of the numbers of male and female students at these schools, since the institutions for females are much larger.

## Secondary education

3.6 Muslim institutions in Britain catering for the secondary age-range are sometimes described as seminaries. This description can be misleading, however, since most cater only for students in the 11–16 or 11-18 age-range,

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<sup>23</sup> The Deobandi movement began at Darul Uloom Deoband, India, where the foundation stone was laid on 30 May 1866. Its members played a key role in establishing similar institutions in other parts of the South Asian subcontinent during the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century.

<sup>24</sup> See, for example, Birt and Lewis (2008), who maintain it is unlikely that students from Deobandi darul uloods will be acceptable as imams in Barelvi communities. Gilliat-Ray observes that 'various scholars of Islam in Britain have estimated that about 50 per cent of British Muslim organisations reflect a general Barelvi worldview' (Gilliat-Ray 2010: 94).

and contain few if any who are older. Also, relatively few of the students intend to become full-time imams. Their theological training qualifies them for employment in due course at a mosque or other religious organisation on a full-time, part-time or voluntary basis, for they have substantial knowledge of Islam and Islamic sciences. Most, though, seek employment in mainstream society or else a place at a university or college.

- 3.7 Most secondary-type Muslim institutions in Britain are known as darul ulooms. As also in such schools throughout the South Asian sub-continent, the religious curriculum is based on a syllabus known as *dars-e-nizami*. This derives its name from Mullah Nizamuddin (1678–1747), a distinguished scholar based in Lucknow, India.<sup>25</sup> In its original form it was a nine-year course for students in the 12–21 age-range and led to a degree-level qualification. The medium of instruction was originally Farsi but later was Urdu. After graduation, former students pursued careers as imams or Islamic scholars, or else as senior government administrators and officials. It was based on a set of carefully selected texts reflecting rationalist traditions developed in Iran and became the dominant system of Indian Islamic education from the eighteenth century onwards. It was seen as having the capacity to preserve Islam at the same time as selectively adopting social, cultural and technological changes from the West. Its proponents saw it as reformist in relation to Islam in South Asia more generally, and as oppositional in relation to colonialism.
- 3.8 Most darul ulooms in the UK, as also in South Asia, have made variations to the original syllabus, for example by cutting back on content which they consider superfluous to the needs of students growing up in contemporary society or by taking a pragmatic decision to make the syllabus more manageable in view of the educational demands placed on students of compulsory school age. In Britain the language of instruction is nowadays frequently English rather than Urdu. A student who completes the full *dars-i-nizami* syllabus is awarded the certificate known as the *Sanad* and is recognised within British Sunni communities as an *alim* in the case of young men or an *alimah* in the case of young women. Different terms are used in Shi'a Islam.
- 3.9 There are differences between Shia and Sunni approaches to faith leadership training. All schools, whether Shia or Sunni, aim to provide an education that produces good citizens who are proactive in society and make strong contributions to the community at large with a good foundation of Islamic knowledge. Shia primary and secondary schools, however, do not provide theological training aimed directly towards being a religious guide in the community. In Britain young adult Shia students undertake study for becoming a religious scholar after the end of formal schooling, for example by attending institutions such as the Islamic College in London. There is further information about Shia approaches in paragraphs 3.28–29.
- 3.10 In addition to the *dars-e-nizami syllabus*, also known as the *Alimiyyah* curriculum, all Muslim institutions in England catering for the 11–16 age range

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<sup>25</sup> There is an alternative view that the name derives from Madrasa Nizamiya in the Iranian town of Nishapur, founded in the eleventh century. The madrasa was named after its founder, Khawaja Abu 'Ali Hasan, more popularly known as Nizam ul-Mulk Tusi (1018-1092).

teach the core subjects of the national curriculum and many prepare their students for public examinations at GCSE. All are inspected by Ofsted. Extracts from recent Ofsted reports give a positive idea, from a non-Muslim perspective, of their aspirations and achievements, as shown in Box 3.1.

### **Box 3.1: 'Prepares pupils well for their future life'**

'The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is outstanding. The school's aims emphasise acquiring an in-depth knowledge and love of Islam and instilling religious and moral values. .... The school actively promotes tolerance of other races and religions, for example through the PSHE and citizenship programme and through invited speakers explaining their beliefs. This awareness prepares pupils well for their future life in a multicultural society. The curriculum develops individuals who can think for themselves, whilst also considering the needs of others. Through living together as a community and through their opportunities to have a say in life in school, pupils are learning how to make a strong and positive contribution to society.'

'Teachers' planning in Islamic studies is good with some well thought out lesson plans and appropriate resources. There are helpful guides for developing the Arabic language, and these include such aspects as Nawh (formation of words into sentences in modern and classic Arabic) and Serf (Etymology). The teaching becomes highly effective, as relationships between teachers and students are exemplary, and based on mutual trust and respect. The students' progress in Islamic studies is generally good or better, with a very good success rate for those involved in the Hafiz (memorisation of the Koran) and Alim (scholar of Islam) programmes of study.'

'Students hold very clear views about right and wrong, and they are confident and articulate in their discussions about truth, equality, justice and respect. These attitudes, and the many chances to compare the religious beliefs and values of other communities and faiths, illustrate very clearly that the students are keen to maintain positive community relations.'

Source: Ofsted reports on Muslim schools for the  
11-16 age range, 2007–09

- 3.11 Teachers at these institutions are often former students and may not always have formal teaching qualifications. Teachers and Muslim institutions affirm the need for increased opportunities to engage both in initial training and in continuing professional development (CPD), since this will enhance student learning and experience. With regard to pedagogy, most schools in Britain have preserved the book-based teaching style employed by the traditional Muslim institutions of South Asia. The lessons are largely taught or delivered in the traditional way, with the teacher teaching verbally without visual aids or handouts. However, there is increasing use of handouts, student participation, coursework and whiteboard explanation. Students are sometimes required to work in affiliated mosques, to give them a form of work experience.
- 3.12 Students' spiritual and religious education may impact positively on their social development. For example, a teacher at a school in the Midlands informed the review team about research he had carried out whilst studying at the University of Birmingham in order to ascertain the impact of traditional teaching methods on academic progress. The majority of the students whom he interviewed felt that traditional methods involving extensive memorisation of chapters of the Qur'an and *hadith*, along with the ability to understand the finer points of *fiqh*, had developed their powers of memorisation and cognition which in turn helped them to do well in subjects of the National Curriculum. Teachers and instructors at the darul ulooms also maintain that an important aspect of traditional methodology is that it nurtures respect for knowledge and teachers, and spiritual development in students. But in any case there are many instances within traditional Muslim institutions where the younger generation of British educated teachers are developing a range of different methods of teaching.
- 3.13 For students who do not intend to become imams or to undertake other kinds of leadership role within their communities, it would be helpful if their religious education were to be formally recognised, for example through the national 14–19 qualifications programme. Many students are devout in their personal faith and do not seek earthly rewards. Such students may nevertheless wish, motivated by their faith, to seek entrance to a mainstream college or university after they have left their darul uloom, or a similar Muslim institution. In this respect formal recognition of their religious education, alongside GCSE and A level grades, would be very useful to them. Interviews and discussions with students in darul ulooms showed clearly that they would welcome such recognition.
- 3.14 Amongst other things, this might involve modifying the Islamic Sciences syllabus itself so that it is more relevant to living in a non-Muslim society, and – more especially – so that it equips young alims and alimahs with the pastoral and counselling skills that they seek and that they can use with contemporaries whose knowledge of Islam is less profound than theirs. Indeed, several examples of such modifications are already evident. It is a question of sharing good practice that already exists, not of starting from scratch.

## Further and higher education

- 3.15 In this section of the report there are brief descriptions of recent or proposed initiatives at the following institutions: Cambridge Muslim College; Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, University of Cambridge; Al Mahdi Institute, Birmingham; Ebrahim Community College, London; Khoja Shia Ithna-Asheri Community in association with University of Winchester; and the Islamic College, London, in association with Middlesex University. The purpose of these descriptions is to illustrate the range of thinking and practical pioneering that is currently taking place. By and large the descriptions are factual rather than appreciative or evaluative. The underlying assumption, however, is that they are significant and valuable, and that practical experience of these kinds should be more widely shared. These initiatives are definitely not exhaustive.
- 3.16 A useful distinction may be drawn between Islamic Sciences and Islamic Studies. The former is taught from the perspective of believers and comprises traditional studies focusing on learning and interpretation of texts to clarify and enhance personal and religious practice, and the application of Islamic law. The latter is not necessarily taught from a believer's perspective and draws on a range of modern academic disciplines, including sociology, history, anthropology, linguistics, geography and politics to study the Muslim world. Broadly, Islamic Sciences is taught in Muslim institutions and Islamic Studies is taught in publicly-funded institutions. Most of the descriptions in the following paragraphs are of Islamic Sciences programmes. There is also consideration, however, of the potential of Islamic Studies to contribute to the training and development of Muslim faith leaders (see paragraphs 3.30–3.34).

### Cambridge Muslim College

- 3.17 The Cambridge Muslim College currently offers a one-year Diploma in Contextual Islamic Studies and Leadership, a course designed to help those who already possess significant training in the Islamic sciences, for example through attendance at a darul uloom as described above, to develop, articulate and implement their knowledge effectively in Britain today. Further, it aims to help students with a background in traditional Islamic sciences to go on to join mainstream higher education. In the future, the college will offer part-time and distance learning options, three- and four-year degree courses, and a range of non-accredited summer courses and regular study days for employers and the public. The diploma course has three interlinked objectives:
- to enable students to understand and engage with contemporary debates about the role of religion in general, and Islam in particular, in modern society
  - to encourage the students to be compassionate and reliable spiritual and pastoral advisers to Muslims and others

- to equip students with practical skills to make them more effective leaders of Muslim institutions, and to enhance their prospects for further education and work.

### **Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, University of Cambridge**

- 3.18 An intensive professional training course was launched in 2009 and completed in 2010, organised jointly by the University of Cambridge and Al-Azhar University in Cairo. It was designed for young British Muslims currently studying in darul ulooms and similar institutions and the aim was to build on the knowledge students had already gained through lectures, tutorials, seminars, visits, workshops and personal study assignments, and in this way to broaden their appreciation of Islam in modern contexts. The visits were not only to Muslim organisations but also to a Christian postgraduate theological training centre and a Jewish rabbinical college.
- 3.19 There was first a period of three months study at Al-Azhar. The Cambridge component of the course then required the students to tackle questions and issues they would not necessarily have encountered before. Themes included the role of Muslims in Britain, the challenges facing Muslims in the West, multiculturalism, British Muslim identity, gender equality, human rights, and pastoral care.

### **Khoja Shia Ithna-Asheri Community, Damascus, and University of Winchester**

- 3.20 The Khoja Shia Ithna-Asheri Community has a course that started in 2007 and is validated by the University of Winchester as an MA course in Islamic education. Graduates of the programme will be authorised as religious scholars in their communities (*alims* and *muballigheen*, religious scholars as educators) and also have a masters degree. In Damascus, high standards of traditional Islamic and Arabic education are provided by the Islamic Institute for Postgraduate Studies.
- 3.21 There are five MA modules: teaching religion; moral, spiritual and religious education; Qur'an – scripture and signifier; Islamic ethics; authority in Shia Islam; and research methods. In addition there are 16 enrichment modules delivered in English including Islam in the West, Islamic finance and the position of women in Islam. There are also 19 competency seminars on topics such as leadership skills, conflict resolution and financial management. The *muballigheen* course seeks to bring together in one course religious learning, vocational education (for example, leadership, management and administrative skills) and pastoral ministry.

### **Al Mahdi Institute, Birmingham**

- 3.22 The Al Mahdi Institute in Birmingham is a Shia organisation that was established as a non-profit charity to respond to the perceived need for an educational institute in the UK which would provide students with a structured degree course in the fields of Arabic and Islamic Sciences within a

multicultural and pluralist society. The fact that the members of the Institute come from diverse intellectual and philosophical schools of thought is a reflection of its philosophy and mission.

- 3.23 The curriculum is a modified form of that which is taught in traditional Islamic colleges, the major difference being that there is great emphasis on the use of modern theories in the study of religion, theology and language, and that both Arabic and English are used as languages of instruction. The aim is to train and prepare students who on graduation will be able to function within Western academic traditions and contemporary intellectual discourse as participants, not spectators.

### **European Institute of Human Sciences (EIHS)**

- 3.24 The European Institute of Human Sciences (EIHS) near Lampeter, Wales, was established in 1998 as a private charity to offer education in Arabic and Islamic Studies or Shariah up to degree level standard. It aims to train male and female faith leaders so that they not only have deep Islamic knowledge but also awareness of socio-cultural norms in British society. Students usually study Arabic for one or two years based on their specific needs and then go on to study for a three year Islamic Studies course which is usually taught in Arabic. The course is considered by EIHS to be equivalent to a BA and was validated by Lampeter University until 2005.
- 3.25 The modules include Islamic jurisprudence, Islamic political thought, comparative religion, Arabic law and rhetoric, Islamic transactions and penal law, contemporary schools of thought, methodology of clarifying Islamic issues, Quranic exegesis, Islamic reform movements and jurisprudence for minorities.

### **Ebrahim Community College, London**

- 3.26 Ebrahim Community College is an independent Muslim sixth form college in east London. In collaboration with quality assurance experts in the university sector, it has developed a BA in Islamic Sciences and Society which is not yet, however, validated. It is designed to be a degree in its own right, but also to be a necessary though not sufficient prerequisite for training as an alim or alimah. It will in addition equip students for professional and academic competence for careers in religious youth work; nursing and mental health care; teaching, especially religious education and personal, social and health education (PSHE); social work, social care and policy; the probation services; work in multicultural and religious contexts, supporting business initiatives with clients from different cultures; and work across different faith communities in a mediating capacity.<sup>26</sup>
- 3.27 'For the first time in the West,' the chief executive of the college has written, 'graduate imams and alims will receive an internationally recognised British degree, which will improve their employment prospects and eliminate the need to travel abroad to get recognition for their studies ... We feel that such imams, alims and leaders will be adequately qualified to deal with the identity

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<sup>26</sup> There is fuller information in Scott-Baumann (2010a).

crisis, sense of alienation and segregation that is peculiar to Muslim communities in Britain and the West.<sup>27</sup> A shared pedagogy is being developed in order to create sustainable links between different education systems. There are two main reasons for this. A new pedagogy can provide a platform or framework for exchange of ideas and better understanding between groups which otherwise see each other as alien; and it ensures that each system can learn from the other.

### **The Islamic College, London**

- 3.28 The Islamic College in London provides a range of curricula, which at bachelors and masters level do not necessarily emphasise the distinctive nature of Shiism (except the planned MA in Shiite Studies) – the Shia focus comes at doctoral level. The masters level courses are validated by Middlesex University. These comprise Islamic Studies and Comparative Philosophy (i.e. Islamic and Western), and further courses are in preparation, for example in Islamic banking and finance, and Muslim civilisation and the culture of dialogue. The Hawza studies provide ministerial and pastoral as well as theological training and offer a range of qualifications, none externally validated as yet. The first of these is the Diploma in Muslim Chaplaincy; the second, the Diploma in Shia Studies. Each takes two years. The students may also study the Muslim ministry course for becoming an *alim*, which they may take to a higher level in the doctoral course.
- 3.29 Middlesex University does not validate the faith leadership aspects, which can be studied alongside the masters and doctoral studies, but students at masters or doctoral level receive authentication for their theology through their connections with the Islamic College and the al Mustafa University in Qom, Iran. The director of the college believes it is vital to accommodate different cultural beliefs in education as well as religion and that authenticity must go both ways. He is quoted in Box 3.2.

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<sup>27</sup> Mohammed M Uddin, letter to Bill Rammell MP, Minister of State for Higher Education, following launch of the Siddiqui Report, July 2007.



### **Box 3.2 : We want to build bridges**

Islamic Law is controversial and also vitally important. Knowledge in Western universities is valuable for interpreting Islam and we hope that our new PhD students at Islamic College here in London will produce a two-way flow with Qom. Just as they influence us with their pure theology, so we can influence them with European thinking. We hope that the syllabus in Qom will be partially influenced by our college, which is unique in the UK. Inside Islam there are differences, we hope to be as open as possible. Our affiliation is Shi'ite, from Iran but we cater to students from all backgrounds up to degree level. At A level we have about 70 per cent Sunni, at BA we have about 50 per cent Sunni and at master's we have only Shia students.

We believe that imams need to be trained here in the UK and we need a variety of Muslim institutions to impart this training. We believe in the study of the Qu'ran as divine revelation, and we also believe there are two approaches to the study of Islam, and that must include the study of Islam in the West – inside and outside. We can provide the insider perspective for Muslims and also use open dialogue as a positive approach. We want to build bridges between the believers' approach and the outsiders', perhaps Orientalist approach to Islamic Studies.

Source:

Interview with Dr M S Bahmanpour, Principal, Islamic College, 2009

## **Islamic Studies**

- 3.30 As an academic discipline, Islamic Studies was not originally intended to contribute to Muslim faith leadership training within Britain. In recent years, however, a number of UK universities have developed programmes which, amongst other things, are relevant for British Muslim students wishing to undertake leadership roles in their communities, for example as teachers and youth workers of various kinds. Such programmes are taught full-time at degree level and part-time at diploma or certificate level.
- 3.31 A report by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) summarised the characteristics of Islamic Studies provision, and draws on data from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) and the National Student Survey. Its findings included:
- Across the UK the number of students on Islamic Studies programmes rose by 12 per cent between 2002-03 and 2005-06. This compared with a seven per cent rise across all subjects of study. A total of 635 students were studying Islamic Studies across all years of study in 2005-06, 188 of them at first degree level.

- Undergraduate students are mainly female and postgraduate students are mainly male. Most of the male postgraduates had not studied the subject before and most of them had not previously studied in UK higher education (HE). Of the 173 male postgraduate students in 2005-06, 36 per cent had undertaken previous study on non-Islamic studies programmes at an earlier date; 21 per cent were not domiciled in the UK or their highest qualification was from outside the UK.
- In the academic year 2005-06, the course with the most postgraduate students was Arabic and Islamic Studies at the University of Exeter (53 students). Amongst first degree programmes, Islamic Studies at University of Birmingham had the most students (62 students).
- Forty-three per cent of students studying Islamic Studies programmes were identified as Asian or Asian British. This compared with eight per cent of students across all subjects of study.
- There is an interesting link between level and mode of study: 'other' undergraduate provision (certificates, diplomas, higher national diplomas and certificates foundation degrees, institutional credits) is predominantly studied part-time (93 per cent), whereas at first degree level virtually all students study full-time (98 per cent of students).

3.32 A follow-up report in 2010 identified 1,101 modules currently being provided in UK universities which could be defined as being concerned with Islamic Studies. The findings included:

- Islamic Studies teaching is concentrated in a small number of pre-1992 institutions – two thirds of all modules are taught at 12 per cent of institutions, nearly all of which date from before 1992.
- Areas with low Muslim populations may have a substantial Islamic Studies presence – this is the case at, for example, Cambridge, Edinburgh, Exeter, Oxford and St Andrews – yet also there are areas with a large Muslim population, for example Bradford, where the Islamic Studies presence is small.
- Sixty per cent of the modules are provided in disciplines traditionally associated with Islamic Studies (religious studies, politics and history), but two fifths are outside the traditional core in disciplines such as law, sociology, art and finance.
- Most Islamic Studies teaching takes place in the second year of an undergraduate course. In terms of numbers of modules, however, the greatest provision is at masters level.

3.33 There is a view among some students who have studied both traditional theology and Islamic Studies that there is more criticality in the latter, as voiced in the quotation in Box 3.3.

### Box 3.3: Debates between traditionalism and modernism

The debates between traditionalism and modernism continue to spill a lot of ink in the house of Islam. Each side accuses the other of scholarly shortcoming and intellectual ineptness. I embarked on an academic course in Islamic studies soon after completing my seminarian traditional studies in the UK – and when asked, as I am often, about which method is better, at least for me, I always opt for the academic discourse. I do value the importance of traditional scholarship and, in and of itself, I have no quarrels. My concerns are *with* the practitioners and commentators of classical Islamic scholarship. Classical Islamic authors were, in every sense of the word, true philosophers and thinkers who thought, wrote and argued critically and objectively; sadly, however, contemporary traditional scholarship is lacking on this front. What we have today is merely the rehearsal of the ideas of past figures in the intellectual history of Islam, and not scrupulous academic discourse that characterised classical thought.

To this end, and the reason why I prefer academic studies, is simply because academic methodological techniques, especially in historiography, offer much more than the anachronistic method that is often pursued by the traditionalist circles. In academia we are taught to re-read, let's say, Islamic history through the lens of apodictic techniques where we approach a given Hadith, for example, by considering its linguistic context, its consistency with other traditions, the settings in which it was uttered, and so on and so forth. Without falling into the pitfall of essentialism, academic studies gives due consideration to historical criticism. Traditionalist circles ... seem to think our received theology reached us instantaneously without going through 14 centuries of scholarship and no one ever seems bothered about the historical contexts of scriptures.

Source: Ahab Bdaiwi

- 3.34 Evaluations of Islamic Studies in institutions of UK higher education have been conducted by the Al-Maktoum Institute, Dundee, and by Dr Atallah Siddiqui, commissioned by the former Department for Education and Skills (the relevant part of which is now the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills). Both argue that Islamic Studies programmes could and should be more relevant to contemporary British society and some of them at least should be re-structured so that they are potentially more relevant to British Muslim students who wish to exercise faith leadership responsibilities. Key points in Dr Siddiqui's report include the following.

- With the exception of a few individual initiatives, the study of Islam and its civilisation remains anchored in the colonial legacy and mainly serves the diplomatic and foreign services. Teaching and research programmes need to be re-oriented. Britain could give the lead to Europe in such a re-orientation if there were sufficient commitment from government, funding agencies and universities, and from the resident Muslim community. Properly directed investment in resources and energies could turn relations with Muslims and Islam in this country in a sustainably positive direction.
- A major shift of the focus of Islamic Studies from an Arab and Middle Eastern perspective to that of a plural society in Britain is needed.
- How and how far social science methods are appropriate to the study of Islam needs to be more vigorously questioned than it has been.
- Publicly-funded institutions of higher education and their staff need to connect more closely with Muslim institutions.
- As issues relating to the future of Islamic Studies assume greater importance, both on university campuses and in the areas of funding and public policy, it is important to take account of, and respond to the variety of, interests involved in this subject.

## Continuing professional development

- 3.35 For Muslim faith leaders, as for leaders in other religious traditions, continuing professional development (CPD) is of crucial importance. It helps them to reflect on their own practice and changing circumstances, to respond to new realities and challenges in wider society, and to give guidance, advice and support to others. Its content may have distinctive features and emphases for leaders who received their initial training overseas.
- 3.36 CPD is provided for Muslim faith leaders not only through award-bearing courses such as higher degrees, diplomas and certificates but also through a wide range of short courses, modules, conferences and workshops. In the following paragraphs there are descriptions of an imamship course at the Muslim College, London; chaplaincy and counselling courses at Markfield Institute of Higher Education; a pilot faith leadership course run by the National Institute of Adult and Continuing Education (NIACE); and short courses and events run by a range of organisations and professional associations.

### **Muslim College, London**

- 3.37 The Muslim College in London is developing a systematic educational programme for imams in the UK. Topics covered in the course include major issues of Muslim concern in the light of *fiqh* (jurisprudence), British laws affecting Muslims, mosques and Islamic organisations, British culture and history, attitudes towards Islam, major Muslim groups and organisations in Britain, Islam in the media, Islam and citizenship, Islam and racism, dispute

resolution, bereavement care and crisis management, marriage and divorce, *dawah* work in the United Kingdom (invitation to Islam), interfaith work, public speaking, the Charity Commission and its relationship with Muslim organisations, mosque management and madrasah management, mosques and youth, mosques and women, fund-raising techniques and skills, spirituality and ethics, community building, immigration law, and imams in the armed services, the National Health Service and prisons.

### **Markfield Institute of Higher Education**

- 3.38 The Markfield Institute of Higher Education (MIHE) in Leicestershire has developed a course for Muslim chaplains which provides training for chaplaincy in three areas: HM Prison Service, NHS hospitals, and further and higher education. The course is the first of its kind and has set a trend for acceptance that chaplaincy is a workable concept in British Islam. The study routine attempts to fit in with busy lives and to give time for placements and moral growth, running for eight days spread over seven months. Entry requirements are flexible, allowing for experience as well as paper qualifications. This flexibility is appropriate for adult students. The course takes both men and women, and both experienced and novice chaplains.
- 3.39 ‘So far,’ observes the course director,<sup>28</sup> ‘MIHE has run seven cohorts. When the first course took place in 2003 chaplaincy was seen as a Christian concept and many Muslims wanted nothing to do with it. However, 161 students have successfully graduated with the certificate, and the average intake is 22. Forty-six of the students came onto the course as ulema or imams and five were alimahs, although theological training is not an entry requirement. So they can add to their pure theology the practical life skills for working with the community – both Muslim and other communities. Students have to engage with tensions between their own beliefs and those of others and in this connection must undertake critical reflection on their own practice and experience.’
- 3.40 ‘Some chaplains,’ he continues, ‘create a role for themselves in their own community when they finish the course. They now see the potential for the work they do and play an active role, for they have made a niche for themselves in their community. When I am accused of stealing the best ulema from the mosques, I reply ‘guilty as charged’! The next step is for our trained chaplains to be actively included in the life of the mosque. A few are achieving this already and are attached to mosques. They have also lost the hesitation they used to have about other faiths and the society of those who are not Muslim.’

### **National Institute for Adult and Continuing Education**

- 3.41 In April 2007 the National Institute for Adult and Continuing Education (NIACE) was asked by the DfES Further Education Reform Unit to set out a proposal for continuing professional development for faith leaders. The approach to the development of adult learning adopted by NIACE is based on the following core concerns:

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<sup>28</sup> Ataulloh Siddiqui.

- to develop a learner-centred approach, which valued the voices and experiences of faith leaders and practitioners in the communities
- to build on the best practice in adult teaching and learning in community development and citizenship available nationally
- to use consultative and inclusive approaches which involve all faith groups
- to reflect respect for diversity and equal opportunities policy and practice in relation to race, gender, disability and age
- to build trust based on transparency of process.

3.42 The overall aim of the programme was to develop the communication, negotiation, representation and other skills of faith leaders so that they could operate more effectively and confidently within their own communities. The awarding body which accredited the qualification was the National Open College Network (NOCN). The decision to collaborate with this organisation was based on the fact that suitable units at the appropriate level for the pilot programme were already available through an existing NOCN qualification and as an awarding body they are keen to support the development of flexible credit based awards. The content covered human rights, the law, specific laws that affect the voluntary and community sector; leadership; issues relating to the local community, practical implications of setting up a voluntary organisation, values and governance, planning and policy making; community development – assessing need, engagement, participation, support and protection; understanding and working with children and young people; safeguarding children and child protection; and organisational finance.

### **Organisations, networks and professional associations**

- 3.43 In addition to the CPD programmes provided by academic institutions such as those described in the preceding paragraphs, it is relevant to note that courses, conferences and seminars of various kinds are planned and offered by professional bodies and associations. The Association of Muslim Chaplains in Education, for example, has established a leadership development programme for women. The course outline states that ‘this six-month programme kicks off with some preparatory work that delegates will have to complete before attending a one-day networking and development event. During the event we’ll be helping delegates to understand and develop leadership behaviours and competencies, while providing exposure to leaders, who will demonstrate how change can be managed to drive performance. Outside of this event, bespoke workshops for programme delegates will be delivered to support ongoing development of leadership skills, while one-to-one coaching will be available to support leadership and personal development.’
- 3.44 It is envisaged that the benefits for participants will include awareness and understanding of leadership competencies and behaviours; a broader understanding of leadership, gained from interaction with others; opportunities to get involved in projects to extend networks and create solutions;



participation in a development programme that has been built for women; bespoke workshops to support the development of leadership competencies and behaviours; access to one-to-one coaching; and exposure to a broad range of leadership styles.

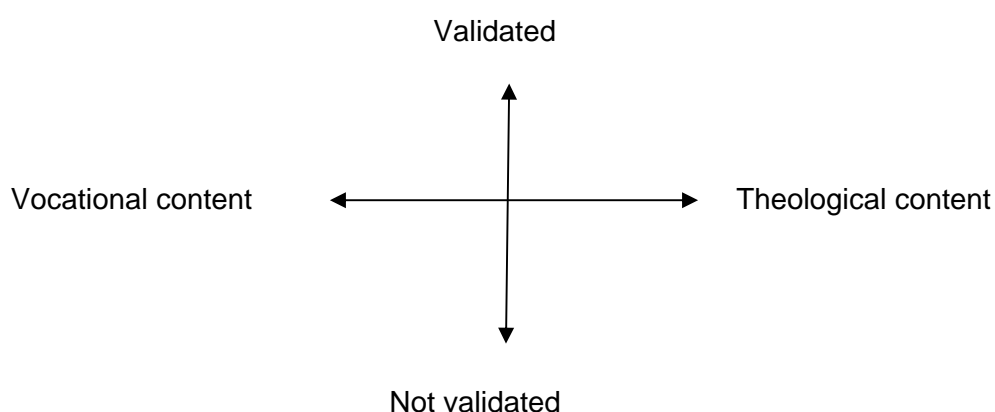
- 3.45 The Association of Muslim Lawyers and the Mosques and Imams National Advisory Board (MINAB) are currently rolling out seminars to support members to apply principles of good governance by presenting and raising awareness on how to implement strong governance standards and avoid pitfalls; understand and comply with the Law in receiving and distributing charitable donations; understand employment and immigration issues affecting the organisation; understand the anti-terror legislation and how it impacts on the organisation; promote transparency and better governance overall. The seminars are supported by the Charity Commission and the Law Society Charity.
- 3.46 Another recent MINAB activity was a one-day workshop in which imams from various denominations came together at the Victoria Park Mosque, Manchester to engage in a non-theological leadership development programme. The programme was designed around a series of reflective and self-exploratory exercises designed to make participants more aware of themselves and others. The imams took part in group sessions that focused upon a variety of leadership strategies. Participants learnt the importance of team-building, cooperation and communication, and through role-playing, they developed an understanding of how to adapt to and cater for different audiences such as youth and women. The feedback was extremely positive.
- 3.47 Local initiatives include an imam training programme run by Dudley Muslim Forum. A brief report about it mentions that eleven imams are involved, representing between them seven mosques in the borough, and that it has led to prayers in mosques being given in English and imams taking on roles as school governors, and being more approachable to younger Muslims. The forthcoming teaching programmes include studying other faiths, particularly Christianity and Judaism, and topics such as international affairs, British law, counsellor training, and health and safety. The traditional role of an imam, the report notes, is around giving prayers but the programme is helping to broaden this to that of counsellor and mentor to the community.
- 3.48 The Urban Nexus consultancy, set up in 2006 to deliver projects and programmes in community cohesion, urban regeneration, economic development, preventing extremism and fundraising, was commissioned by CLG to assist in the process of producing and piloting a draft framework of standards to be provided to all public institutions which wish to engage Muslim chaplains. The standards and related recruitment processes were piloted with four prisons, three NHS primary care trusts and a college of further education.

## Concluding notes

- 3.49 For the purpose of summarising this chapter, though at the risk of over-simplification, it can be observed that there are two principal dimensions along

which current and future provision for Muslim faith leadership training may be mapped. The one dimension is to do with the extent to which the content of programmes of study is primarily theological or primarily vocational, pastoral and practical. The other is to do with the extent to which a programme of study is validated by a publicly-funded institution. If the two dimensions are placed at right angles to each other they form the two principal polarities of a map and the four corners or quadrants represent four principal types of programmes, as shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: Sketch map showing four main types of training and professional development for Muslim faith leaders**



- 3.50 In relation to content (the horizontal line in the map in Figure 1) the opposite poles of the spectrum are a) courses which are primarily about Islamic theology and spirituality, and b) courses which focus primarily on the practical aspects of a faith leader's work, including counselling and pastoral care. Examples of the former include the *dars-e-nizami* course taught and studied in darul ulooms and their equivalents, and Islamic Sciences courses in institutions of higher education. An example of the latter is the course run by NIACE on legal matters and financial management, and child protection and safeguarding.
- 3.51 In relation to content (the horizontal line in the map in Figure 1) the opposite poles of the spectrum are a) courses which are taught and studied from a Muslim believer's perspective, and b) courses which do not necessarily assume that students are of Muslim background. Examples of the former include the *dars-e-nizami* course taught and studied in darul ulooms and their equivalents, and Islamic Sciences courses in institutions of higher education. An example of the latter is the course run by NIACE on legal matters and financial management, and child protection and safeguarding.
- 3.52 Between these two poles there are, for example, Islamic Studies courses which can be and are taken by students regardless of their personal faith background or worldview, and courses where the content is broadly secular but the perspective broadly Muslim. An example of the latter would be a course for youth workers in which all or most of the students are of Muslim background, and where Islamic concepts are used as reference points, but



where the subject-matter is of common concern for people from a range of different religious backgrounds.

- 3.53 In relation to the extent to which courses and modules are validated (the vertical line on the map), the opposite poles of the spectrum are a) courses which lead to the award of a widely recognised qualification, and b) courses, events and programmes which are relatively informal. Examples at the one end of the spectrum include first degrees, higher degrees, diplomas and certificates. Participation in such courses may be full-time or part-time and is usually over an extended period of time. Examples at the other end of the spectrum include courses, conferences and workshops consisting of a small number of sessions, or even of just a single session. Certificates to recognise participation and attendance may be awarded, perhaps at a special ceremony as in the case of the NIACE course, but these are relatively informal and unofficial. Between these two poles there are modules which can contribute to the acquisition of a formal qualification but which can also be freestanding.
- 3.54 This chapter has indicated that the majority of Muslim faith leadership training programmes belong at present to the right hand side of the map in Figure 1, and to its lower half, for a) their content is mainly theological as distinct from practical, and b) they are not validated by publicly-funded institutions. The following chapter observes that this imbalance does not exist to the same extent in other religious traditions in the UK, nor in other countries.

# Chapter 4

## Comparisons

### Faith leadership training in other faiths

- 4.1 As mentioned earlier (paragraph 1.12), it was stipulated that the Muslim Faith Leadership Training Review should consider approaches to training and development in other faiths in Britain, not in Islam alone. Accordingly the team interviewed specialists associated with the Church of England, the Methodist Church, the Roman Catholic Church and the United Reformed Church, and with rabbinical training at Leo Baeck College, London, and studied several key documents and reports. The following paragraphs outline some of the principal findings and reflections.
- 4.2 Until recently the framework in the Church of England for the training and development of clergy was broadly similar to the three-stage framework which operated for certain other professions as well, particularly medicine, law and teaching. The first stage was an undergraduate degree course at a publicly-funded university lasting three years, typically but not necessarily in theology. The second stage was full-time postgraduate study at an institution run by the Church preparing for the vocational and practical aspects of ministry – for example preaching, pastoral work and conducting worship, and including at least one work placement or attachment to a parish. This postgraduate stage was analogous to the time which prospective teachers spent on practical pedagogy and being supervised on teaching practice at a school, and which prospective lawyers and doctors spent respectively at law school and medical school. Prospective Church of England clergy were then ordained as deacons for a year before being ordained as priests and the third stage of their training involved work for at least three years as a curate under the supervision and oversight of an experienced parish priest, and being required to undertake programmes of post-ordination training. Similarly in teaching, law and medicine there is a probationary period after the end of full-time study before someone is considered to be fully qualified.
- 4.3 In recent years the three-stage framework outlined above for the Church of England has been substantially modified and is no longer the norm, for full-time study has largely been replaced by part-time study. However, the emphasis on vocational training alongside theological has continued, as has the emphasis on work placements and reflection rooted in practical experience. In certain respects, indeed, these two emphases have been strengthened. Also the notion of a probationary period of post-ordination training, appraisal and supervision has continued and has been strengthened. Other significant trends are for ministerial training to be ecumenical, as distinct from being confined to the Church of England; for it to be undertaken by prospective clergy alongside people who wish to exercise other forms of leadership, for example as licensed lay ministers (LLMs, previously known as lay readers); for each individual's programme of training and formation to be tailor-made, so to speak, taking into account his or her previous experience and education, age, current employment situation and distinctive skills, strengths and needs; for much use to be made of portfolios, one-to-one

supervision and reflective diaries to record progress; and for programmes to be validated by a publicly-funded institution of higher education, usually on a regional not local basis. Most of these features are illustrated by the West of England Ministerial Training Course (see paragraph 4.6 below).

- 4.4 There are analogous features in the development of Muslim chaplaincy training (see paragraphs 3.38–3.40) and clearly most or all of these features can be present in the training and development of other Muslim faith leaders as well.
- 4.5 Following widespread consultation, a national working party set up by the Church of England, the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church, and in association with the Baptist Union, proposed in 2005 that initial ministerial education (IME) should contain five components: development of self-understanding and growing into the role; development of generic skills such as critical thinking and collaborative working; sustained attention to biblical studies, doctrine and ethics; practical skills in leading worship, preaching, giving talks, conducting pastoral conversations and leading group work; and theological reflection on practice.<sup>29</sup>

### **West of England Ministerial Training Course**

- 4.6 The IME courses are validated by publicly-funded institutions of higher education, and therefore lead to degree-level qualifications. For example, the West of England ministry training course (WEMTC) is validated by the University of Gloucestershire. It consists of taught modules on one evening each week during term time and those training to be lay readers or to be ordained also have a number of residential weekend courses, and for ordinands there is a week-long residential school each year. All students can attend a number of practically focused Saturday workshops. Training for both ordinands and lay readers generally takes three years and leads to the award of a foundation arts degree (FdA) in Christian Theology and Ministry. Students with significant prior qualifications can also study for a BA (honours) degree in applied theology or for an MA. All students who obtain the foundation degree may upgrade to the BA (Hons) later in life when they feel ready. There is robust provision for accreditation of prior learning, which enables recruitment from a wider range of educational backgrounds, and work-based learning is a significant part of the course.<sup>30</sup>

### **Leo Baeck College**

- 4.7 Some of the courses provided by Leo Baeck College similarly lead to degrees or advanced diplomas validated by a university, in their instance London Metropolitan University. Research degrees sponsored by the college are awarded by the Open University. In addition to courses for people intending to become rabbis there are several which are designed for the continuing professional development (CPD) of Jewish educators. The College helped initiate an annual Jewish-Christian-Muslim Student Conference that takes place in Germany, with the intention of introducing the future spiritual leaders

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<sup>29</sup> *Shaping the Future: new patterns of training for lay and ordained*, published by the Church of England Ministry Division of the Archbishops' Council, 2006.

<sup>30</sup> There is fuller information at <http://www.wemtc.org.uk/>

of the three faiths to one another during their formative years of study. All rabbinic students attend this at least once as part of their training. The overall prospectus asserts that ‘we strive to provide the education for religious leaders and teachers who will become both learned and pious human beings. Our goal is to create together an atmosphere in which students and teachers alike will feel that the critical, “scientific” study of the Jewish past is a religious act, so that knowledge and piety will coexist harmoniously in their lives.’<sup>31</sup>

## Heythrop College

- 4.8 The provision of a balanced and integrated theological and pastoral formation for ministers of religion has been one of the principal aims of Heythrop College, founded in 1614 and originally intended to train Jesuit priests for work in England at a time when Roman Catholics were officially persecuted. When the college moved to the University of London in 1970, the student body grew and diversified. Heythrop describes itself as a ‘specialist school in philosophy and theology’ and these subjects continue to govern the college’s mission. Underlying all the courses are certain pedagogical principles which can be traced back to the ethos upon which the college continues to be based.
- 4.9 Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556), the founder of the Jesuits, taught the importance of ‘discernment of spirits’, involving sensitivity to both the outer and the inner world. Ignatian pedagogy, said a representative of the college in an interview for this review, ‘is all about forming people with openness to the many manifestations of religion, a capacity for intelligent critique of the secular, and a proper sensitivity to the action of what Christians would call the Spirit of God’. Courses have been developed in the study of religions, interreligious relations, psychology of religion, and – most recently – in Abrahamic religions, an opportunity for students from Christian, Jewish and Muslim backgrounds to study the three faiths together. The aim, the college’s representative said, ‘is to move students from thinking about other faiths to learning with and from members of other faiths’.<sup>32</sup>

## Muslim faith leadership in other countries

- 4.10 In continental Europe there is a growing awareness, as also there is in Britain, that religion is re-entering the secular arena with renewed vigour, and that dialogue between religious and non-religious worldviews is vital if Europeans are to live together peacefully. The following paragraphs provide a brief survey of the most significant trends in relation to Muslim faith leadership training, based on desk research and interviews with representatives from Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands and Switzerland.
- 4.11 Until recently imam training courses in these countries did not lead to nationally recognised qualifications. In piecemeal fashion, however, European universities are now beginning to offer certificated courses. For example, such

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<sup>31</sup> There is fuller information at <http://www.lbc.ac.uk/>

<sup>32</sup> Dr. Michael Barnes, Heythrop College.

courses are running in Austria, France and the Netherlands and are being planned in Germany and Switzerland. Curricula typically include general culture, language competence, legal frameworks and understanding secularism. Models of good practice in other countries that could be adapted in other countries include the following:

- The German Islamic Conference has been established with representatives from all three levels of government (federal, regional and local) and from all the principal Muslim communities to influence new policy, including policy on faith leadership training.
- The University of Osnabruck, Germany, provides a three-year degree course for imams and hopes to develop a masters degree. The Goethe Institute has developed a new course entitled 'Imams for Integration' in collaboration with The Education Office for Migration and Refugees and the German Association of Turkish Muslim Congregations (DITIB). The course includes 500 hours of German language instruction and twelve days of lessons on intercultural topics.
- In some countries, agreements have been reached to integrate Islamic theological training courses within existing universities. For example, following a call for proposals, the Vrije Universiteit in the Netherlands secured funding to organise a three-year training course.<sup>33</sup>
- The Swiss research project NFP58 is a major research programme on *Religious Communities, State and Society* and includes *Imam Training and Islamic Religious Pedagogy in Switzerland*.<sup>34</sup> This initial report was followed up by a workshop in July 2010 at which representatives from all Muslim groups in German-speaking Switzerland agreed that theological and religious studies courses at Swiss universities are both conceivable and desirable for the Muslim communities and the educational and governmental institutions.

4.12 The Swiss researchers drew a range of conclusions from their overview of the European scene. Where the state takes the initiative and works closely with universities, they noted that it is possible to put in place some form of secular imam training. Yet, to date, they note that this training does not integrate the Islamic aspects of the training with the secular aspects, and in this respect they cited Amsterdam, Leiden and Paris as examples. They believed that two features are decisive for success: having the political will and being prepared to make the possible happen.

4.13 In 2006 the King Baudouin Foundation, based in Brussels, commissioned a review of imam training in Belgium. A year later, it expanded the review to

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<sup>33</sup> There is information for prospective students about the content of the course and about possible career options after it has been completed at <http://www.vu.nl/en/programmes/bachelors-in-dutch/programmes/g-z/religious-studies-variant-in-islam-pt/index.asp>

<sup>34</sup> Rudolf (2010): *Imam-Ausbildung und Islamische Religionspädagogik in der Schweiz?* In NFP58 Religionsgemeinschaften, Staat und Gesellschaft. mm\_09jul21\_schlussbericht\_d.pdf.

consider also developments in Austria, France, Germany, Netherlands, England, Sweden and the United Kingdom.<sup>35</sup> The review noted the importance of coordination between the secular components of training (language history, sociology, and so forth) and the theological components; of taking into account students' motivations for doing the courses, so that the courses can be adapted accordingly – for example, not all students wish to pursue careers as imams; and of coordination between the training on the one hand and Muslim organisations and communities on the other, so as to ensure there are job opportunities for locally trained students.

## Developments outside Europe

- 4.14 The next set of paragraphs briefly explore international practices based on textual analysis of sources from seven non-European Union countries: Bosnia, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Africa, Turkey and the United States. Significant good practice in three of these countries is discussed here. This section has also been informed by training procedures and practices that were observed by a member of the core team during separate visits to India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. In all these countries modernity and globalisation have led to new developments in pedagogy, curricula, and training models that are used to train Muslim faith leaders which often involve collaborations with governments and universities.
- 4.15 In the United States, the Zaytuna College has become the first Muslim college. Students can opt to major either in Islamic law and theology or in Arabic Language.<sup>36</sup> The college recruited its first batch of students in 2010. It will seek accreditation from the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), an accrediting body recognised by the US Department of Education to conduct reviews of schools and colleges. The accreditation process can take up to seven years. It will also seek validation from Islamic institutions of higher learning in the Muslim world.
- 4.16 Another interesting initiative in the United States involves a partnership in California between Claremont School of Theology, the Islamic Center of Southern California and the Academy for Jewish Religion California. The intention is to develop shared programmes and modules for the initial training of imams, rabbis and Christian pastors and ministers. The hope of officials at all three organisations, according to a preliminary press statement, is 'that when leaders study their own religious traditions together alongside friends of other faiths, they will develop the respect and wisdom necessary to transform America's fractured religious outlook'.<sup>37</sup>
- 4.17 During 2000 there was widespread discussion in Bosnia about the role of imams. In 2005 the Ryjaset (Islamic leadership) of the Muslim community in Bosnia reviewed the qualifications and skills required by imams to support Bosnian Muslims with an aim to provide a 'more well-rounded, complete religious, intellectual, moral, social, cultural-educational development' for all

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<sup>35</sup> Husson (2007).

<sup>36</sup> There is detailed information about the syllabus at [http://www.zaytunacollege.org/academics/major/islamic\\_legal\\_and\\_theological\\_studies#course\\_listings](http://www.zaytunacollege.org/academics/major/islamic_legal_and_theological_studies#course_listings).

<sup>37</sup> Preliminary information at <http://news.yahoo.com/s/time/08599201095100>



future imams. The Ryjaset suggested that imams will need to have high school Islamic education as the minimum requirement. A further three year programme of study (equivalent to a degree) was also planned for imams to help towards achieving the desired aims. The programme of study aimed to prepare future imams, khatibs and muallims for a life and leadership within a context of cultural, religious and national diversity.

4.18 The Majlis Ugama Islam Singapore (MUIS), also known as the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore, advises the government on matters pertaining to the Muslim community, including the training of faith leaders. MUIS support for madrasahs includes a curriculum development project, teacher training and development, and a new programme that enables participating madrasahs to specialise in different areas – primary education, secondary education to groom religious leaders and higher education in mainstream subjects respectively. There are also programmes of continuing professional development: Qur'an teachers recognition scheme (QTRS), Azatiah/Imam recognition scheme (ARS), and a bachelors degree in Islamic revealed knowledge and heritage

4.19 Although many of these innovations are encouraging they come with the caveat that not all foreign models are relevant to British contexts, for example the joint madrasah system which is being implemented in Singapore would be difficult to implement in the UK given the diversity of the British Muslim population. Also many of the new models are fairly recent (for example in Bosnia and Singapore) and will need to mature before they can be commented upon. The following general observations may nevertheless be made:

- Professionalisation of faith leader training leads to better equipped future leaders and better qualified teachers with access to CPD (continuing professional development) and latest pedagogical developments. This is evident in the further education and opportunities for professional recognition that are available to imams in *Singapore*, *Ryjaset* (Islamic leadership) programme in Bosnia, approaches in Turkey to train religious professionals and in other countries.
- Professionalisation usually includes mandatory standards for professional religious training. The Muslim faith communities may wish to establish certain key standards for their personnel i.e. fluency in English, graduate status, familiarity with contemporary pedagogies, and completion of professional practice standards. This may be enabled by training establishments linking with existing and new initiatives in universities and colleges of higher education.
- Validation through linkages with universities is the preferred route to achieve this professionalisation in Egypt, Singapore, South Africa and the United States. This gives students the access to increased career pathways, and provides institutions with access to quality control frameworks and other support, including but not limited to financial support, which they otherwise do not have.

- The medium of instruction is an area of ongoing debate: in Singapore and South Africa key Islamic texts have been translated into English to make them more accessible to primarily English-speaking students.
- Hybrid models are being developed which retain the religious pedigree and spirituality of traditional training models but which also incorporate elements that future leaders will need, including knowledge of western philosophy, appreciation of community cohesion and practical life skills such as pastoral care and counselling.

## Concluding notes

4.20 There is a certain reassurance in knowing that questions about faith leadership in relation to modernity and multiculturalism are being asked and explored in other religions besides Islam, and that questions about Muslim faith leadership in contemporary society are being explored in other countries besides Britain. Points of interest include:

- an abiding tension between faithfulness to tradition on the one hand and discernment of, and sensitivity to, contemporary contexts and realities on the other
- an increasing concern with professionalisation, and in this connection with specifying in some detail the skills, attributes and knowledge which faith leaders need
- suspicion of managerial and bureaucratic approaches to faith leadership in so far as these appear to de-emphasise the importance of spontaneity, and of personal faith and spirituality
- the importance of pastoral skills and counselling, and of theological reflection on contemporary events and issues
- the importance, after initial training and qualifications, of continuing professional development
- the need for faith training courses and programmes to be externally validated through the award of publicly recognised degrees, diplomas and certificates
- the need for greater sharing of experience and reflections between and within different faith traditions, and internationally as well as within each individual country
- the valuable roles which can be played by national governments and their agencies in encouraging and facilitating contacts and collaboration between religious organisations on the one hand and publicly-funded institutions in the education sector on the other.



4.21 In the next and final chapter these points underlie the consideration of future developments in relation to Muslim faith leadership training in Britain.

# Chapter 5

## Reflections and conclusions

### Key messages from this review

- 5.1 The findings and conclusions of this review, briefly summarised, are shown in Box 5.1.

#### **Box 5.1: Summary of key messages**

##### **1. A sound basis for further developments**

There is much good practice in Muslim faith leadership training in Britain at all levels – secondary education, higher and further education, and continuing professional development. There is, however, an urgent and acknowledged need for further development of educational provisions for Muslim faith leader training in Britain.

##### **2. Diversity of tasks, roles and denominations**

Faith leadership in Muslim communities is exercised not only by mosque-based imams but also by chaplains, teachers, instructors, scholars and youth workers, among others. Programmes of training and development need to bear this diversity in mind and also, therefore, that faith leadership in Muslim communities is exercised by women as well as by men. Further, programmes must bear in mind that there is great diversity in Islam with regard to traditions, denominations, points of view and schools of thought.

##### **3. Part of the solution, not the problem**

The Muslim Faith Leadership Training Review was set up within the context of concerns about security and social cohesion. The review shows that, in the overall task of improving mutual trust and confidence in modern Britain, providers of Muslim faith leadership training are part of the solution, not part of the problem.

##### **4. Sharing of experience**

Sharing of experience is of critical importance – not only within and between Muslim communities in Britain but also with Muslim communities in other countries, and with providers of faith leadership training in other faiths.

## **5. Integration of theory and practice**

Programmes of initial training and continuing professional development need to include not only theology and spirituality but also reflection on practical experience, counselling and pastoral skills, and contextualising Islam in contemporary society.

## **6. Accreditation**

There would be substantial advantages if programmes of Muslim faith leadership training were to be validated in accordance with the levels in the national qualifications framework (NQF). At present only a small number of mainly degree-level qualifications are validated and study at secondary school of the *dars-e-nizami* curriculum is not validated at all.

## **7. Pastoral care and counselling**

There is a need to expand and develop the courses, programmes and modules in Islamic pastoral care and counselling which already exist, and to integrate these with study of theological and spiritual issues. The relatively new role of Muslim chaplain in institutions such as hospitals, universities, prisons and the armed services makes this development increasingly important.

## **8. The roles and perspectives of women**

Both as a faith and as a way of life Islam has a rich history of gender equality, and as teachers, chaplains and alimahs many Muslim women exercise faith leadership in their communities. They also have distinctive expectations and needs that all Muslim faith leaders need to address. In all planning of leadership training their needs, expectations and perspectives must be borne in mind.

## **9. Continuing professional development**

In addition to initial training, continuing professional development (CPD) is of essential importance for faith leaders in all religious traditions, as for managers and leaders in all other walks of life as well. It helps them to reflect on their own practice and changing circumstances, to respond to new realities and challenges in wider society, and to give guidance, advice and support to others.

## **10. The role of government**

Government has a key role to play in supporting the developments and improvements which providers of Muslim faith leadership training seek, as summarised above, and in facilitating closer partnerships and relationships between Muslim institutions and publicly-funded institutions.

## Action points

5.2 In the light of the key messages summarised above, the following action points are proposed. They are grouped under five broad headings, corresponding to five areas where deliberations need to take place and subsequent plans to be made:

- secondary education
- Muslim communities and organisations
- further and higher education
- continuing professional development
- government.

### Secondary education

5.3 The *alim* course, based on the *dars-e-nizami* syllabus and its equivalents is clearly valued by British Muslim communities, particularly the Deobandi community. However, it would be valuable to assess existing courses according to the needs of communities in which young people may need advice about how to understand their multicultural surroundings. This may involve drawing on the concepts of applied theology.

5.4 At present, the religious education provided in Muslim institutions for the 11–19 age range is not accredited outside Muslim communities. As a consequence, students who do not wish to continue their studies with a view to becoming imams are at a disadvantage when it comes to applying for places in mainstream further and higher education. Consideration should therefore be given to possibilities such as the following:

- developing a basic certificate in Islamic Sciences for the 11-13 age-range, equivalent to level 1 of the national qualifications framework (NQF); a general certificate for the 14–16 age group, equivalent to NQF level 2 (GCSE); an advanced certificate equivalent to level 3 (A level); and a three-year degree or diploma course leading to qualification as an *alim* or *alimah*, equivalent to NQF levels 4–6
- developing a diploma in arts and humanities, within the national 14–19 diplomas programme, which would draw on, though not be wholly co-extensive with, the *dars-e-nizami* syllabus and its equivalents
- preparing and entering students for GCSEs and A levels in Islamic Studies and Muslim community languages<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> For one such course there are syllabuses and past examination papers at <http://www.flyingcolours.org.uk/students/index.html>. It is taught mainly in Muslim-majority

- for students who stay on beyond the age of 18, developing and teaching a two-year foundation degree in applied theology that builds upon their existing education and involves accreditation of prior learning.
- 5.5 In some Muslim institutions catering for the 11–19 age-range, modifications of the curriculum may need to be accompanied by:
- improving the quality of the information, advice and guidance (IAG) provided to students in relation to their future careers, and to progression to further and higher education
  - ensuring that teaching staff have access to high quality continuing professional development, for example through the programme developed by the Association of Muslim Schools UK in conjunction with the University of Gloucestershire through the assessment based option route (ABO)
  - standardising guidelines for terms and conditions of employment for teachers and other staff, so that they are comparable with those which obtain in secondary schools more generally.

## **Muslim organisations and communities**

- 5.6 Significant voices from within Muslim communities believe that students graduating from a Muslim institution at the age 16 or 18 are not yet ready to take on the full range of responsibilities of an imam even if they wish to. (Relatively few, it has been emphasised throughout this report, do in fact wish to.) It would therefore be valuable to introduce the idea of ‘trainee imam’ or ‘apprentice imam’ with the possibility of career progression to qualified imam status (QIS) through routes such those mentioned below in the section concerned with higher education (paragraph 5.9).
- 5.7 It would be valuable to develop standard job descriptions and person specifications for imams, customised and focused as appropriate for specific local circumstances. Further, it would be valuable to develop model statements of terms and conditions of employment.
- 5.8 As noted and discussed in Chapter 3, Muslim organisations are amongst the principal providers of continuing professional development for faith leaders, particularly of programmes which are relatively informal. They also play key roles in:
- recognising the importance of CPD for faith leaders, and facilitating, encouraging and supporting participation
  - helping to ensuring that imams have access to high quality CPD programmes in pastoral skills and applied theology

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countries, particularly in the Middle East, but may also be taught in independent schools in the UK.

- helping to ensure that women as well as men exercise faith leadership responsibilities and have access to relevant CPD programmes
- helping to ensure that the experiences and perspectives of women inform the design and content of initial training and CPD programmes
- facilitating the establishment of a European Centre for Excellence in relation to Muslim faith leadership training and development.

## Higher education

5.9 Institutions of higher education should consider, in consultation with local, regional and national Muslim organisations:

- developing a three-year honours degree in Islamic Studies and Sciences which would build on, though not be narrowly dependent on, the traditional *Shia* and *Sunni* syllabi
- developing a two-year foundation degree, perhaps employment-based, in applied theology
- re-orienting Islamic Studies programmes at first degree and postgraduate level to make them more relevant for women and men who wish to undertake faith leadership responsibilities as teachers, chaplains, scholars
- setting up a senior fellowship or scholarship programme, enabling imams to undertake MBA and other masters level courses in areas such as community development, interfaith relations and social policy.

5.10 An overall framework for discussion of these possibilities is provided in Appendix D.

## Government departments

5.11 Government has a key role to play in ensuring that this report is widely disseminated and discussed, and in:

- facilitating the formation of a working party of specialists in accreditation and higher education to consider the practical possibilities involved in aligning education in Muslim institutions with the levels in the national qualifications framework (NQF)
- facilitating a time limited working party or task group consisting of community leaders, scholars, academics and interfaith practitioners to discuss, support, lead and implement next steps in the light of this report
- facilitating research to advance understanding of faith leadership roles currently undertaken by Muslim women, and to help design initial training and CPD programmes in the future.

## Final note

- 5.12 As shown throughout this report, the Muslim Faith Leadership Training Review involved a wide range of activities and a wide range of individuals and institutions. Also, it necessarily involved attention to many different traditions and points of view, and therefore much dialogue and deliberation. The purpose of this report is to help promote further such dialogue and deliberation, not only in Muslim communities and organisations but also throughout wider society.

## Appendix A

# Muslim institutions in the UK which provide faith leadership training

The lists in this appendix were compiled from a range of sources, including the Association of Muslim Schools UK, Birt and Lewis as cited in Gilliat-Ray (2006) and, in the case of those providing secondary education, the Department for Education. It is important to note that in Muslim institutions the distinctions between secondary, further and higher education are not always hard and fast, since students at 11–19 institutions sometimes stay on for up to three further years for more advanced studies at higher or further education level. Such institutions are listed in this appendix once only, according to their main function as judged by student numbers.

In addition to these institutions, there are many informal and unregistered institutions which were not researched as part of this review and are not listed here.

### A1. At secondary school level

All the institutions in list A1 state that they teach a traditional syllabus which gives students a theological education. At Sunni institutions this is usually a form of the *dars-e-nizami* syllabus, whilst Shia institutions have their own syllabus. All are registered with the Department for Education, are inspected by Ofsted and teach the core subjects of the National Curriculum.

	<b>Name of institution</b>	<b>Year founded</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Number of students*</b>
1	Abu Bakr Girls School, Walsall	1998	Girls	255
2	Abu Bakr Boys School, Walsall	1998	Boys	101
3	Al Jamiah Al Islamiyyah, Bolton	1995	Boys	170
4	Al Karam Secondary School, Retford	1995	Boys	110
5	Al Sadiq and Al Zahra Schools, London	1992	Co-ed	346
6	Azhar Academy, Forest Gate, London	2003	Co-ed	234
7	Al Mahad-Al-Islami Secondary School, Sheffield	1996	Girls	76
8	Bury Park Educational Institute, Luton	2004	Boys	88
9	Darul Arqum Educational Institute, Leicester	**	Boys	150
10	Darul Hadis Latifah, London	**	Boys	108
11	Darul Uloom Al Arabiya Al Islamiya, Bury	1979	Boys	313
12	Darul Uloom Dawatul Imaan, Bradford	2003	Boys	121
13	Darul Uloom Islamic High School, Birmingham	1985	Boys	97
14	Darul Uloom Leicester	1994	Boys	122
15	Darul Uloom London, Bromley	1992	Boys	123



16	Imam Muhammad Zakariya School, Preston	**	Co-ed	97
17	Institute of Islamic Education, Dewsbury	1982	Boys	297
18	Jaamiatul Imaam Muhammad Zakaria School, Bradford	1993	Girls	460
19	Jamea Al Kauthar, Lancaster	1997	Girls	375
20	Jameah Girls Academy, Leicester	2001	Girls	154
21	Jamia al-Hudaa Residential College, Nottingham	1996	Girls	263
22	Jamia al-Hudaa, Sheffield	2003	Co-ed	60
23	Jamia Islamia Birmingham	**	Boys	148
24	Jamia Islamia, Nuneaton	1996	Boys	75
25	Jamiat ul Uloom Al Islamia, Luton	**	Boys	31
26	Jamiatul Ummah School, Tower Hamlets	1997	Boys	134
27	Jamiatul-Ilm al-Huda UK School, Blackburn	1997	Boys	381
28	London East Academy, Tower Hamlets	**	Boys	124
29	London Islamic School, Tower Hamlets	**	Boys	111
30	M.A. Institute Secondary School, Bradford	**	Boys	95
31	Madani Secondary Girls School, Tower Hamlets	**	Girls	247
32	Madinatul Uloom Al Islamiya School, Kidderminster	1988	Boys	221
33	Madrasatul Imam Muhammad Zakariya, Bolton	2001	Girls	114
34	Markazul Uloom, Blackburn	2001	Girls	240
35	Mazahirul Uloom School, Tower Hamlets	2001	Boys	114
36	Rabia Boys and Rabia Girls, Luton	1997	Co-ed	260
37	The School of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Brent	**	Co-ed	45
38	Zakaria Muslim Girls High School, Kirklees	**	Girls	229

\* As recorded by the Department for Education in 2009.

\*\* Information not available at time of the review

## A2. At higher and further education level

The institutions in list A2 cater for the post-18 age-range.

1	Al-Mahdi Institute, Birmingham	1993	Co-ed	60
2	Al-Maktoum Institute, Dundee	*	Co-ed	*
3	As-Suffa Institute, Birmingham	*	Co-ed	*
4	Cambridge Muslim College	2009	Co-ed	10
5	Ebrahim Community College, Tower Hamlets	2003	Co-ed	141
6	European Institution for Human Sciences, Llanbydder, Wales	1999	Co-ed	60
7	Hawza Ilmiya, Willesden, London	2003	Co-ed	100
8	Islamic College, Willesden, London	1998	Co-ed	280
9	Jame'ah Riyadul Uloom Islamic, Leicester	1997	Men	100
10	Markfield Institute of Higher Education, Leicestershire	2000	Co-ed	150
11	Suffatel Uloom, Bradford	*	*	*
12	Sultan Bahu Trust, Birmingham	1997	Men	32
13	The Muslim College London	1987	Co-ed	50
14	Quwwatul Islam London	2003	Women	84
15	Winchester link with Islamic Institute for Postgraduate Studies, Damascus	2007	Co-ed	5

\* Information not available at time of the review

## A3 Distance learning

16	<a href="http://www.qibla.com">www.qibla.com</a> (previously sunnipath)	*	*	*
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\* Information not available at time of the review

## Appendix B

### List of people consulted

In addition to members of the advisory group the following were amongst those who took part in consultations and discussions relating to the production of this report. Views expressed or implied in the report, however, are the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of any of the people mentioned below or those on the advisory group.

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Rabbi Marc Saperstein

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## Appendix C

### Glossary of Arabic terms

The following terms appear from time to time in the main text of this report. Their meanings in English are broadly as shown below.

Alim	A scholar of Islam who is well-versed in the Qur'an and the Islamic sciences. The term is derived from the word <i>ilm</i> , meaning knowledge, usually of a religious or spiritual nature. The plural in Arabic is <i>ulama</i> , but in this report it is anglicised as <i>alims</i> .
Alimah	The feminine of <i>alim</i> .
Alimiyyah	See <i>darul uloom</i> .
Ayatollah	A high-ranking Shi`ite religious leader who is regarded as an authority on religious law and its interpretation and who has political power as well
Azhar	Founded in 970-972, it is the chief centre of Arabic literature and Sunni Islamic learning in the world and the world's second oldest surviving degree granting university. It is associated with Al-Azhar Mosque in Cairo, Egypt.
Barelvi	The Barelvi movement started in 1880, deeply influenced by Sufism. It derives its name from Bareilly, situated in Uttar Pradesh, India, the home city of Ahmad Raza Khan (1856-1921), whose writings substantially shaped it.
Dawah	literally means 'issuing a summons' or 'making an invitation', and refers now usually to preaching, and inviting people to the Islamic faith and life.
Dars-e-nizami	A curriculum used in many madrasahs (Islamic religious schools) in South Asia. It was named after Mullah Nizamuddin Sehaly, who died 1748 at Firangi Mahal, a famous seminary belonging to a family of Islamic scholars in Lucknow, India.
Darul uloom/Jami`ah	Literally, a house of knowledge but by extension refers to a school that provides an in-depth course on Islamic sciences, popularly known as the <i>alimiyyah</i> syllabus. Deobandis usually use the term <i>darul uloom</i> and Barelvis <i>jami`ah</i> for this type of institution.

Deobandi	Someone who follows the methodology of the Deoband Islamic movement, which began at Darul Uloom Deoband in India, where its foundation was laid on 30 May 1866. The movement began to gain significant strength in the early 1900s with graduates from Deoband playing key roles in establishing similar institutions in other parts of South Asia.
Fatwa	A decision or judgement made by an Islamic jurist based on Islamic law.
Fiqh	The understanding and implementation of Islamic ideas, jurisprudence, laws and commandments.
Hadith	Generally used to describe the sayings, deeds and tacit approvals of Prophet Muhammad.
Hafiz	Literally means 'guardian', used nowadays for someone who has completely memorised the Qur'an.
Hawzah	Used in the Shia world to refer to the traditional Islamic school of advanced studies.
Ijaza	A certificate to indicate that someone has been authorised to transmit a certain subject or text of Islamic knowledge. Usually implies the student has learned such knowledge through face-to-face interactions with the teacher.
Ijtihad	Exerting the sum total of one's ability in attempting to uncover divine rulings on issues from their sources, particularly the Qur'an and Sunnah.
Imam	For Sunni Muslims, the religious leader who leads prayers in a mosque; for Shia Muslims a recognised authority on Islamic theology and law and a spiritual guide.
Khatib	The person who delivers the sermon ( <i>khutbah</i> ), during the Friday prayers.
Khutbah	The sermon at Friday prayers.
Maktab/madrasah	Supplementary Islamic school for the learning of Qur'anic recitation and elementary Islamic knowledge, usually attached to a mosque.
Masjid	Mosque.
Maulana	Used as a title in Central Asia and South Asia, preceding the name of respected Muslim religious leaders, in particular graduates of religious institutions who have studied under other Islamic scholars.

Mu'adhdhin/muezzin	A person at a mosque who leads the Islamic call ( <i>adhan</i> ) to Friday prayer and the five daily prayers ( <i>salat</i> ) from one of the mosque's minarets.
Muballigheen	The plural of <i>muballigh</i> , meaning a conveyor of the message of Islam
Mujtahid	An Islamic scholar competent to interpret divine law ( <i>shari`ah</i> ) in practical situations using <i>ijtihad</i> (independent thought).
Sunnah	The way of life prescribed as normative for Muslims on the basis of the teachings and practices of the Prophet Muhammad and interpretations of the Qur'an.
Tafsir	Exegesis or commentary, usually of the Qur'an.
Tajwid	Set of rules governing how the Qur'an should be read or recited.
Taqlid	Literally 'imitation' or 'tradition'. In Islamic legal terminology refers to the practice of following the decisions of a religious authority without necessarily examining the scriptural basis or reasoning underlying the decision.



## Appendix D

### Post-18 Qualifications: a framework for discussion

A framework such as this can be used as a basis for developing collaborative partnerships between universities and Muslim institutions for the purpose of developing and accrediting courses in applied Islamic theology. The entry criteria are A levels or accreditation of prior learning or experience (AP(E)L).

Objectives	Certificate in HE	Diploma in HE and foundation degree	Honours degree	Postgraduate teacher training and social work, and masters degree	Doctorate
Knowledge and understanding					
Cognitive and intellectual skills					
Key transferable skills					
Discipline-specific skills					

#### NOTES

The four major categories – development of knowledge and understanding, cognitive and intellectual skills, key transferable skills, discipline-specific practical skills – are explained in greater detail at <http://www.seec-office.org.uk/creditlevel descriptors2001.pdf>. Credit level descriptors derived from them establish the levels of complexity, relative demand and independent thought that are required when a student completes a programme of learning.

The entry requirements of a student are established according to academic achievement or accreditation of prior learning that can also be experiential (AP(E)L). It is possible for students to enter at different levels if they have a portfolio of learning and experience to demonstrate that they have achieved an appropriate level.

Credit level descriptors are used for a) curriculum design, b) guiding assignment of credit, c) providing guidelines for academic groups of experts, d) providing guidelines for recognising levels of learning that have taken place in non-formal settings and e) staff development.

Subject benchmark statements provide a means for the academic community to describe the nature and characteristics of programmes in a specific subject or subject area. It is possible to map Islamic Theology (*darse nizami, hawza*) and various applied requirements for pastoral service onto such subject benchmark

statements, while retaining the unique characteristics of Islamic theology and at the same time giving clarity to shared characteristics across religions.

Such a process would facilitate development of a robust and flexible curriculum structure for proposing accreditation of Muslim faith leadership training in applied Islamic theology. It can be offered in stages, starting with a certificate and continuing then with a diploma, a foundation degree and an honours degree. Such a programme can also be developed into masters and doctorate level qualifications.

Below there is an example of a benchmark statement for an honours degree in theology and religious studies which could readily be adapted for Islamic theology:

'On graduating with an honours degree in theology and religious studies, students should be able to:

- represent views other than the student's own sensitively and intelligently with fairness and integrity, while as appropriate expressing their own identity without denigration of others, through critical engagement in a spirit of generosity, openness and empathy
- demonstrate with sensitivity awareness of the passion and claims to certainty that may arise in religious traditions, with their positive and negative effects
- demonstrate sophisticated understanding of the multi-faceted complexity of religions, for example in the relationship between specifically religious beliefs, texts, practices and institutions, and wider social and cultural structures, norms, aesthetics and aspirations
- demonstrate intellectual flexibility through the practice of a variety of complementary methods of study, for example, philosophical, historical, systematic, dogmatic, phenomenological, linguistic, hermeneutical, empirical, speculative, social scientific and archaeological
- demonstrate awareness of and critical assessment of religious contributions to debate in the public arena about, for example, values, truth, beauty, identity, health, peace and justice
- demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of how personal and communal identities and motivations are shaped by religion, how this has both constructive and destructive effects, and how important such identities are.'

Source: Quality Assurance Agency, 2007

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/benchmark/statements/Theology.asp>

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