

# A Muslim on Campus



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# WHAT IS LIFE LIKE ON CAMPUS ?

Welcome to life on campus, the place where a significant number of Muslim students will spend their university life. Away from home and away from family and friends, the three years on average spent by most students pursuing a degree is a crucial time for a Muslim!

## FREEDOM

Many young people live for the day when they can move out of the house and go to university and finally be “free”. Freedom from their parents, from restrictions on their lifestyle, from everyone telling them what to do. This is why in university you find many that just do what they want. "Life's short," they say, "let's enjoy it while we can!"

As a newcomer to campus, it's vital that you understand what being a Muslim at a university means. Varsity's a great place, but probably different to what you're used to. It is about as similar to school as a tricycle is to a tractor.

## DIFFERENCES FROM SCHOOL

The most obvious difference is size. A university is a much bigger place with many more students; a typical school might have one thousand students, a typical university might have twenty thousand.

The second obvious difference is in the teaching style. At school, you are usually spoon-fed information in small groups and registration is taken in each class. Not at a university. Most lecturers don't care if you attend their lectures or not; and they don't say "*Copy this from the board into your exercise books*", it's more likely that they will put up a slide and you can copy it if you feel it is relevant. As for class sizes, certain lectures in popular courses can be attended by as many as 1500 people. Don't expect a lot of personal attention!

The third obvious difference is in the student body. While school may be an environment which emphasises making everyone behave in a similar manner (for example by making everyone wear the same uniform); university is almost the opposite, where being different is the norm.

## **NO UNIFORMS OR RULES TO WORRY ABOUT**

There are no uniforms, and provided you act within the bounds of common sense and common courtesy, people do not really care that much about what you do.

Nobody is going to harass you for being different, they're more likely to be impressed by you – a good opportunity to express your Muslim identity.

Because nobody's looking over your shoulder, checking that you've been doing your homework and attending lectures, it means that you have to depend on

yourself a lot more. It's no longer good enough to coast along. You need to motivate yourself. This sounds trivial but many first year students make a pretty big mess of it because of this. Many who were top students in school get marks in the low 50's and in some cases, fail outright.

Many people you will meet do not have the same priorities and principles as yourself. You will hear the word 'fun' a lot, which will be used to justify almost anything imaginable and sometimes beyond! You will face situations where, all that is between you and naked temptation is your Muslim identity and conscience!

## **MY BEHAVIOUR AS A MUSLIM ON CAMPUS**

There is more to being a student on campus. As a Muslim, you have a unique opportunity to develop yourself and serve others. These are very simple things to do, and they don't take much time. More than anything else, they're really about an Islamic attitude, rather than a prescriptive list of do's and don'ts.

Importantly, be a true Muslim. Many Muslims on campus tend to be apologetic, as if it is something to be embarrassed about. This is understandable to a certain extent, given the bad rap that Muslims get in the media today, but it doesn't make it right.

There is a lot to be proud about being a Muslim. Historically, the activities of the Muslims as scientists and scholars formed the basis for the European

Renaissance (a fact which many historians 'forget' about), as well as creating a stable, just society for more than 800 years; and morally, being Muslim means that you adhere to a set of beliefs and forms of behaviour that gives you an edge over those who don't possess these values.

The sense of Muslim brotherhood/sisterhood are beneficial in a number of ways. Firstly, it "backs up" other Muslims on campus who no longer feel isolated about being Muslim. Seeing someone else who is proud to be Muslim lifts another Muslim's spirit incredibly. When people see Muslims practicing their faith it invokes curiosity and interest in them, which may be the door for Allah Ta'ala guiding them to the correct path. You will be surprised how many times you will be asked questions about Islam, without having to do anything "active".

When such opportunities do arise, inform them about Islam; in this way you will be fulfilling your obligation Da'wah. Don't be too forceful. The Qur'an says: *"Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom, and good advice and discuss with them in the best way possible."* (16:125)

## **BE A MUSLIM FIRST**

But there is a caveat to all of this, which is: What is the point of being proud of Islam if its effects are not perceived in your actions? There is no point talking to people about the importance of good manners in Islam if you do not follow

it up with your own actions. As clichéd as it is, "actions speak louder than words" applies particularly in this situation.

Remember that you are a living example of Islam, and that almost everything you do in public will not only reflect on you, but also on Islam. You should reflect all the attributes that make you proud to be Muslim: honesty, sincerity, trustworthiness, cleanliness, politeness and so on. When people see these characteristics in you, they will not only like you as a person, they will also be curious about Islam; and seeing you are Muslim will now have a more positive image of Islam than they may have had before.

This also means that you should fulfil your Islamic obligations in other ways as well. For example, there is no excuse for you not to pray on campus. Salah facilities are found at most universities, and even if there aren't, there are many quiet places to be found that can serve as a place to pray. There is no reason not to dress Islamically, since there are no rules about dress.

*Time well spent on campus can be a very fulfilling and rewarding phase of your life.*

*May Allah Ta'ala help you adjust to university life, and to use this opportunity fruitfully. University, like many things, is not in itself good or bad; it is what you do there that makes all the difference. May Allah Ta'ala guide us!*



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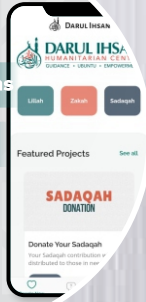
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## About Darul Ihsan

Darul Ihsan Humanitarian Centre provides education, guidance, social, empowerment and welfare services to the community. In providing this service, we adopt a holistic approach, that gives due importance to basic needs as well as human rights and dignity of those that we serve.

## Founding Philosophy

Darul Ihsan Humanitarian Centre is a multi-purpose, humanitarian-services providing organisation. 'Ihsan' means compassion towards mankind and to act with excellence. The Centre was established in the year 2000 with the primary objective of serving humanity and alleviating poverty and hardship locally and abroad. Since its inception, it has developed and established many humanitarian projects and provides a variety of free services to the community.

## Key Objectives

One of the key objectives of the Centre is to promote a better understanding of humanity and peace, thereby serving as a bridge-builder between faiths and communities. Through guidance, Ubuntu and empowerment, the organisation hopes to train and develop the youth to become torch bearers of hope, peace and compassion to humanity.



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WELCOME

