



# The Islamic College Strategic Plan 2017-2022

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## INTRODUCTION

The Islamic College was established in 1998 to promote a sound understanding of Islam. Now in our third decade, we look to shape the future by empowering our students and associates through offering academic excellence, opportunities for Islamic cultural engagement, and opportunities for personal enrichment. To that end, we aim to ensure that our current vision, values, and goals will continue to build on that foundation to 2022 and beyond. The College provides a suitable environment for those who wish to continue their studies in a reputable institution and an Islamic environment. We fulfil the needs of both Muslims and non-Muslims who are interested in understanding various aspects of Islam.

We will maintain what we have offered by promoting the Islamic Studies (undergraduate and postgraduate) and Islamic Law (postgraduate) programmes, placing equal emphasis on both research and teaching by supporting and establishing our reputation for practice-led engagement to generate the greatest impact. We will continue to seek out intellectually able students from a wide variety of backgrounds whilst embracing new thinking, new technology, and new practices which enhance our institution. We shall strive for excellence in all that we do, foster a passion for creating and applying knowledge, and be proactive in engaging all who can benefit. We are pragmatic about what motivates the modern student and will offer an innovative and distinctive academic curriculum that reflects employer expectations.

Our mission is to provide the highest quality learning, skills and training to meet individual educational needs and employment demands, while honouring Islamic moral values.

The Islamic College is dedicated to help students fulfil their potential and engage in authentic research on Islam and related topics based on primary sources.

In keeping with our standards and philosophy of service, the institution has been structured to provide students with the highest degree of functionality and satisfaction. We hope to produce a holistic picture of the Islamic heritage, and offer both intellectual rigor and practical applications. It is delivered by a professional team that includes recognised scholars in the field, many of whom who also serve the religious community.

The Islamic College also aims to disseminate Islamic knowledge in an environment that accords with Islamic values and thus tries to integrate the Islamic worldview and values in which that intellectual heritage matured, was nurtured, and developed. The College provides an excellent opportunity for students who want a deeper understanding of Islam, its philosophy, in context, and the dynamics of Muslim thought.

The higher education sector has been experiencing unprecedentedly rapid change, and that will continue: we expect the coming five years to be the most challenging in our history. We will only succeed if we have a clear strategy and credible plans to which everyone is committed. We must also maintain the qualities that have delivered our success to date: flexibility, adaptability, speed of response, credibility, a culture which embraces change and innovation, strong leadership and management, and high performing, dedicated academic and professional service staff, while maintaining our moral foundation.

Additionally, this means that we must manage uncertainty, navigate through complexity, and take managed risks to ensure we are effective, sustainable and competitive. This strategic plan will become an active management tool to aid us in continuing to scan the horizon and make adjustments as needed.

## OUR MISSION

Our mission is to provide the highest quality learning, skills, and training to meet individual educational needs and employment demands, all based on Islamic moral values.

## OUR VISION

The Islamic College is dedicated to helping students fulfil their potential and to develop academic knowledge via academic literature and primary sources.



# OUR AIM AND OBJECTIVES

By 2022 we aim to:

- Continue to provide an education in Islamic Studies at the highest possible level of quality
- Encourage research across a whole range of subjects about Islam
- Provide an integrated and interdisciplinary approach to those interested in acquiring a critical, constructive, and comprehensive understanding of issues and topics about Islam
- Help students become more articulate, independent, and flexible learners
- Enable students to pursue their Islamic understanding at the highest academic level
- Provide an inclusive environment for both Muslims and non-Muslims from different cultures and backgrounds
- Foster a culture where all staff are fully engaged in achieving the success of our single shared vision
- Establish more partnerships and increase both the number of international students (DE) at the College and UK/EU students
- Increase the student population while maintaining an attractive and affordable staff-student ratio without reducing quality.
- Achieve an overall graduate employability level in the upper level of UK educational institutions.
- Continue to strive for even higher levels of effectiveness and efficiency.



## FOREWORD

### Board of Trustees of Irshad Trust

This document sets out the Islamic College's strategy for the 'third decade of excellence'. It has been drawn up by the Principal and senior team and has been endorsed by the Board of Trustees of Irshad Trust (being the charity financing the College).

As an academic institution endeavouring to improve and maintain standards of excellence of learning and research subjects pertaining to Islamic Studies, it is of paramount importance that specify priorities and targets are set, so that they can assist the Islamic College in achieving its aspirations and objectives.

The staff of the College are committed to implementing the strategy highlighted here. They are mainly academic targets which can only be achieved when standards of education are developed and changes are properly evaluated and monitored. The ambitious plans set out herein will, together, endeavour to improve on our present

accomplishments and develop valuable programmes to meet the future needs of students and assist us in striving to increase learning and research capabilities through the programmes delivered at the Islamic College

As a continuation of the previous strategy, this plan will also demonstrate how previous targets were achieved and what needs to be further accomplished where there may have been a shortfall in the fulfilment of the targets.

The Trustees of Irshad Trust have high expectations from the Management Team of the Islamic College to raise academic standards, and it is through this Strategic Plan that it is hoped that they will be able bring the planned targets, through shared commitment, to fruition.



## PRINCIPAL'S STATEMENT

I'm delighted to present the Islamic College's five-year strategic plan for the period of 2017-2022.

The Islamic College is an excellent institute with a dedicated, diverse, and passionate community of students, staff, and alumni. The higher education sector and the market within which we operate have changed. Indeed, the sector continues to develop rapidly. To compete and succeed, we must continue to innovate. In this strategy, I therefore propose to build on the strengths of our college, by focusing on our ability to enhance student success and deliver real world impact through our academic activity and our links to local religious community centres, other academic institutions, scholars, and professionals to widen participation. By utilising these strengths and by working with our partner university, we will provide ever greater opportunities for our students,

staff, and the communities we serve.

With the involvement of the whole college community in its development, this strategy sets out our objectives for the coming five years. Our strategy is about building on our past to shape our future. We will focus on enhancing the quality of all we do, investing in our future and above all enabling the talents of our students and staff to realise our shared ambitions.

I'm confident we have the talent and flexibility to enable us to continue to evolve and satisfy expectations. If we can continue to incorporate the efforts of both staff and students in our academic programmes and college community aspirations, then I am sure we will be well equipped to flourish and to deal with the future challenges.

The Principal

# EVIDENCE OF ACHIEVEMENTS 2012-2017

The Islamic College has achieved targets set in the previous plan thus providing the stability needed for the College to advance further and expand both in the structural and academic sense.

Our 'Strategic Plan, 2017-2022' provides the College with the opportunity to reflect on its strengths and weaknesses to create a vision for the future. We have involved the whole College community in the strategic planning process and we have agreed on a vision for the College 'to be a college offering high quality undergraduate and postgraduate education, research excellence and public engagement'. This is a commitment to achieve excellence as a unique Islamic educational academic institution in London, which is accredited in the UK with an outstanding faculty, staff and students. We take very seriously our commitment to improve the College's learning and teaching, research, student experience, preparation for graduate employability, and engagement with local and national communities. In order to ensure that we achieve our goals, we are improving our ability to ensure vigorous institutional assessment and quality enhancement. We will also need to increase student enrolment and to increase learning resources to improve the learning and teaching, student experience and estates to achieve our strategic goals. We believe that our distinctive position in the higher education landscape will make Islamic College much more attractive for the students.

- During the last strategic plan, management oversaw the construction of the new building, an exciting transformation to our growing campus. This new facility benefits students, staff, and the local community.

- It has maintained the academic standards required to satisfy the conditions of validation agreements set in the partnership with Middlesex University. Programmes have continued to receive positive recommendations from external examiners through their reports

- The College has delivered the strategic plan goal of developing institutional strategies for 'learning and teaching' and for 'research and professional engagement'. These were approved by the Academic Board and are now being implemented and monitoring mechanisms put in place. Our publications and research activities are meeting set targets through the publication of books, articles and journals useful for research and reference in Islamic Studies. We have also arranged annual conferences and regular seminars, and encouraged staff and graduate students to participate in external academic activities, conferences and academic writing. Both our student journal (published annually) and the Journal of Shi'a Islamic Studies (published quarterly) contribute towards taking our research activities to the world. These will be developed further throughout the process of this plan to take both the College and its contributions further

- The Trustees also maintained their full support throughout this period. They have identified and continued to invest in the plans which have enabled the sound management of student enrolment, business and professional leadership development and curriculum enhancement. The annual HECFE monitoring report has recognized that the college is operating with a sound business plan

- Over the last five years, the annual monitoring reports, Board of Studies review, and student submissions have been submitted to Middlesex University to maintain and monitor our academic quality and standards through self-evaluation process as a part of our Strategic Plan.

- Annual Monitoring Reports are also submitted to QAA during inspections. QAA has showed satisfaction with the Islamic College's activities based on the AMR and other documents



submitted at the time of the last monitoring visit.

- Student affairs and the academic registry have built relationships to enhance student retention by identifying students for early intervention with respect to poor attendance, financial problems, and behavioural concerns, and offering assistance to ensure their needs are being met.

- Throughout the period of the previous plan, The Islamic College has gone through many formal inspections from the British Accreditation Council, HEFCE, QAA and HESA. They have proven to be positive and given The Islamic College recognition for its academic, managerial and administrative excellence in the field of Islamic Studies.

- The Islamic College has also gone through the Prevent Duty operations managed by its Quality Assurance Committee. The College's QA Committee has been involved with Leadership Foundation and Middlesex University meetings and trainings to get full guidance on how to manage the duties in this regard.

- Various Prevent Duties functions have been explored by the management, staff and student who are helping and assisting The Islamic College in fulfilling the duties pertaining to the statutory requirements set out in Government policies

- The College successfully achieved a revalidation of its MA in Islamic Law degree from Middlesex University in 2017 in its quality assurance

agency institutional review.

- Upgrades to library space and the computer lab are currently in progress, and the new facilities will open in 2018. They will serve as a study hub and meeting place for staff and students.

- The College's Annual Monitoring Reports (AMR) during the time of the last strategic plan showed that the Islamic College maintained a high retention rate throughout the cohorts. The College's teaching reports and External Examiners' reports have assisted The Islamic College continuously in making plans which encourage students to continue their studies at the Islamic College to higher levels. Students are given the opportunity to move from an undergraduate programme (on completion) to a postgraduate programme through sponsorships and scholarships towards MA programmes of the Islamic College. Irshad Trust has continuously assisted the Islamic College in this area.

- The College has also developed a system to create greater student participation in the improvement of the programme. A student council was created which provides regular feedback from students. Our Board of Studies allows student representatives to make comments on lectures, methods of delivery of their subjects and overall application of the course(s) they have embarked on. For this purpose, the College monitors satisfaction by means of an annual student questionnaire which covers all issues of the previous academic year beside the regular feedback at the end of each semester.



## STRATEGY AT A GLANCE

In this third decade of excellence, The Islamic College will focus on key priorities which will assist in the full delivery of learning experiences articulated in light of the success of the previous plan.

As a unique academic institution serving the educational needs of a wide range of communities, The Islamic College has achieved some of the targets set in the previous plan. The plan identified priorities which The Islamic College will continue to try to realize robustly through the academic programmes by professionally managing and delivering them with the assistance of faculty and experts in the field of Islamic Studies.

It is anticipated that the planned priorities will be achieved because this Strategic Plan sets the future agenda for the development of teaching Islamic Studies within an academic framework.

The bridge built over the last two decades in the community and the academia will continue. In doing so, it will provide The College with the opportunity to deliver quality education provisions.

## STUDENT ACHIEVEMENTS

Our external engagement will ensure courses are relevant to employers, and by ensuring our courses are research informed we will develop the critical awareness in our students that employers want.

### OUR FOCUS IN 2017-2022

- Task 1 – Employability

Providing students with an individualised learning experience to develop the skills and aspirations that enable them to enter employment or further study.

- Task 2 – Student Involvement

Ensuring that students are seen as participants in their learning and that student voices are heard.



## REAL WORLD UPSHOT

One of our distinctive features is the highly applied nature of what we do. We need to ensure that within the context our teaching, research and enterprise interact, and that through this interaction we create a distinctive academic environment that motivates staff and students to succeed and support student engagement.

## OUR FOCUS IN 2017-2022

### • Task 1 - Teaching & Learning

Ensuring our teaching remains highly applied, professionally accredited and demonstrably linked to research and enterprise, delivering the attributes that will make our graduates highly sought after.

### • Task 2 - Research & Innovativeness

Delivering outstanding economic, social, and cultural contributions from our intellectual capital, by connecting our teaching and research to the real world through commercial activities and social enterprise. In the forthcoming years, the Islamic College will direct its research activities towards creating dialogue between faiths and cultures. This plan anticipates that the Islamic College will be recognised for its community endeavours and as such assist in the promotion of Muslim contributions to intercultural knowledge.

We also aim to:

- Publish high quality books and journals on the thought, faith, and practice of Shi'i Islam.
- Establish a research centre that will provide a welcoming and productive environment for researchers and professionals who wish to work on research projects in the field of Islamic Studies.
- Work collaboratively with other academic

institutions and publishers in the field of Islamic Studies.

- Make ICAS Press publications available to all parts of the English-speaking world, particularly academic libraries.
- Expand the library's collection of resources on Shi'i Islam and to establish the library as a hub for research in Islamic Studies.
- Acknowledge high standards of research and academic writing produced by students of The Islamic College.
- Explore and exchange opinions on Islamic thought and practice with academic communities of diverse backgrounds and perspectives.
- Provide support and advice to lecturers and students of The Islamic College in their research activities.

## ACCESS TO OPPORTUNITY

The Islamic College will continue to solidify its relationship with partner institutions who have assisted in the College's progression over the years. Our local and national partners were addressed in the previous strategy, and their greater involvement for the betterment of the college will be acquired and enhanced throughout the period applicable to this plan. In addition to benefitting our staff and students, we remain committed to extending and deepening our partnerships with the community which we serve and the schools and colleges in our region.

We will create an environment for our staff and students to further develop civic engagement and professional partnerships, and continue to develop pathways into higher education for students from low participation neighbourhoods.

## OUR FOCUS IN 2017-2022

- **Task 1 - Access**

Working with local partners to provide opportunities for students with the potential to succeed, and through active engagement ensuring student retention.

- **Task 2 - Multicultural Community**

Developing a multicultural community of students and staff, through which academic alliances and partnerships will further build our capacity and capabilities in education, research, and enterprise.



## STRATEGIC EMPOWERMENT

Management and governance arrangements need to be aligned with the strategy and provide a robust framework within which there is space for staff, in all roles, to be creative and empowered to deliver. We need to ensure that we are able to attract, develop, and retain the best staff and provide an environment that motivates and enables them.

## OUR FOCUS IN 2017-2022

- **Task 1- Resources & Set-up**

Strategically investing in the creation of first class facilities and ensuring they are underpinned by services which are responsive to academic needs and outcome-focused.

- **Task 2- People & Corporate**

Creating an environment which attracts and fosters the very best staff, and within which all staff, whatever their role, feel valued and proud of their college and take appropriate responsibility for its development.

## STUDENT RECRUITMENT

In 2014, enrolment was capped to 50 students by the HEFCE. This means that while there are facilities for students greater than the capped figures, the capping enables The Islamic College to regulate and coordinate the overall demand made on the College in the studies of the various branches of Islamic Studies.

## OUR FOCUS IN 2017-2022

- Task 1 - Growth in Student Numbers

We are trying to increase our student enrolment from all sources, including undergraduate and postgraduate degree students. When it is realised that there will be a greater intake, The Islamic College will request HEFCE to increase our capped figure.



## IMPROVEMENT IN OUR RATE OF RETENTION

There is a strong possibility for the Islamic College to increase levels of retention. We will strive to attract the students with a high likelihood of success by developing policies and strategies to maximise student performance, their satisfaction with teaching, and with student services and the quality of student life at the College in order to attract them to our postgraduate programmes.

### OUR FOCUS IN 2017-2022

- **Task of Retention of Students**

The Islamic College recruits' students from all across the world, and our alumni are to be found in all corners of the globe. Attracting an increasing and diverse cohort of students who strengthen our agenda for excellence and retaining students that enrol with us through to successful completion will be high priorities. We remain committed to our goals of widening participation, promoting social mobility, equity and fair access and will continue in our efforts to make the Islamic College attractive and accessible.

We will:

- Ensure that our academic offering and transformative integrated student experience appeal to prospective applicants
- Enhance our marketing, recruitment, application and admissions processes and structures.
- Provide prospective applicants with the information they need to make an informed choice about their studies, and
- Engage our alumni across the world in recruiting, mentoring, and giving career advice to current students.

## INTELLECTUAL CAPITAL

Together with the previous plan's success in this area, this plan will widen its links with students who have graduated and are busy in their professions. The Alumni play an important function in raising the profile of the Islamic College. They are involved in outstanding work in various sectors of the community.

### OUR FOCUS IN 2017-2022

- **Task of Alumni Engagement**

During the period of this plan, the Islamic College aims to further expand the Alumni department that will provide services to the Alumni enabling them to keep greater contact with the College. This will also assist The Islamic College in tracking the activities of its graduates. As graduates in Islamic Studies, they are also a resource for the College's research department. It is proposed by the Irshad Trust that the Islamic College attract these students to its postgraduate programmes by offering scholarships to them. Therefore, over the period of this plan, the Islamic College will be offering special continuing awards to its undergraduates through the Alumni department.

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Islamic College's enrolment enhanced by a positive relationship with the community. The visibility factor is essential in strategies throughout the priorities drawn up in this plan. Engaging the community at all levels has been vital to the Islamic College's. To maintain this success, we look to developing our visibility locally and nationally. The College's visibility internationally is mainly useful for the Distance Learning programme at the postgraduate level.

## OUR FOCUS IN 2017-2022

- Task of Increase College visibility in the community

We will transform our vision into a reality by getting the College recognised for its work in the community. This will be undertaken by inviting the community more to the college and representatives of the College going to them.



## DELIVERING THE STRATEGY

Strategic Plan (2017–2022) articulates our mission and vision and sets out a clear strategic intent with institutional priorities.

In delivering this strategy we will:

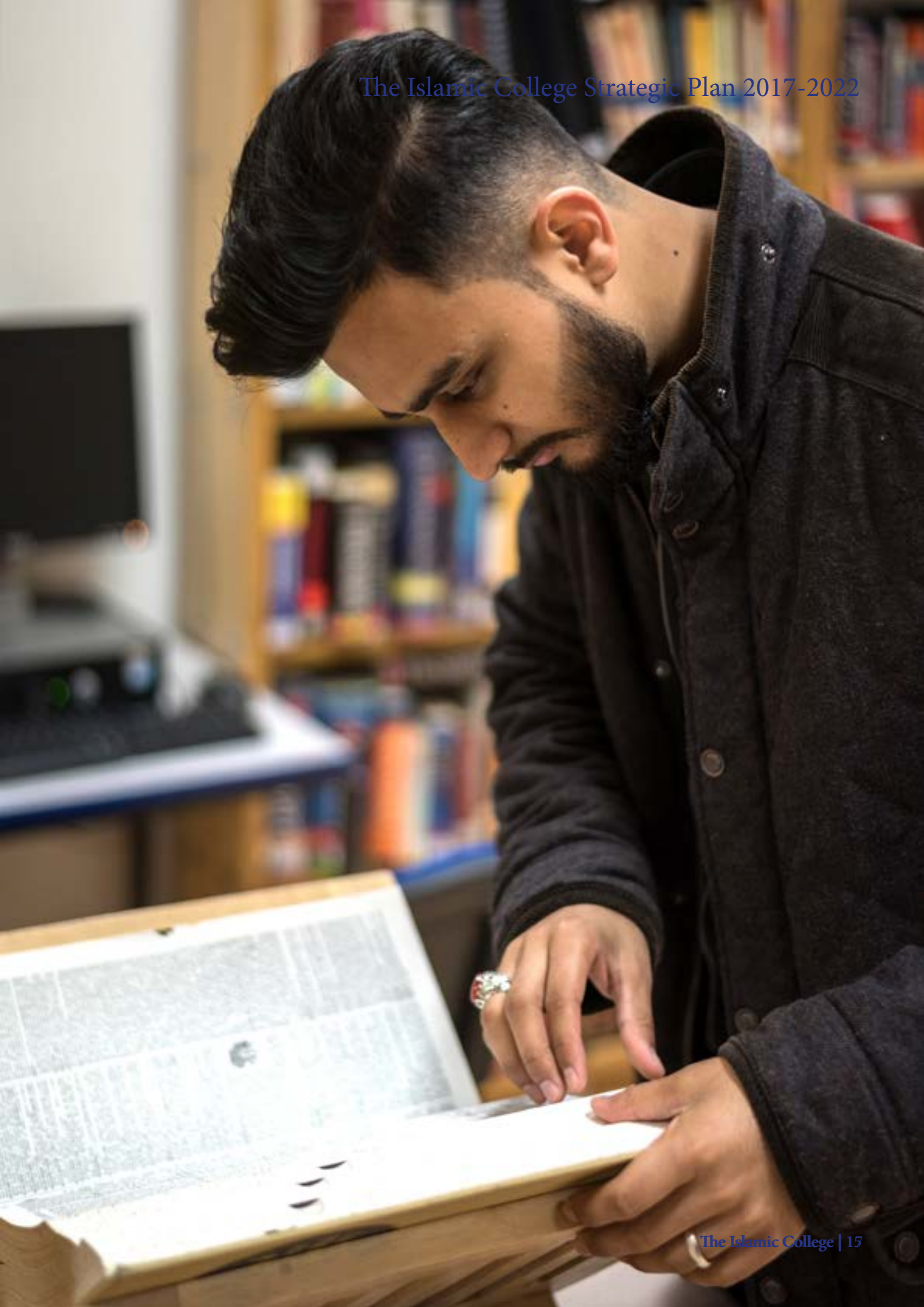
- Track our progress towards achieving our strategic objectives on a continuous basis, and monitor our performance, benchmarking externally against peers and sector norms as well as internal metrics, and communicate these to external and internal stakeholders.
- Develop an enhanced set of institutional Key Performance Indicators to monitor our performance regarding student enrolment, student achievement

and the student experience, teaching quality, research and enterprise, staff empowerment and sustainability. We will also monitor a set of financial and environmental metrics.

- Produce annual implementation plans on institutional, faculty and departmental levels, detailing specific actions and outcomes.
- Ensure that staff are empowered to contribute to the institutional objectives by aligning their personal objectives with those set out in this plan.
- Contribute to and implement higher education policy imperatives









[www.islamic-college.ac.uk](http://www.islamic-college.ac.uk)

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