



The
***Muslim
Student's
Guide***

to University and Beyond

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Contents

<i>Introduction</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Chapter 1: What is the Point?</i>	<i>3</i>
Who? Where? Why? What Next?	3
The Limited Nature of Man	5
The Creation of the Universe	7
The Size of the Universe	8
The Creation of Man	13
Allah vs. <i>Shaytan</i>	15
The Freedom to Choose	16
What Next?	17
<i>Chapter 2: The Early Days</i>	<i>18</i>
Freshers' Week	19
A Small Fish in a Big Pond	20
Freedom	21
A Bit of History and Politics	21

Back to Freedom Again	23
Alcohol	24
Boyfriends and Girlfriends	25
Step-by-Step Approach	27
Haya or Modesty	30
Jannah is Surrounded by Difficult Things	30
Shade on a Hot Day	31
Two Wings of a Bird	32
The Importance of a Good Start	32
Have the Right Intentions	33
Learning	34
Personal Motivation	36
New Friendships	38
Find a Good Seat	39
The First Year in General	40

*Chapter 3: **Guidance and Learning*** **41**

Different Types of People	41
Choosing Friends Wisely	43
Teamwork	44
Developing a Good Relationship with your Lecturers	44
The Ultimate Role Model	46
Prioritising	47
Turning Up Would Help	50
Getting Organised	52
Work Smarter, Not Harder	53
Worship Smarter, Not Longer	54
Knowledge Comes from Allah	55
Seeking Knowledge	56
The Qu'ran	58
The Last Sermon	59
Your Bank Balance	63
What's Your Legacy?	64

Chapter 4: <i>The Importance of Time Management</i>	66
Time Flies	66
Time in Islam	69
Luqman's Advice to his Son	69
Procrastination	70
Making Time for <i>Salah</i>	72
The Importance of <i>Salah</i>	73
The Benefits of <i>Salah</i>	75
<i>Wudu</i>	75
Making <i>Salah</i> Easy	77
Got Time to Kill?	78
Tips on Making Use of 'Dead Time'	79
Finding Time to do <i>Dhikr</i> of Allah	80
Juggling Obligations and Responsibilities	81
Dealing with Stress	82
 Chapter 5: <i>Final Exams</i>	 85
Preparing for Exams	85
Death	87
Preparing for the <i>Akhirah</i>	89
In the Exam Hall	91
What if I Fail an Exam?	92
The Next Stage	93
Judgement Day	96
What to Expect in <i>Jahannum</i>	98
What to Expect in <i>Jannah</i>	99
 Chapter 6: <i>Beyond</i>	 101
 <i>Glossary</i>	 104
 <i>Bibliography</i>	 108

The Early Days

Of course you are going to be nervous about your first day at university and probably even the first week as you are finding your way around, meeting new people and feeling bewildered by all the opportunities that are available. I don't mind telling you that I was very anxious. But equally, don't let this spoil what is possibly the most exciting time of your university life. And remember that everyone is in exactly the same situation as you.

Before the start of term, you should have received plenty of correspondence from the university. Some of it will be about the various procedures that you need to go through, including course registration, Union membership and ID cards. They may also send you more general information about university facilities, your department, maps of the campus and so on. If you make the time to familiarise yourself with all this as well as browsing the university website, then you will feel more confident and prepared for these first days.

Fresher's Week

The first week of the academic year at university is usually referred to as Freshers' week where a variety of events are held to help and welcome new students. There are a wide range of social activities, including live music and other performance events, sports challenges, stunts and open-air markets especially designed to allow Freshers to make new friends and to get to know others doing the same course. As well as providing a chance to learn about the university, Freshers' week allows you to get to know the city or town which is home to the university and to become familiar with the representatives of your Student Union.

You will also come across a Freshers' Fair for student clubs and societies which is a great way for you to get an idea of the array of facilities on offer, typically outside your course of study. The various societies and clubs available within the university will have stalls and lots of goodies to entice you to join up. These range from sports societies, religious societies, societies for different countries, media societies, community work, politics – you name it and there is probably a society for it. Joining a few gives you the chance to meet like-minded people who share an interest, learn or keep up a skill or just to take a break from all that study!

Do avail yourself of these fantastic opportunities as you will probably not have such a choice again. One of the regrets I have is not signing up for a martial arts course as it was something I always wanted to do but because none of my friends wanted to do it, I left it. On the other hand, you are at university to study so do be careful of not taking on too much and signing up for everything that appeals to you at once. Societies will always welcome you at any time of the year if you decide to join later.

Teamwork

You will find on your course timetable that there are opportunities for you to work by yourself as well in groups with other people. That is because both skills are important. Likewise, some acts of worship are individual such as fasting while others are collective such as the *Jumu'ah salah*. This shows that the nature of Islam is not just about the individual but also about brotherhood/sisterhood and the necessity of interacting positively with others.

Whether you are working in pairs or groups of twenty and whatever the task, the same basic principles for successful teamwork apply. The first thing is to realise that each person will bring to the team differing skills and personalities. The trick is to identify everyone's strengths and to work to those, while compensating for each other's weaknesses, so that the team is strong as a unit and there is harmony among the team members.

The other critical element of teamwork success is that all the team efforts are directed towards the same clear goals, the team goals. This relies heavily on a common vision and good communication between the team members. Each team member must be clear about what his or her role is and what they are responsible for. Each team therefore needs a leader to ensure the smooth running of the team, to direct the members and oversee the flow of communication.

Developing a Good Relationship with your Lecturers

You may have less interaction with your lecturers and tutors than you did with your teachers at school, but that doesn't mean that they should just remain names and faces that you listen to in lectures and then leave.

In later years, you may need your lecturers' help with your final year project and dissertation, career's advice, and to act as referees for jobs and work placements. So do make sure that you are on good terms with the staff in your department. You may be assigned a personal

Seeking Knowledge

Gaining knowledge does not end when your course at university finishes. Most graduates in their respective positions need to acquire further skills or pass professional exams usually in the form of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) so that their skills and knowledge are always up to date. In addition, most professionals become members of their relevant profession's society or institute after they graduate. These institutes publish regular subject journals and organise seminars that members can attend to keep abreast of what is happening in the field as well as providing the opportunity to meet like-minded people.

If we want to continually develop our self and our soul in order to become better human beings, then we need to continue to seek knowledge throughout our lives. As the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said:

"To acquire knowledge is the duty of every Muslim man and woman." (Ibn Majah)

Does that mean that once you have obtained your degree, you will have fulfilled your duty to acquire knowledge? Not quite. You may have become a good scientist or historian, but if you have not acquired the basic knowledge about religious obligations, you will remain an uneducated person. Today, there are millions of Muslims who have many degrees and a string of letters after their name and are very capable in their respective fields. However, it is all worthless if they have not even learnt to read the Qur'an or perform *salah*, let alone knowing how to conduct themselves as Muslims in their daily home, business and social lives.

All humans are dead except those who have knowledge. And all those who have knowledge are asleep, except those who do good deeds. And those who do good deeds are deceived, except those who are sincere. And those who are sincere are always in a state of worry. (Imam Ash-Shafi'i)