

**CIWAS-MAINSTAY PhD STUDENTSHIP**

Start Date: September 2025

Application Deadline: 01 March 2025

Interview Date: April 2025

**Royal Holloway, University of London**, is inviting applications for 3 PhD studentships within the Centre for Islamic and West Asian Studies (CIWAS), in partnership with the Mainstay Foundation. This pioneering programme seeks to explore critical issues relating to the politics and international relations of the Middle East and Muslim-majority societies. We encourage innovative research projects that offer fresh perspectives on the political, social, and cultural dynamics of the Middle East, particularly those that employ comparative or cross-regional approaches. This unique opportunity supports research that contributes to a deeper understanding of the Islamic world and its global connections.

**Project Overview**

The studentship aim to provide new insights into the complexities of the Middle East, fostering research that ranges from modern history to current political and social transformations, religious authority, Islamism, and gender dynamics. We are also keen to support comparative, cross-regional, or cross-national studies, as well as research focusing on specific countries or themes, such as democracy and elections, the experiences of Muslims in Europe, diasporas, and the impact of media.

The successful candidates will be based in the Politics, International Relations, and Philosophy Department, which is home to several renowned research centres, including CIWAS, the Gender Institute, the Global Politics and Development Centre, the Democracy and Elections Centre, the Centre for International Security, and the New Political Communications Unit. We particularly encourage PhD projects that link CIWAS with one of these other centres, fostering interdisciplinary and collaborative research.

Applicants with experience in or research focused on lower- or middle-income countries are especially encouraged to apply. Proficiency in relevant foreign languages and expertise in both qualitative and quantitative research methods will be highly regarded. These studentships are an exciting opportunity to contribute to cutting-edge research on some of the most pressing issues facing the Middle East and the broader Islamic world today.

**Details of Award**

The CIWAS-Mainstay Scholarship covers full home tuition fees and provides an annual stipend of £20,000 for three years.

**Eligibility**

Successful applicants must possess a relevant Master's-level qualification in a social science or Humanities discipline, or be expected to complete their Master's studies before the commencement of the PhD programme (with merit or equivalent). They are also required to have a valid IELTS certificate, with an overall score of 6.5, a writing score of 7.0, and no other sub-score lower than 5.5, unless they have an English language university degree and have written their dissertation in English.

**How to Apply**

Interested candidates should submit the following to Dr. Mohammad Kalantari at mohammadreza.kalantari@rhul.ac.uk, using the subject line: “CIWAS-Mainstay PhD Studentship”:

1. A cover letter

2. PhD research proposal (for guidance see [here](https://www.royalholloway.ac.uk/research-and-teaching/departments-and-schools/politics-and-international-relations/studying-here/research-degrees/applying/))

3. Curriculum Vitae (CV)

4. A writing sample

The application deadline is 1 March 2025. Shortlisted candidates will be notified and invited to submit their official application to the Royal Holloway Doctoral School Portal following an internal review.

**Further Information**

For any questions about the application process or for informal inquiries, please contact Dr. Kalantari at mohammadreza.kalantari@rhul.ac.uk.