

Madinah al-Ilm and Bab al-Ilm Short Summer Courses 2013 - FAQs

Application process

Q. How do I apply for a place on the course?

In order to apply for a place on one of the two courses, you must complete the online application form. The application form will then be reviewed by a member of our team, and if you are eligible, an informal telephone conversation will be arranged with you at a mutually agreed time.

The telephone conversation will involve a brief discussion about your reasons for applying and what you would like to achieve from the course.

Based on your responses, references will be checked before you are informed of the final decision.

Please note that places will be allocated on a first come first served basis, on the condition that the application form, informal telephone conversation and references are completed satisfactorily.

Q. What are you looking for in an application?

A successful applicant will be one who demonstrates a willingness to learn and a wish to attend the course of their own accord.

We often find that some applications are submitted by parents on behalf of their child and we would request that applicants apply on their own accord so that they are truly motivated and committed to the course.

Q. How quickly will I know whether I have been accepted on the course or not?

The deadline for all applications and deposits is 10 February 2013. Please note that we will not look at an application form until all documents and a deposit is received.

All applicants will inshAllah be informed of a decision soon after the application deadline.

Q. If I have attended one of the courses before, can I apply again?

As the courses are heavily subsidised and many applications are received, individuals will only be allowed to attend each course once. Thus, if a participant has attended the Bab course, they will be able to apply for the Madinah course if they meet the age criteria. However, they will be unable to apply for the Bab course for a second time.

Q. If I have previously applied and have been unsuccessful, can I apply again?

If you have previously applied and have been unsuccessful, we would recommend that you apply again. Please make a note in your application form that you have previously applied and we will take this into consideration when looking at your application.

Q. Is my deposit refundable?

Your deposit is only refundable if your application is not successful. If you are accepted on to the course and you then decide you no longer wish to attend, your deposit will not be refunded.

Q. How do I make payment for the course?

The preferred method of payment differs between each region. They are as follows:

- AFED participants – through bank transfer (please contact AFED: secretariat@africafederation.org for the relevant details)
- CoEJ participants – through the CoEJ website
- Dubai participants – through The World Federation website
- NASIMCO participants – through the NASIMCO website
- Participants from other regions – through The World Federation website

The Course – Timetable

Q. How long will we be in Qum and Mashhad?

The Madinah and Bab short summer courses in Iran are three week courses that are predominantly held in the blessed cities of Qum and Mashhad. Normally, students spend the majority of their time in Qum and the last few days of the course in Mashhad. This is usually the last three to four days.

Q. Where will we be staying in Qum and Mashhad?

Whilst in Qum and Mashhad, there will be separate accommodation for the boys and the girls. The exact location of where participants will be staying is yet to be confirmed.

In previous years, participants have stayed in hawzas whilst in Qum.

Accommodation in Mashhad will be in a hotel close to the haram of Imam Ridha (as).

Q. What will the courses involve?

The timetable for the courses is jam packed with various visits, lessons and ziyarats. The timetable includes the Ziyarat of Imam Ridha (as) and Bibi Masuma (sa), a visit to Masjid e Jamkaran, climbing Mount Khizr, lessons on various Islamic topics and meetings with learned scholars.

There will also be plenty of opportunities to play sports and take part in cultural activities.

Q: How often will we get to go shopping?

Time for shopping will be accounted for in the timetable. If there is any need to go for further shopping outside of the timetable, participants will need to obtain consent from the organisers who will ensure that the extra shopping time does not clash with any other activities, such as any cultural activities or classes. The participants are expected to request permission within reason and understand when it is not possible for the organisers to allow time for shopping.

In previous years we have found that the amount of time allotted for shopping was more than enough.

Q: How often will we be going to the haram?

Frequent visits to the haram will be accounted for in the timetable for Qum. If free time has been allocated in the timetable, participants may be able to visit the haram outside of the allocated times by requesting permission from the organisers.

The Course - Rules and Regulations

Q: What sort of behaviour and attitude is required of participants applying for this course?

The behaviour and attitude of those wishing to participate in the summer course programme is:

1. Respect for the rules and regulations of the summer course as well as the country you are visiting;
2. A willingness to learn & improve oneself;
3. Striving to be a model for others; and
4. Appreciation for the work of those volunteering to make your trip as comfortable as possible as well as being patient with them.

Q: What is the dress code required for both girls and boys?

Modest dress is required from all participants. For boys, long sleeve shirts and tops are mandatory and khanzus can also be worn. There may be some instances, such as meetings with learned scholars, where specific clothing will be advised to you, e.g. khanzus. Boys are not permitted to wear t-shirts or shorts outside of the accommodation in which they are staying.

The dress code for girls is full hijab (including non-transparent socks), ensuring that one's hair, arms, and feet are fully covered. Girls will be required to wear hand socks and an Iranian chador. The Iranian Chador will be provided on arrival and hand socks will be available for purchase in Iran for those who do not have any. As the Chador is open at the front, girls should wear a regular chadar/abaya underneath.

Girls must wear black scarves/shellas.

A full dress code can be found on the application form. Please note that you cannot apply for the course without formally accepting to abide by the dress code.

Q: Are there any specific rules or codes which need to be practiced during my stay at the Hawza?

There will be a set of rules and guidelines given to each participant in regards to the courses and in general, each student must comply with these. They also form part of the application. Please note that you cannot apply for the course without formally accepting to abide by the course rules.

In addition, the accommodation itself has its own rules that participants will be briefed on upon their arrival, these will need to be adhered to in addition to the course rules.

The Qum hawzas' own specific traditions and culture **must** be respected at all times.

Q: Whilst staying at the hawza, will I be able to leave the hawza, to go out as and when I wish?

The answer here is relative to age and gender. Primarily, due to the rules of Jamia tuz Zahra (the girls' hawza), girls are not allowed to leave the Hawza unless they are supervised.

Madinah boys will be allocated time in their timetable and will be able to leave the hawza during these times only with the permission and at times, with the supervision of a mentor (the supervision of a mentor will be assessed on individual requests). However, Bab boys will not be able to leave the hawza alone.

Q: Will I be able to use my mobile phone whilst on the course?

Mobile phones must not be used whilst on the course. Any participant found using their mobile phone will be asked to give their mobile phone to the organisers for safe keeping. We strongly advise you to leave your mobile phone at home and not bring it with you on the course as it will be taken from you.

Q: Will I be able to bring any hand held games/video games on the course?

Hand held games and video games must not be used whilst on the course. Any participant found using such devices will be asked to give them to the organisers for safe keeping. We strongly advise you to leave your hand held games and video games at home and not bring them with you on the course as they will be taken from you.

The Course – Facilities available

Q: Are there Western toilets available to use?

The girls' hawza contains one Western toilet however the rest of the toilets are of Eastern style. The boys' hawza may not have a Western toilet however commode chairs may be made available on request.

There are Western style toilets available in some places, including the Haram in Qum, the hotels in Tehran and other destinations. The organisers also try to ensure that the hotels in Mashhad, for both boys and girls contain western toilets.

Q: What facilities are there for washing clothes?

There is a washing machine and deep wash basins available on site for the girls and local washing powder can be bought on site. However, girls are encouraged to bring their own washing liquid especially if they suffer from skin conditions.

For the boys, a paid laundry facility may be available; however undergarments and socks will have to be hand washed as these cannot be washed by the launderette.

Q: Will there be any place to store my valuables safely?

On arrival into Iran, the organisers will take responsibility of all participants' passports. It is the individual's responsibility to look after all other valuables.

The accommodation that the participants will be staying in is safe, however please note that the Qum Office will not be held responsible for any items that get lost or are stolen.

Q: What are phone and email facilities like? How often will I be able to phone home and use the internet?

There are **limited** phone and internet facilities.

Timings allotted for both will be subject to the timetable and will be determined upon arrival. Consideration has been made to take into account the different time zones, but this will only work if all participants comply to the systems put in place.

Please also note that **it will not be possible** to obtain and use an Iran SIM cards during the course of the trip and this has also been highlighted in the rules and guidelines.

Roaming facilities on mobiles phones should also not be used by participants. Delete this as we have said no phones.

Q: What will the food be like?

Whilst in Iran, the students will be provided with a variety of food, including traditional Iranian, fast food, Indian cuisines etc.

Meal times are fixed and therefore if participants are in the habit of snacking in between meals they are encouraged to bring snacks with them.

Similarly if students feel that there is a chance that they may not like the food on offer, alternatives will not be available and therefore we recommend that packet soups, cereal bars and pot noodles are brought with them. Participants should expect to try food that is different to what they are used to and be open to new tastes. If the food is not to their liking however, they are still expected to be polite and courteous to those who have prepared the food for them.

Q: How many people will there be per room?

This will be determined closer to the time of the trip as it can range from 4 to 8 per room.

In the past where the girls have stayed at the Jamia tuz Zahra, the rooms are dormitory style with 6 beds per dorm. From past experience, the numbers have been slightly larger for the boys.

Q: Will we be drinking bottled water for the whole trip?

Bottled water will be provided throughout the trip however the water available at the harams and accommodation is safe to drink. Participants will be expected to take responsibility for keeping hydrated throughout the trip as the heat is intense. Participants in the past have fallen ill due to dehydration.

Q: What happens if I get sick?

If you get sick, there will be members of the organising team who will be able to look after you. The healthcare facilities in Iran are adequate and trips to the hospital can be made if necessary. However, all participants are advised to take their own personal medication.

Generally, the kinds of sickness that occur on the trip are dehydration, flu, diarrhoea and stomach bugs, all of which can be treated with over the counter medication brought with the students.

The Course – Miscellaneous questions

Q: How much money would be advisable to take for the whole trip?

The trip is an all-inclusive trip therefore items such as accommodation, food and transportation are all covered.

Expenses such as phone calls, laundry, shopping and extra luggage charges are not covered. We find that £200 (\$300 USD) should be sufficient to cover all these additional expenses.

However, this will of course be dependent on the amount of shopping a participant wishes to do.

It is worth noting that some students tend to spend a lot of money at the Ansariyan book store and then have their books shipped back home. Depending on an individual's interest in books, the amount to convert will be relative, therefore it is advisable to bring a little buffer money in case.

Q: How will I exchange my money?

The organisers will advise participants on the best place to exchange money and how best this can be done.

If too much money is exchanged, then students can convert it back into the original currency at the airport before leaving Iran.

Q: What is the role and duty of mentors?

The mentors are present to help facilitate the course, as well as provide advice and guidance to the students' to ensure physical and spiritual wellbeing and to ensure they get the most out of their trip.

If you have any further questions that have not been answered, please email us at madinahbabcourse@world-federation.org