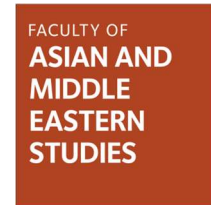


FACULTY OF ASIAN AND MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES

Pusey Lane, Oxford, OX1 2LE

Tel: +44(0)1865 278200 Fax: +44(0)1865 278190

enquiries@ames.ox.ac.uk www.ames.ox.ac.uk



22 June 2026

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to express my enthusiastic support for Imran Fazal's doctoral research plans. Imran applied for a place in the doctoral program of Oxford's Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies in January 2026, and I was one of the academics tasked with assessing his application. We were extremely impressed by Imran's writing samples and his ambitious yet distinctly feasible research project. Imran's application received a rare set of full marks (40/40), and he was not only offered an Oxford doctoral place but was also emphatically put forward for various funding opportunities. Virtually all scholarships available to support doctoral study at our faculty are not under the immediate control of faculty academics, meaning that our students compete with other applicants inside Oxford and nationally. In Imran's case, despite the exceptional strength of his application, our efforts to secure funding for his doctoral research were unfortunately unsuccessful in this round.

Imran's proposed doctoral project aims to study the doctrine of *jihād* in the writings of the medieval Muslim jurist and theologian Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 1328). Ibn Taymiyyah is often viewed primarily as a figurehead of contemporary Salafi Islam, yet recent work on his prolific literary output has unearthed a much more complex and nuanced thinker than most scholars would have expected to find around the turn of the millennium. Building on this step change in Taymiyyan studies, Imran's project compellingly brings together his skills of philosophical analysis, his deep knowledge of the Islamic tradition (especially of Islamic jurisprudence), and his previous work as Head of Policy for the Joint Extremism Unit. Excitingly, while Imran's project will be a precious contribution to Islamic intellectual history, it also has clear social and religious implications beyond academia.



I am very keen for Imran to be able to pursue his doctoral research at Oxford and recommend him highly in terms of his personal aptitude and the strength of his research project. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can provide any further information (nicolai.sinai@ames.ox.ac.uk).

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Nicolai Sinai'.

Nicolai Sinai FBA

Professor of Islamic Studies, University of Oxford

Fellow of Pembroke College