

Madrasas and Islamic Higher Education in the US: Toward Standardization	
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History of madrasa	<p>Places like Dār al-Arqam in Makka or the ṣuffa (platform) in the Prophet’s Mosque (Madīna) were the earliest madrasas</p> <p>During the era of the salaf, most gatherings of knowledge took place in mosques</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Al-Azhar and al-Qarawiyyīn were built as mosques and used as teaching spaces as well <p>Masjid-khān complexes soon evolved that provided teaching space and lodging under one roof, often built adjacent to mosques</p>
Nizām al-Mulk	Seljuk vizīr who established madrasas all over the Seljuk Empire, and used them as means of propagating Sunnīsm in general and Ash‘arī theology and Shāfi‘ī fiqh in particular
Ijāza	Based on the premise that the student had mastered the text and was qualified to transmit it or teach it to others
Types	Of narration (riwāya), of teaching (tadrīs), and of fatwa (giving legal opinions)
Dār al-‘Ulūm Deoband	<p>Mawlānā Qāsim Nānautvī and his colleagues, who had been directly exposed to the mass education system introduced by the British in India, decided to appropriate it for their own purposes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Multi-year ‘Ālim Course, standard textbooks to be completed in a year, official examinations at year’s end, etc. <p>Mawlānā Qāsim Nānautvī, the main founder of Dār al-‘Ulūm Deoband, was open to the idea of madrasa graduates studying in secular institutions after completing their madrasa training</p> <p>The degree of standardization achieved at Deoband allowed its system to be easily replicated elsewhere</p> <p>Deobandī madrasas are not as traditional (opposite of modern) as many Deobandis would like to believe</p>
Dars-i nizāmī	Curriculum devised by Mawlāna Nizām al-Dīn Siḥālvī of Lucknow that leaned heavily towards the rational sciences (ma‘qūlāt) and fiqh

Deobandī 'Ālim Course	<p>Those who completed the whole program were thoroughly trained generalists with the ability (isti'dād) to become a naḥwī, a mantiqī, an uṣūlī, a faqīh, a mutakallim, a mufassir or a muḥaddith, with further effort</p> <p>Most Deobandī madrasa graduates today have become consumers of research produced by others</p>
Western Madrasas	<p>Most offer 6-7-year programs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Duration is reduced by removing most of the texts dealing with mantiq (Sharḥ al-Taḥdhīb and al-Quṭbī) and falsafa/kalām, as well as some texts of fiqh (Sharḥ al-Wiqāya) and uṣūl al-fiqh (al-Ḥusāmi and al-Tawḍīḥ wa al-Talwīḥ) <p>It would be fair to say that the 'Ālim Course in a typical Western madrasa is designed to produce generalists although of somewhat lesser quality than that possible in South Asian madrasas</p>
Who is an 'ālim?	<p>The word 'ālim can be used for someone who has general training in Islamic sciences, as well as for someone who possesses expertise in one or more of them</p>
Arab educational systems	<p>Students in Egypt and Saudi Arabia have to finish 12 years of basic schooling before they can enroll in an Islamic college or university</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Those choosing to do so start preparing early by enrolling in a madrasa shar'iyya or a ma'had shar'ī, which are basically high schools with a heavy dose of Islamic content
Islamic versus non-Islamic institutions	<p>Those teaching in an Islamic institution view themselves as spiritual guides/mentors for their students</p> <p>In secular universities, there is no relationship between acquiring Islamic knowledge and practicing it</p> <p>Divinity Schools draw from the academic resources of the secular university but package them in a way that they are attractive to practicing Muslims</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Only when an Islamic studies program is based in a divinity school does it come anywhere close to imparting theological Islamic training <p>A person can conceivably graduate from a secular university with a PhD focusing on Islamic law and still not know how to pray or fast</p>
Shortcomings	<p>An average madrasa graduate has not received any training in modern or postmodern thought, which is essential for successfully combating the many ills that beset Muslim communities</p> <p>Muslims in America face a different set of circumstances and challenges than those in British India</p>

	<p>Most so-called muftis of today are basically trained to narrate fatwa</p> <p>The average student graduates from the ‘Ālim Course after having extensively studied fiqh texts and the evidences of various madhhabs, but still finds himself at a loss on how to narrate fatwa according to the Ḥanafī madhhab</p>
Recommendations	<p>A 1-year track that focuses mainly on Islamic literacy for adults</p> <p>A 2-year track that combines study of Classical & Modern Standard Arabic with Islamic studies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Equivalent to the first 2 years of a 6-year ‘Ālim Course <p>A BA program in conjunction with the 2-year Foundation program, consisting of a mini takhaṣṣuṣ fi al-iftā wa al-ḥadīth, exposure to Western thought, and the absence of Dawrat al-Ḥadīth</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1-year of Dawrat al-Ḥadīth can be replaced by improving the quality of Mishkāṭ instruction, giving more time to application of ‘ulūm al-ḥadīth, and selected readings from ṣiḥāḥ sitta <p>A transitional MA program taught over the course of 1 year divided into two semesters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - One dealing with Western thought and civilization, and the second one dealing with Islamic thought and civilization <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What forces and ideas have gone into the making of a modern Westerner and how that has affected the world we live in today, etc.

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