



The Lord Sheikh

APPGIF Co-Chair

House of Lords

Westminster

SW1A 0PW

TEL - 0207 219 5529

EMAIL - sheikhm@parliament.uk

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP
10 Downing Street
London
SW1A 2AA

23rd June 2021

Dear Boris,

Alternative Student Finance Update

We are writing on behalf of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Islamic Finance (APPGIF).

A core aim of APPGIF is to promote the understanding and development of Islamic finance both within Parliament and outside.

At the 9th World Islamic Economic Forum in London in 2013 former Prime Minister David Cameron he undertook to provide a student loan scheme which is Shariah compliant. Despite Mr Cameron saying that *"never again should a Muslim in Britain feel unable to go to University because they cannot get a student loan – simply because of religion"* a suitable finance scheme has yet to be launched.

As we approach a new academic year Alternative Student Finance remains unavailable so Muslim students will continue to be excluded from the Higher Education system, 8 years after the Government made a commitment to address this issue. We are sending you a letter that has been co-signed by Parliamentarians and organisations representing the Muslim community in Great Britain to highlight the scale of the problem and the impact it is having on access to further and higher education.

I have spoken about this issue in Parliament on several occasions at the request of members of the community. We request that you kindly arrange for a suitable minister to meet us to discuss this matter in more detail, to better understand what has caused the delay, and when a suitable Alternative Student Finance product will be available.

We believe that the diversity of modern Britain must be reflected in all spheres of life and we must do what we can to encourage and integrate the next generation of Muslims.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Kind Regards,
Yours sincerely,

M Mawad .

The Lord Sheikh (Co-Chair)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Naz Shah'.

Naz Shah MP (Chair)

Dear Prime Minister,

Re: Support for equal access to University that will help give UK a competitive edge in the post-pandemic world economy

We have contacted the APPG IF to request your support for Alternative Student Finance – a measure that will have a significant positive impact on our economy and one that has been agreed to by past Conservative Governments.

Many Muslim students find themselves unable to take on the financial burden of a higher education course or the University degree simply because the current student loan system involves interest. This perpetuates economic inequalities that have wider implications on all spheres of life – as was devastatingly apparent during the Covid pandemic.

The government has already identified – and provisionally committed to - a solution that is practical and acceptable to all parties in the Takaful based funding structure of an Alternative Student Finance system. With more than 1 Million British Muslims being under the age of 15 and more than 48% of them living in the 50 most economically deprived constituencies – the economic necessity is clear. We also trust that the moral case for providing a fair and equal mechanism for students from different background to access alternative student finance is clear.

However, despite the considerable benefits the implementation of such a structure would have for the British economy, we are no further forward almost a decade later. By making this a task and complete priority of the Department of Education, you will able to fulfil that promise and improve access to higher education for those from the most underprivileged in British society with all the attendant benefits that come with that including improved health outcomes, security rates and integration.

In 2013, your predecessor, Prime Minister David Cameron stated emphatically, “Never again should a Muslim in Britain feel unable to go to university because they cannot get a student loan – simply because of their religion.”

This September will mark the 10th cohort of students who will have no alternative to support them into higher education. For some, this will mean they cannot go to university, simply because of their devotion to their faith.

We urgently request you meeting with the APPG and our representatives to ensure we can take the necessary steps to fulfil the promise to build back better and fairer.

Yours sincerely,

Lord Sharkey

Stephen Timms MP

Conservative Muslim Forum

The Islamic Finance Council

National Union of Students

IntoUniversity

The Access Project

The Brilliant Club

Brightside

upReach

Al-Qalam Sharī'ah Scholar Panel

Preston Muslim Girls High School

Islamic finance guru

Dr Riyaz Timol - Research Associate at Cardiff University's Centre for the Study of Islam in the UK

Islamic Relief UK

Finsbury Park Mosque

Newham Muslim Forum

Albarkat Welfare Trust

Federation of Muslim Organisations

Muslim Charities Forum - CEO

Economic Covid Recovery Group

Push

Villiers Park

Impetus

Causeway

AL-HQ Law & More

The Peace Centre

Strive UK

Muslim women of Merton

Council of Islamic Affairs

Assalatur Rahman Islamic Association

Pakistan Youth & Community Association

Charity Week

York Mosque & Islamic Centre

Essex Islamic Academy

MWM

Square Education Services

Bristol Islamic Schools Trust

Muslim Aid

Council of Nigerian Muslim Organisations UK

Camberwell Islamic Centre Camberwell, London

Raeya Carer Project

Council of Nigerian Muslim Organisations UK

Camberwell Islamic Centre London

Muslim Association of Nigeria UK

Just4Youth

Sri Lankan Muslim Cultural Centre UK

Muslim Mamas

Muslim School Oadby

Consortium

Fomwauk

Federation of Student Islamic Societies (FOSIS)

Global Somali Diaspora

British Islamic Medical Association

Muslims in Rail

At-Taqwa Islamic and Family Centre

CNMO UK - Trustee

Muslim Association of Britain

Uswat welfare trust

National Zakat Foundation

Muslim Women of Merton

CC: The Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP (Chancellor of the Exchequer), The Rt Hon Gavin Williamson MP (Secretary of State for Education)