

**STRENGTHENING
RELIGIOUS
LEADERSHIP FOR
A COMMUNITY
OF SUCCESS**

*Report from the
Committee on Future Asatizah*



**COMMITTEE ON
FUTURE
ASATIZAH**

Copyright © 2020 by Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura (Muis).

All Rights Reserved. No part of the publication may be reproduced, published or transmitted in any form or by any means electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recorded or otherwise without the prior permission of the copyright owner. You may use the contents and save an electronic copy, or print out a copy, of parts of this publication solely for your own information, research or study, provided you include the copyright notice on such copy. All information is correct at the time of publishing and printing, and is subject to change without prior notice.

EXCHANGE OF LETTERS WITH MINISTER-IN-CHARGE OF MUSLIM AFFAIRS	i
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
CHAPTER 1: THE CONTEXT	
<i>THE ASATIZAH SECTOR</i>	
<i>ASATIZAH AS GUIDES IN A MULTI-RELIGIOUS SOCIETY AND A GLOBALISED WORLD</i>	3
<i>CONTINUING EFFORTS IN ASATIZAH DEVELOPMENT</i>	
<i>HIGHER ASPIRATIONS AND INCREASING EXPECTATIONS</i>	
<i>IMPETUS FOR CHANGE</i>	
CHAPTER 2: THE COFA ENGAGEMENT PROCESS	
<i>CREATING A SHARED VISION</i>	
<i>COFA ENGAGEMENT MODALITIES</i>	10
<i>DATA ANALYSIS AND INSIGHTS</i>	
<i>MOVING INTO THE FUTURE TOGETHER</i>	
CHAPTER 3: ASPIRATIONS AND VISION OF THE FUTURE	
<i>VISION OF FUTURE ASATIZAH</i>	
<i>STRATEGIC INTERVENTIONS AT INDIVIDUAL, INSTITUTIONAL AND SECTORAL LEVELS</i>	19
<i>A. INSPIRING INDIVIDUALS</i>	
<i>B. STRONGER INSTITUTIONS</i>	
<i>C. VIBRANT AND PROFESSIONALISED SECTOR</i>	
<i>FROM ISSUES TO ACTION</i>	
CHAPTER 4: KEY THRUSTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	
<i>THRUST 1: PROFESSIONALISING THE ASATIZAH SECTOR</i>	39
<i>THRUST 2: STRENGTHENING INSTITUTIONS</i>	
<i>THRUST 3: NURTURING INSPIRING RELIGIOUS GRADUATES</i>	
CONCLUSION	58
ANNEX	61
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	70

EXCHANGE OF LETTERS WITH THE MINISTER-IN-CHARGE OF MUSLIM AFFAIRS

20 February 2020

Minister-in-charge of Muslim Affairs

In March 2019, the Committee on Future Asatizah (COFA) was convened to develop a vision for the asatizah of the future, and advise Muis in its efforts to strengthen the development of the asatizah workforce. Since then, my fellow COFA members and I have engaged over 1,900 stakeholders, including senior religious scholars, asatizah serving in various institutions, madrasah educators, mosque leaders, academics, professionals, youths, faith leaders from various faith backgrounds and members of the community.

2. COFA has completed its work and now submits the vision of the future asatizah and the key recommendations to achieve the vision.

3. From the COFA engagements, COFA proposes the following **vision of future asatizah**:

*As **religious leaders** in a multi-cultural and diverse society, our asatizah are well-regarded in proactively engaging with emerging issues of the modern world, and in interacting and connecting with diverse other communities, to build a cohesive Singapore society.*

*As **professionals**, our asatizah are advocates of lifelong learning, acquiring knowledge and skills in guiding Muslims in Singapore to respond to contemporary challenges.*

*As **role models**, our asatizah are rooted to Islamic traditions, resilient, adaptable, compassionate, driven and committed to the betterment of the Singapore society.*

4. To achieve this vision, COFA further submits **ten key recommendations based on three key thrusts to professionalize the asatizah sector, strengthen our religious institutions and nurture inspiring religious graduates.**

5. We believe that these key thrusts and accompanying recommendations will strengthen the development of the asatizah workforce and improve the sector's attractiveness and vibrancy. COFA hopes that future asatizah will seize the opportunities arising from these recommendations with a strong spirit of responsibility and ownership for their own growth. We believe that such opportunities will also contribute to the continued development of strong and transformative religious leadership, which is essential for the continued growth of the Muslim community and Singapore. Together, we can build a vibrant Singapore Muslim community of success that inspires and radiates blessings to all.

6. On behalf of my fellow committee members, we thank you for the privilege of serving on COFA.



Dr Mohamad Maliki Osman
Chairman, Committee on Future Asatizah
Senior Minister of State for Defence and Foreign Affairs



Ministry of the Environment
and Water Resources

21st February 2020

Dr Mohamad Maliki Osman
Senior Minister of State for Defence and Foreign Affairs
Chairman, Committee on Future Asatizah

Dear Maliki, well done!

I would like to thank you for submitting the recommendations of the Committee on Future Asatizah (COFA) on 20 February 2020.

2. I am heartened that the Committee has consulted widely, incorporating key insights from over 1,900 stakeholders to strengthen the recommendations developed. The Committee's efforts are timely as asatizah provide religious guidance and pastoral support to help the Singapore Muslim community navigate increasing challenges in a more globalised, diverse and connected world.

3. The Government welcomes COFA's recommendations to develop the asatizah sector along three key thrusts of:

- a. professionalising the asatizah sector;
- b. strengthening religious institutions, and
- c. nurturing inspiring religious graduates.

These efforts will enable our asatizah to continue playing a crucial role as leaders, professionals and role models for Muslims in our multi-cultural and contemporary society. By working with the community and the Government, asatizah can also help our Muslims to work with fellow Singaporeans to build a caring, cohesive, and confident Singapore.



PEOPLE DEVELOPER
SINGAPORE



4. On behalf of the Government and the community, I would like to thank the Committee members and the working groups for their commitment and efforts. I look forward to the continued development of the asatizah sector, which will help to grow our Muslim community as a Community of Success.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Masagos Zulkifli', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

MASAGOS ZULKIFLI
MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND WATER RESOURCES AND
MINISTER-IN-CHARGE OF MUSLIM AFFAIRS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Committee on Future Asatizah (COFA) was convened in March 2019 to develop a vision for asatizah of the future. COFA engaged over 1,900 stakeholders, including senior religious scholars, asatizah serving in various institutions, madrasah educators, mosque leaders, academics, professionals, youths, faith leaders from various faith backgrounds and members of the community. COFA also conducted online and street surveys as well as in-depth interviews to complement the engagement sessions.

During the COFA engagements, participants discussed how driving forces such as the changing texture of society, demography, economy and technology will impact the Singapore Muslim community in the future. Participants emphasised how these trends will shape the socio-religious lives of Muslims, and how they interact with and contribute positively to others in a multi-cultural, modern and cosmopolitan city.

A key theme from the COFA conversations is the strong recognition that asatizah have a critical and essential role which they must continue to play, in providing guidance for the community at all levels, contributing and galvanising contributions to nation-building and to humanity, as inspiring leaders, competent citizens and effective contributors.

Another key insight is the urgent need to revitalise the religious sector to ensure that asatizah remain an important pillar and beacon in guiding the community to live confidently in a plural society. There is also a need to strengthen the role of asatizah in nation-building. These can be done by strengthening asatizah's core roles as religious leaders while leveraging opportunities for them to serve, contribute and develop themselves in adjacent areas, such as the social and education sectors. Based on the expectations and aspirations of the community and the asatizah themselves, COFA's vision of **future asatizah** is as follows:

*As **religious leaders** in a multi-cultural and diverse society, our asatizah are well-regarded in proactively engaging with emerging issues of the modern world and connecting with other communities to build a cohesive Singapore society.*

*As **professionals**, our asatizah are advocates of lifelong learning, acquiring knowledge and skills in guiding Singapore Muslims to respond to contemporary challenges.*

*As **role models**, our asatizah are rooted to Islamic traditions, resilient, adaptable, compassionate, driven and committed to the betterment of the Singapore society.*

COFA hence puts forth ten (10) recommendations centred around the three (3) key thrusts of professionalising the asatizah sector, strengthening religious institutions and nurturing inspiring religious graduates. The ten recommendations are listed below:

THRUST	RECOMMENDATION
<p style="text-align: center;">Professionalising the Asatizah Sector</p>	<p>1. Develop a structured talent management programme focused on grooming future asatizah to fill different leadership positions in the sector, including those who will helm apex roles in key religious institutions.</p>
	<p>2. Develop a skills framework (that includes a career map and competency framework) for future asatizah that is anchored on roles in the core religious sector with access to pathways to adjacent sectors.</p>
	<p>3. Introduce common salary guidelines and improve the compensation and benefits for asatizah in key religious institutions including madrasahs and mosques, in tandem with efforts and opportunities for upskilling.</p>
	<p>4. Review and revitalise community assets (e.g. MBMF for religious education and wakafs such as Wakaf Ilmu) and engender ground-up community contributions to better support asatizah development.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Strengthening Institutions</p>	<p>5. Establish a liaison office for aspiring and current asatizah to discover opportunities and pathways for career and professional development, both in the core religious and adjacent sectors.</p>
	<p>6. Enhance career guidance and internship programmes for students in madrasahs to support their holistic development and allow them to make more informed choices in their educational pathways.</p>
	<p>7. Support the vision for a credible, world-class institute of higher learning offering undergraduate and/or postgraduate programmes in the Islamic religious sciences.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Nurturing Inspiring Religious Graduates</p>	<p>8. Strengthen knowledge and skills development via the Asatizah Recognition Scheme's (ARS) Continuous Professional Education (CPE) platform to better address existing or newly emerging fields.</p>
	<p>9. Strengthen fresh graduates' skills in contextualisation, facilitate career skills and development, and offer work-based experiences through the Postgraduate Certificate in Islam in Contemporary Societies (PCICS) initiative.</p>
	<p>10. Increase support for overseas religious undergraduates and postgraduates in skills upgrading during their period of study.</p>

This report presents the context for future asatizah development, details of the stakeholder engagement approach and co-creation process, and subsequently discusses the key findings and recommended way forward. Long-term, sustained and concerted efforts will be needed to realise our collective vision. May the plans and initiatives which will be rolled out achieve the intended outcomes, and may our asatizah remain an important institution for the community for many more generations to come.



CHAPTER 1

**THE
CONTEXT**

THE ASATIZAH SECTOR

1. Our asatizah form an important part of Singapore's Islamic religious sector, which is served by both asatizah and non-asatizah.¹ They serve in mosques, madrasahs, public service institutions, (i.e. Muis, the Syariah Court and the Registry of Muslim Marriages) as well as private Islamic education centres and providers, associations such as PERGAS, PERDAUS, Darul Arqam, and other organisations which play important roles and functions in the Islamic socio-religious landscape. Asatizah constitute the heart, mind, hands and spirit of the sector's human capital.

2. Asatizah in Singapore fulfil the core function of facilitating and providing Islamic religious guidance and teaching to the Muslim population. The employment pattern of the asatizah sector is a dynamic one. Currently, out of the total 2170 individuals in active employment, 45.1% (978) are holding full-time positions while the remaining are in part-time positions (44.5%) and freelancing (10.4%), offering services on-demand.² Out of the 978 religious graduates who are registered under Tier 1 of the Asatizah Recognition Scheme, 1 in 2 are serving in the core religious institutions such as mosques, madrasahs, Muis, the Syariah Court and the Registry of Muslim Marriages. The other 50% are social entrepreneurs, employees of private Islamic education providers or are working full-time in adjacent sectors.

ASATIZAH AS GUIDES IN A MULTI-RELIGIOUS SOCIETY AND A GLOBALISED WORLD

3. In Singapore, communities of different religions, faiths, beliefs, spiritualities and religious practices have been co-existing harmoniously with mutual respect, acceptance, understanding, compassion, care and cooperation. Each has benefitted from the freedom to practise one's faith, belief and religion peacefully. Singapore Muslims, while a minority, are well-integrated in the Singaporean society. Singapore Muslims are proud of and committed to Singapore and their national identity while remaining rooted to Islam. This is by no means accidental and is largely due to the contributions of religious leaders over the past decades in promoting mutual understanding, care and concern, and promulgating and practising the concept of unity in diversity.

4. Nevertheless, Singapore cannot take this harmonious way of life for granted. Every level of society, from the individual, family and community, has a part to play in cherishing, safeguarding

and improving the harmony that Singapore enjoys. The support and guidance from *asatizah* and religious leaders to enable Singapore Muslims to navigate future uncertainties critically and confidently are of paramount importance. This is especially so within the context of driving forces and dynamic changes such as globalisation, greater connectivity and technological advancements, the changing texture of society (including the growing diversity of Muslims in Singapore), evolving social and family norms, widening income inequality, as well as contestations of views and lifestyles. To seize opportunities and overcome challenges in this ever more complex future landscape, the Muslim community will require a strong vision and a growth mindset, where the Singapore Muslim community, guided by its religious leaders and other community leaders, can progress in a meaningful manner. In short, these changes call for a visionary growth.

5. *Asatizah* have been playing an important role in providing religious guidance for the Singapore Muslim community, and in contributing to who the Singapore Muslim is today. This must continue in the foreseeable future. The generations of *asatizah* are well-regarded as the “*Obor Ummah*” (Beacons of the Community). They have contributed to portraying Islam as a way of life and helped Muslims learn and practise Islam confidently. The scholars of yesteryears have laid an important foundation and legacy for the community. The beneficiaries of *asatizah*’s contributions are not limited to the Muslim community but span other communities and the nation as well. For example, some of our pioneer *asatizah* were pivotal in social cohesion initiatives, actively breaking new ground in the development of sustainable institutions and networks which promote interreligious harmony, hand in hand with religious leadership from other faiths.

6. Our *asatizah* paved the way for Singapore Muslims to understand the Holy Quran and Prophetic traditions meaningfully, to contextually apply and practise Islamic teachings and continually expound the relevance of Islam to the Muslim community’s contemporary lives. Guided by the *asatizah*, the Singapore Muslim community continues to broaden and deepen their understanding of the Islamic worldview, traditions and practices.

7. Beyond functioning as religious teachers and spiritual guides for Singapore Muslims, the *asatizah* of today also seek answers to contemporary issues affecting an individual’s decision-making processes and interactional experiences in our plural, multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious nation. Today, *asatizah* in Singapore are expected

to dispense religious guidance ranging from matters such as those related to faith (aqidah) and ritual practices, finance and estate matters, science and medicine, family and marriage.

8. Increasingly, socio-religious issues are becoming more complex and many issues require deeper and broader research and deliberation before guidance can be offered. Some complex socio-religious issues, for example, are related to current and future advancements in technology and their implications at different life-stages from preconception to end-of-life matters which involve ethical and religious considerations. The advent of bio-scientific developments such as lab-grown meat and organs, in-vitro DNA reconfiguration of designer babies, and the extension and termination of life-support using AI technology pose new ethical questions. In the field of finance, block-chain systems, cryptocurrencies and new forms of assets and wealth pose unprecedented juristic questions that require new knowledge as well as approaches before guidance can be issued.

9. On the social dimension, a more educated populace, demographic changes, an ageing population and the growing yet diverse needs of youths call for new and expanded roles from the *asatizah* fraternity. There are also ideological developments that may challenge traditional conceptions such as gender and the role of the family, in terms of their nature, status and functions. In all of these, the community will continue to seek guidance from *asatizah* to live confidently as Muslims and active citizens, and with the ability to engage with and respond to such issues.

10. The marketplace of ideas is expanding and deepening. Accessibility to this marketplace has reached unprecedented levels, and the amalgamation and the interconnectivity of both global and local concerns and issues are becoming more complex and nuanced. The contestation of ideas in this marketplace could be healthy, in that ideas are democratically challenged, critiqued, co-created and curated. However, there is a pressing need for positive guides to help the Muslim community navigate this marketplace of ideas, such that ideas detrimental to universal values expounded by Islam such as justice, mercy and compassion are properly addressed, critiqued and evaluated.

11. Alternative ideas which promote the universal values of Islam should be propounded such that they drown out these more detrimental ideas. While this heavy responsibility to act as positive guides for themselves and for others is to be borne by all Muslims, *asatizah* play a special role

and function in that they have chosen to take on the mantle of collective religious leadership as a fraternity. Our asatizah are thus essential in guiding the Muslim community to properly navigate this marketplace of ideas, and to become active producers of ideas harmonious with Islam's universal values.

CONTINUING EFFORTS IN ASATIZAH DEVELOPMENT

12. Recognising asatizah's critical role in the socio-religious life of Singapore Muslims, and in nation-building, Muis and the community have significantly invested in asatizah development over the past ten years. Among others, the capacity building initiatives included regular engagements, postgraduate scholarships as well as specially curated developmental programmes conducted together with both local and overseas institutions, such as the Studies in Inter-Religious Relations in Plural Societies Programme (SRP) of the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Nanyang Technological University (NTU), Hartford Seminary (USA), Oxford University, the Al-Azhar University, Dar Al-Ifta Al-Misriyyah and the University of Jordan.

13. The implementation of the mandatory Asatizah Recognition Scheme (ARS) in 2017 was another effort towards professionalising the asatizah sector through the establishment of baseline standards such as minimum qualifications, a shared code of ethics and access to continuous professional education and upgrading opportunities. At the systemic level, the ARS aimed to strengthen the asatizah workforce and improve the quality of Islamic educational offerings in Singapore.³

14. Further upstream in the asatizah talent pipeline, the six full-time madrasahs in Singapore continue to function as the bedrock in nurturing and grooming the asatizah of tomorrow. Initiatives to strengthen the madrasah sector have been undertaken systematically in the past few decades. Investments in leadership, teachers' professional development, and grants for students' programmes have enabled the madrasahs to grow. The results of this growth are evident in the performance of madrasah students at the national examinations, as well as in various Islamic degree programmes overseas.

15. Both government and community resources to support the madrasahs have been enhanced. These include funding for infrastructure and Information Technology (IT) upgrades, teacher training grants and programmes, financial incentives for teachers, financial assistance

and progress awards for students, and grants for students' holistic development through co-curricular activities, counselling services and career seminars. These initiatives underscore the important position of the madrasah institution.⁴

HIGHER ASPIRATIONS AND INCREASING EXPECTATIONS

16. Regular engagements with students from madrasahs and Islamic universities have shown that while they recognise the important function of *asatizah* in providing religious guidance to the community, they are equally aware of the changes in society and the critical need to be equipped with inter-disciplinary knowledge, employability skills and professional competencies. Students also regularly expressed aspirations to expand their roles beyond teaching in mosques or madrasahs. Undergraduates from Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Malaysia, Indonesia and Brunei mentioned careers as IT specialists, researchers, lecturers, translators, writers, motivational speakers and counsellors. As an undergraduate expressed, “*why limit the potential of asatizah when they can contribute more to the community... dakwah (advocating goodness) is not done through teaching only...*”.

17. A survey of pre-university madrasah students indicated that 20% expressed preference to pursue a degree not related to Islamic Studies.⁵ Even the younger 15-year-old students expressed the need for pathways to be created for them to serve in emerging fields. One madrasah student cited her interest in content creation and IT specialisation to serve the Muslim community and beyond. Another madrasah student observed that the ageing population in Singapore was an area of opportunity for future *asatizah*, and highlighted that eldercare was a potential career choice for her. Other students also expressed similar observations with regard to the diverse possible opportunities to serve the community upon graduation.

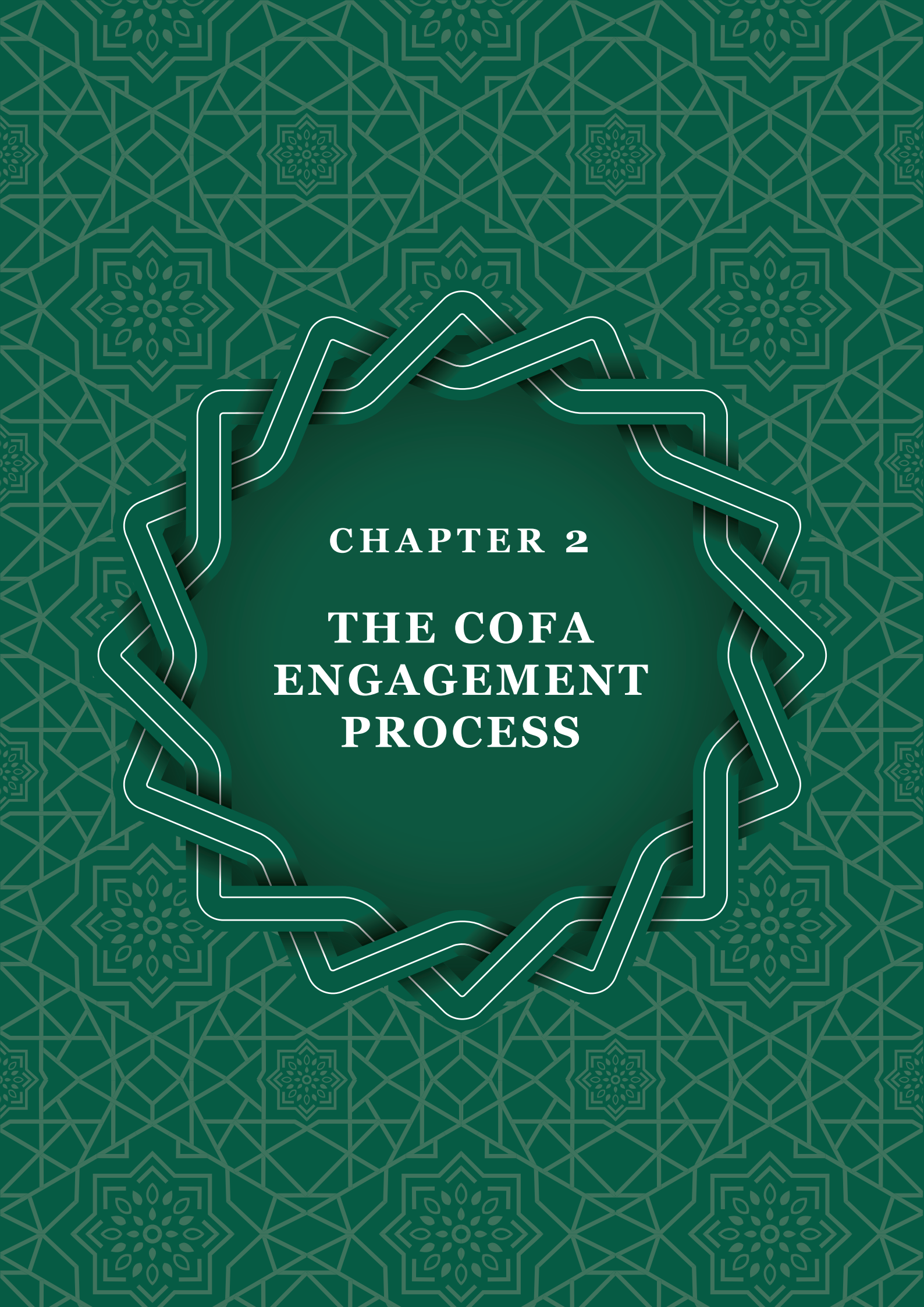
IMPETUS FOR CHANGE

18. Considering students' growing aspirations and the shifts in demands from the community and employees, it is important to note some key concerns highlighted by madrasah pre-university graduates, undergraduates and young *asatizah* who had just entered the workforce. These included (i) unattractive career prospects and progression in the religious sector, (ii) uncompetitive salaries⁶, (iii) perceived insufficient training and developmental opportunities, (iv) inadequate preparation for employment in the future economy, and (v) uncertainty if they could excel in other fields of work beyond the religious sector.⁷

19. The changing context, community's evolving needs and structural gaps in the sector presented in this section highlight the importance of taking a broader, longer-term view of asatizah development in Singapore. It is pertinent to discuss the roles of future asatizah and the competencies required for these roles. It is also useful to analyse how targeted interventions at different parts of the system (i.e. sector, institutions and individuals) can contribute towards the desired outcomes.

20. A thorough understanding and appreciation of the issues at hand will enable us to effectively plan and channel resources strategically towards improving the socio-religious sector. With a more vibrant, viable and dynamic religious sector, future generations of asatizah will be motivated to reach their highest potential, which will in turn lead to high-quality Islamic learning and religious services for the Muslim community, and a more dynamic and vibrant socio-religious life.





CHAPTER 2

**THE COFA
ENGAGEMENT
PROCESS**

CREATING A SHARED VISION

21. As articulated in the preceding chapter, trends related to the shifting roles of the asatizah, local and global driving forces, gaps in remuneration and career prospects, and the shifting aspirations of madrasah graduates present invaluable opportunities to collectively reimagine the socio-religious sector in Singapore.

22. To this end, the Committee on Future Asatizah (COFA) was formed in March 2019 to capture the community's vision of future asatizah, including their potential future roles and competencies.

COFA's Role:

- ❁ Spearhead the engagement of community stakeholders on the vision for "Asatizah of the Future" and the plans for achieving this vision.
- ❁ Advance the thinking of the skills and competencies needed of the future asatizah community, and in this context provide input to strategies to develop the future asatizah.

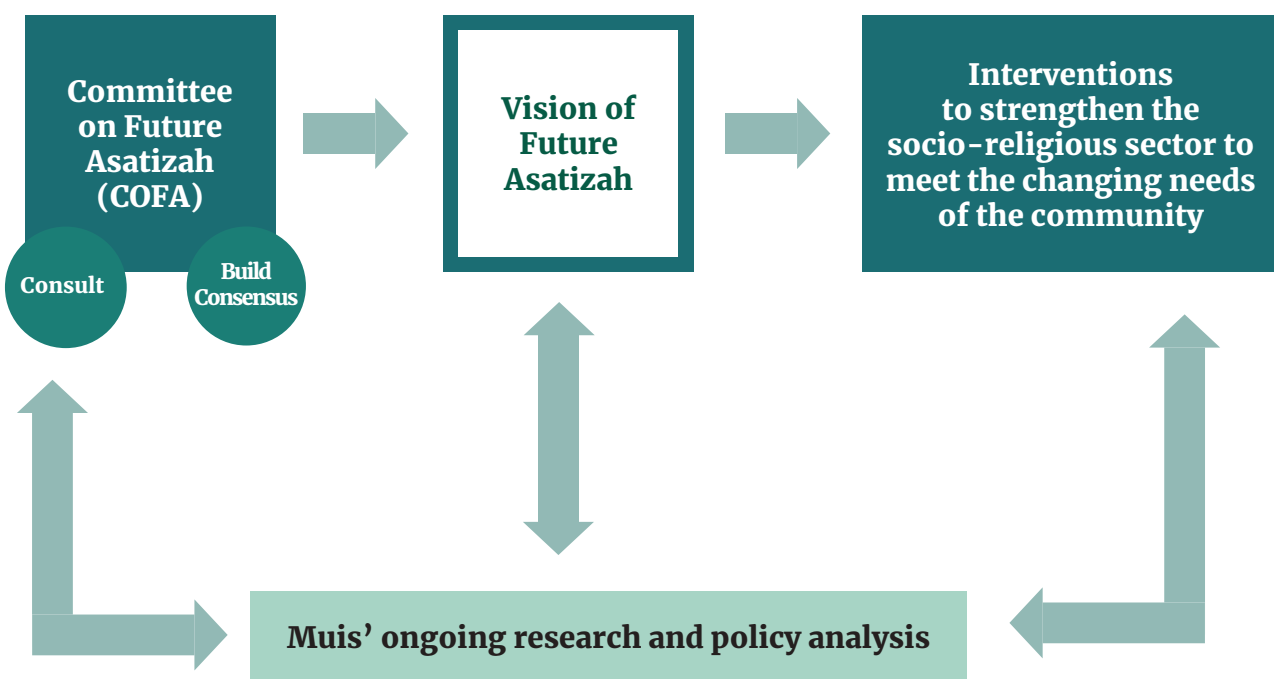


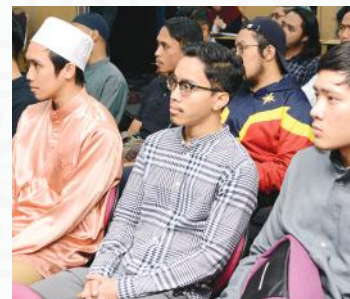
Diagram 1: Conceptual model of the envisioning exercise

NO.	COFA MEMBER	
1	Dr Mohamad Maliki Osman (Chairman)	Senior Minister of State for Defence and Foreign Affairs
2	Ustaz Dr Mohamed Fatris Bakaram	Mufti of Singapore
3	Ustaz Dr Nazirudin Mohd Nasir	Deputy Mufti of Singapore
4	Ustaz Dr Mohammad Hannan Hassan	Deputy Director, Office of the Mufti (Capacity Development) & Vice-Dean, Muis Academy
5	Ustaz Ali Mohamed	Chairman, Asatizah Recognition Board (ARB)
6	Ustaz Pasuni Maulan	Vice-Chairman, Asatizah Recognition Board (ARB) & Member, Muis Council
7	Ustaz Mohd Kamal Mokhtar	Member, Syariah Court's Appeal Board; Member, Board of Directors, Warees Halal Limited & Syariah Committee, Maybank Islamic Berhad
8	Ustaz Abdul Mukhsein Md Shariff	Assistant Vice-Principal, Madrasah Aljunied Al-Islamiah
9	Ustazah Kalthom Isa	Counsellor, Religious Rehabilitation Group & Member, Syariah Court's Appeal Board
10	Ustaz Tarmizi Wahid	CEO, Safinah Institute & Member, Asatizah Youth Network
11	Mr Naseer Ghani	Immediate Past President, Singapore Kadayannur Muslim League
12	Professor Seng Boon Kheng	Head, Social Work Programme, SR Nathan School of Human Development, Singapore University of Social Sciences (SUSS)
13	Associate Professor Suzaina Kadir	Vice-Dean (Academic Affairs), Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore (NUS)
14	Ustaz Dr Mohamed Bin Ali	Assistant Professor, Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) & Vice-Chairman, Religious Rehabilitation Group (RRG)
15	Dr Gog Soon Joo	Chief Futurist, SkillsFuture Singapore (SSG)

COFA ENGAGEMENT MODALITIES

23. COFA embarked on a series of engagements between March to October 2019. COFA mapped the range of stakeholders to collect diverse aspirations and views. In eight months, COFA engaged close to 2,000 participants via five modalities. In this regard, the COFA engagement exercise utilised the 'musyawarah' concept of consulting its various stakeholders to collectively reach a consensus.

OVERVIEW OF THE COFA ENGAGEMENT EXERCISE



24. Focus group discussions (FGDs) and round table discussions gathered individuals from similar backgrounds and experiences in each session. FGDs generally consisted of about 20 to 70 participants while round tables consisted of 10 to 15 participants. For the FGDs, participants were clustered into smaller groups of six (6) or eight (8) to provide enough time for individuals to air their views. The round table discussion format was carried out to facilitate deeper discussions among experts from different backgrounds. FGDs and round tables were typically based on the following discussion flow:



Diagram 2: Typical Flow of COFA Focus Group Discussions

25. These two modalities focused on emerging issues facing the Singapore community and explored the roles future asatizah could or should play to address them.



Youth Leaders and Young Asatizah at a COFA Focus Group Discussion, September 2019

26. To supplement findings obtained from the engagement sessions, COFA conducted an online survey from April to October 2019 which invited the general public to contribute and share their ideas, aspirations and vision of the future asatizah.

27. COFA also conducted a street survey in September and October 2019 to understand public sentiments and opinions on specific topics related to future asatizah. The survey interviewed a total of 505 respondents via a purposive sampling approach. Four (4) out of the five (5) key sample categories represented the views of the Singapore Muslim community. These categories were the professionals, tertiary youth, senior citizens and Islamic class adult learners. The survey purposively sampled madrasah alumni as they were considered as potential future asatizah. For all five categories, diversity in terms of gender, age and ethnicity were incorporated into the street survey sampling.

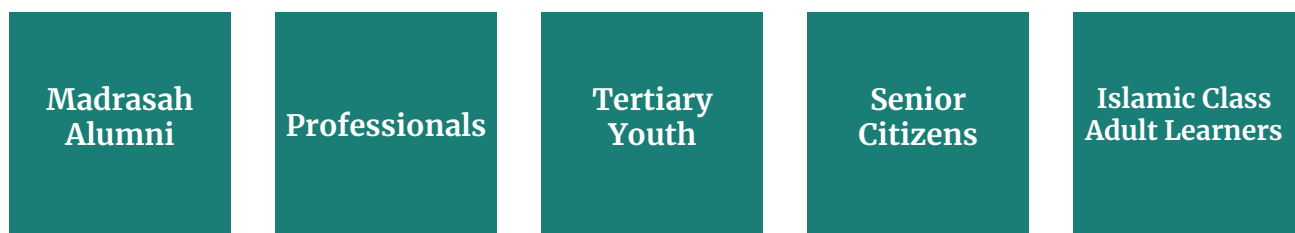


Diagram 3: Purposive Sampling for Street Survey Conducted in September and October 2019



COFA Round Table with Senior Asatizah from the Asatizah Recognition Board, March 2019

28. Additionally, COFA conducted in-depth interviews with community leaders to further supplement the COFA findings. The in-depth interviews focused on the interviewees' personal aspirations for asatizah as well as their observations and thoughts on the roles, skills and values of current and future asatizah. The interviewees were also asked about their views on the relevant institutions and policies connected to asatizah development.

Table 1 : COFA’s five Engagement Modalities

MODALITIES	DESCRIPTION	FOCUS AREA
Focus Group Discussions	20-70 participants were clustered into smaller groups of 6-8 pax. Each group was allocated time to discuss before presenting their ideas to the larger group.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emerging issues faced by the community. • Roles future asatizah could play to address the community issues.
Round Table Discussions	10-15 participants seated in a round table format to facilitate deeper discussions and debates.	
Town Hall Sessions	<p>Attended by 80 to 150 participants. Findings from COFA engagements were presented for review. Validation was sought via interactive digital platforms and panel discussions.</p> <p>COFA Town Halls were conducted twice. Once midway through the engagement exercise and another upon the completion of the engagements.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vision of future asatizah. • Skills and competencies of future asatizah. • Roles and functions of future asatizah for the core and adjacent sectors.
Future Asatizah Online Survey	<p>An online survey questionnaire in both English and Malay versions was made available from April to October 2019 on the Muis website. Marketing and outreach were conducted via emails, social media platforms and the dissemination of posters at mosques, inviting participation from the community.</p> <p>The aim of the survey was to capture both quantitative and qualitative data related to aspirations, expectations and levels of agreement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respondents’ views on the future-readiness of asatizah. • Respondents’ hopes and expectations for asatizah. • Current and future roles that asatizah should play for the community. • Skills and qualifications required of future asatizah. • Respondents’ views on the Post-graduate Certificate in Islam in Contemporary Societies (PCICS) and the Islamic institute of higher learning.
Street Survey	Conducted to capture public awareness and sentiments on specific topics related to future asatizah.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roles, skills and competencies of current and future asatizah. • Respondents’ support and opinions towards efforts and initiatives to develop asatizah and fund their development.
In-depth Interviews	Interview sessions conducted by the COFA secretariat and Muis senior officers. The interviews targeted individuals from different backgrounds and expertise (i.e. community leaders, madrasah leaders, senior asatizah).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviewees’ personal aspirations for asatizah. • Interviewees’ observations on the roles, skills and values of the current and future asatizah. • Interviewees’ views on relevant institutions and policies to nurture asatizah.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INSIGHTS

29. COFA's research methodology comprised both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The qualitative data sources included notes of discussions, interview transcripts and responses to the open-ended questions from the surveys. These data points were coded, categorised and grouped together to produce themes. The emergent themes were reviewed, compared and were further grouped till saturation point was reached (i.e. no further themes could be interpreted). Appropriate qualitative data analysis software applications were used to support the process.

30. The quantitative aspects of the research from both the online and street surveys consisted of Likert scale and ranking questions. The quantitative data were analysed and triangulated with the qualitative data to identify the salient overarching themes under which other themes could be grouped.

MOVING INTO THE FUTURE TOGETHER

31. Ground-up feedback to revitalise the asatizah sector is essential because the review and design of ensuing policies require concerted effort and commitment. This is an extensive task that involves a non-linear and iterative process consisting of a wide-range of variables at the individual, institutional and sectoral levels. By listening to the voices and gathering the suggestions from close to 2,000 individuals, we come closer to a better understanding of the shared vision of tomorrow by synthesising both convergent and divergent views and ideas.

32. The next chapter presents the *Aspirations and Vision of the Future*.



The background is a teal color with a repeating geometric pattern of interlocking lines forming stars and polygons. In the center, there is a large, white-outlined frame with a complex, multi-pointed, zig-zag shape. The text is centered within this frame.

CHAPTER 3

**ASPIRATIONS
AND VISION OF
THE FUTURE**

VISION OF FUTURE ASATIZAH

33. From the COFA engagements, the Singapore Muslim community's aspirations for the future asatizah community is encapsulated in the following vision statements:

As religious leaders in a multi-cultural and diverse society, our asatizah are well-regarded in proactively engaging with emerging issues of the modern world and connecting with other communities, to build a cohesive Singapore society.

As professionals, our asatizah are advocates of lifelong learning, acquiring knowledge and skills in guiding Singapore Muslims to respond to contemporary challenges.

As role models, our asatizah are rooted to Islamic traditions, resilient, adaptable, compassionate, driven and committed to the betterment of the Singapore society.

34. To serve the future community well, participants underscored the need to unpack the possibilities for future asatizah in the core religious sector. As observed by Ustaz Syed Mustafa Alsagoff, *“first and foremost, (future) asatizah need to be experts in the religious fields, i.e. mufassirun (experts in Quranic exegesis), muhaddithun (experts in prophetic traditions), fuqaha’ (Islamic jurists), etc. These are needed in Singapore and I always remind my students to aspire to become Islamic scholars, instead of just aiming to become an ustaz or ustazah (Islamic teachers). They need to be better than their teachers of today”*.

35. On the one hand, while many emphasised the need for future asatizah to continue strengthening their core function in providing religious guidance and teaching, the COFA engagement exercise also highlighted the need for some future asatizah to be equipped with relevant skills, competencies and knowledge related to other fields, which are important for asatizah to be satisfactorily equipped to perform complementary functions in the provision of religious guidance related to areas such as social work, finance, and science and technology for the future.

36. Mastery of these skills, competencies and knowledge in the core religious sector for all asatizah and in the adjacent sector for some asatizah will complement another common theme derived from the COFA engagement, which is the need for asatizah to aspire and continually strive for excellence not just in the core religious sector, but in the adjacent sectors. In short, for asatizah to strive to do the best in whatever they choose to do, with a continual and sustainable growth mindset.

37. In this regard, there were calls to clearly identify potential areas of contribution for asatizah in the socio-religious and adjacent fields. As of today, there is already a portion of registered asatizah who are serving in the non-religious fields, some of which are located within the adjacent sectors such as education, public service, health, business and research. Considering the needs of the ageing population and growing needs for socio-religious related functions in the social service sector, participants suggested for a more targeted approach where some future asatizah can be groomed to undertake specific roles in the social service sector to serve as socio-religious functionaries and allied religious professionals in palliative care, end-of-life and bereavement management, gerontology, special needs education, pastoral care, and counselling.

38. A summary of the sectors where future asatizah could potentially contribute to is detailed in the following diagram:

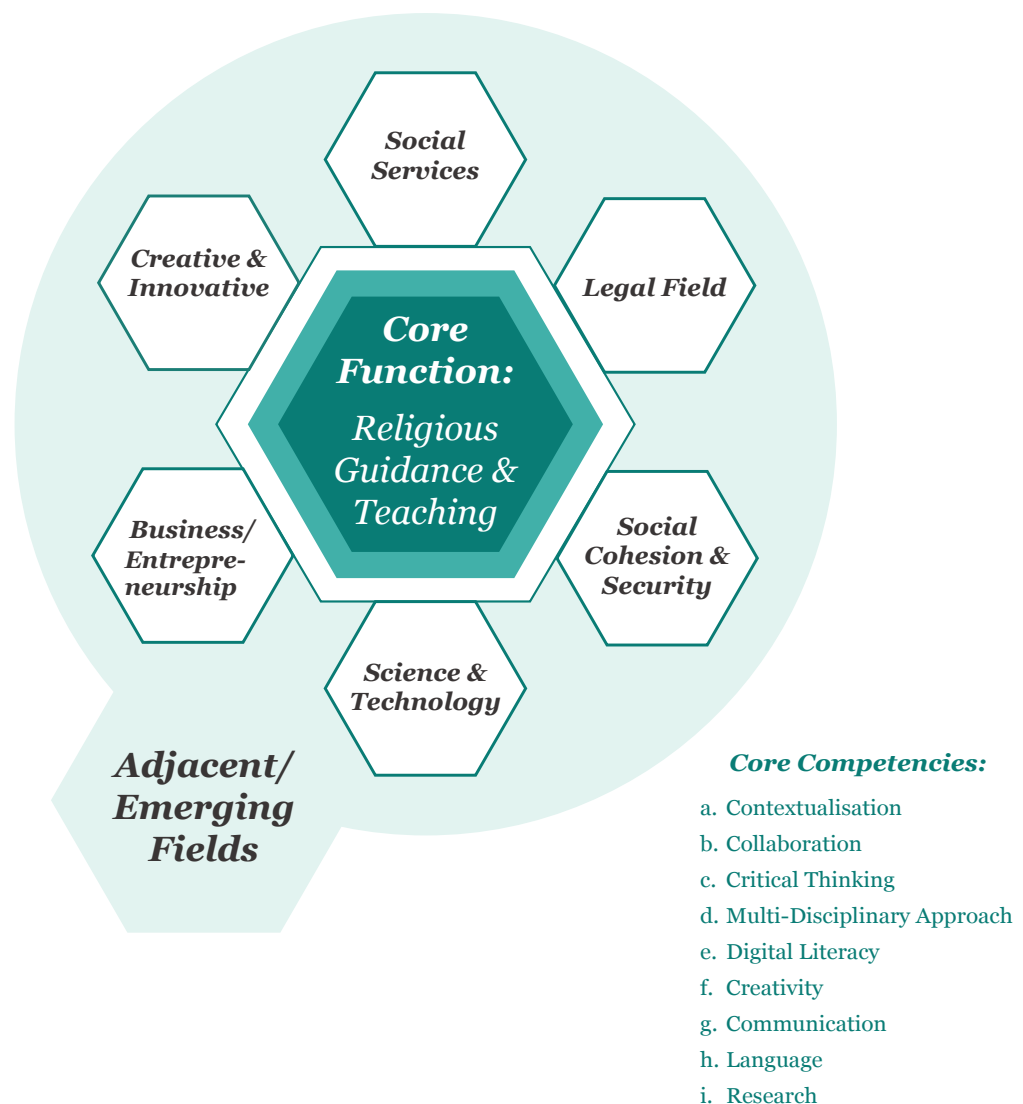


Diagram 4: Conceptual Representation of the Core and Potential Adjacent Sectors for Future Asatizah

39. In addition to other job-specific skills, COFA participants also talked at length about the core competencies required of future asatizah to function effectively:

- a) Provision of religious and spiritual guidance towards a contextualised understanding of Islam, and using appropriate learning approaches
- b) Collaborative, critical thinking and multi-disciplinary thinking
- c) Digital literacy, creativity and communication
- d) Language mastery and strong research skills

STRATEGIC INTERVENTIONS AT THE INDIVIDUAL, INSTITUTIONAL AND SECTORAL LEVELS

40. Having unpacked the community's aspirations and vision of the future asatizah, it is then necessary to identify the most impactful levers of change to achieve this vision, taking into consideration the interactions between the different parts of the religious sector ecosystem comprising three main actors – the individual ustaz/ustazah, the institutions, and the sector. A holistic and systemic approach is recommended to improve the ecosystem. This involves the direct development and upskilling of asatizah as individuals who are the end recipients of the systemic interventions and primary agents within the ecosystem. It also entails strengthening the institutions and related processes and systems which impact and interact with asatizah. Holistically, it comprises the revitalisation of the asatizah sector in which these asatizah and institutions are embedded as actors.

41. From the COFA engagement exercise, the common themes and issues discussed within these three areas are:

a. Individuals - Nurturing Inspiring Religious Graduates

- i. Providing Contextualised Religious Guidance through a Multi-Disciplinary Approach
- ii. Contributing to Nation Building through Adjacent Fields
- iii. Partnering Others to Address Wide Ranging and Cross-Cutting Issues

b. Institutional – Strengthening Institutions

- i. Completing the Local Islamic Education Value Chain
- ii. Revitalising the Madrasah for Future Pathways and Skills

c. Sectoral – Professionalising the Asatizah Sector

- i. Preserving Relevance by Meeting the Community’s Needs
- ii. Focusing on Youths and Inclusive Language
- iii. Enhancing Attractiveness for Potential Talent
- iv. Balancing Supply and Demand

A. INSPIRING INDIVIDUALS

(i) Providing Contextualised Religious Guidance through a Multi-Disciplinary Approach

42. Over the years, expectations on the asatizah fraternity have been shifting in tandem with the evolving needs and aspirations of the Singapore Muslim community. Anticipating the issues and challenges that society will grapple with in the future and the opportunities that society must proactively seize to improve themselves, COFA participants highlighted the importance of equipping future asatizah with broader knowledge and skills to contextualise their religious knowledge, taking into consideration the lived realities of the congregants and laity.

43. In this regard, discourses should move beyond a superficial legalistic and juristic focus on what is halal (the permissible) and haram (the prohibited), along with other rulings such as makruh (discouraged), towards broader and deeper discourses on Islamic principles, purposes and ethical focuses in addressing complex and interconnected issues faced by the community in the modern and contemporary world. Rising expectations for future asatizah as thought leaders are expected to increase the demand for intellectual leadership from the asatizah fraternity. A visionary expression of this was captured in the interview with the President of Muis:

“

Singapore’s future asatizah have the potential to become thought leaders, trail-blazers and trend-setters, who are highly-regarded as authorities of Islamic knowledge, locally and internationally, with future asatizah developing our own Islamic content in Singapore and reviving our strong writing tradition. To support this vision, it is crucial for institutions within the socio-religious ecosystem to be strengthened.”

Hj. Mohd Alami Musa, Muis President

44. There is the emergence of new and more complex issues with the continuance of older and more longstanding issues with rising complexity. These multi-causal issues have a bearing on Singapore Muslims' psyche, considerations and practices. COFA participants and survey respondents pointed to the urgent need for contextualised religious guidance in the future to properly diagnose the problems related to these issues, define them, and propose solutions or the way forward with these issues, with due consideration to the complex trade-offs. The findings from the online survey for example, indicated that the skills to contextualise Islamic knowledge for Singapore was the highest-ranked skill expected of future asatizah as depicted in Figure 1 below.

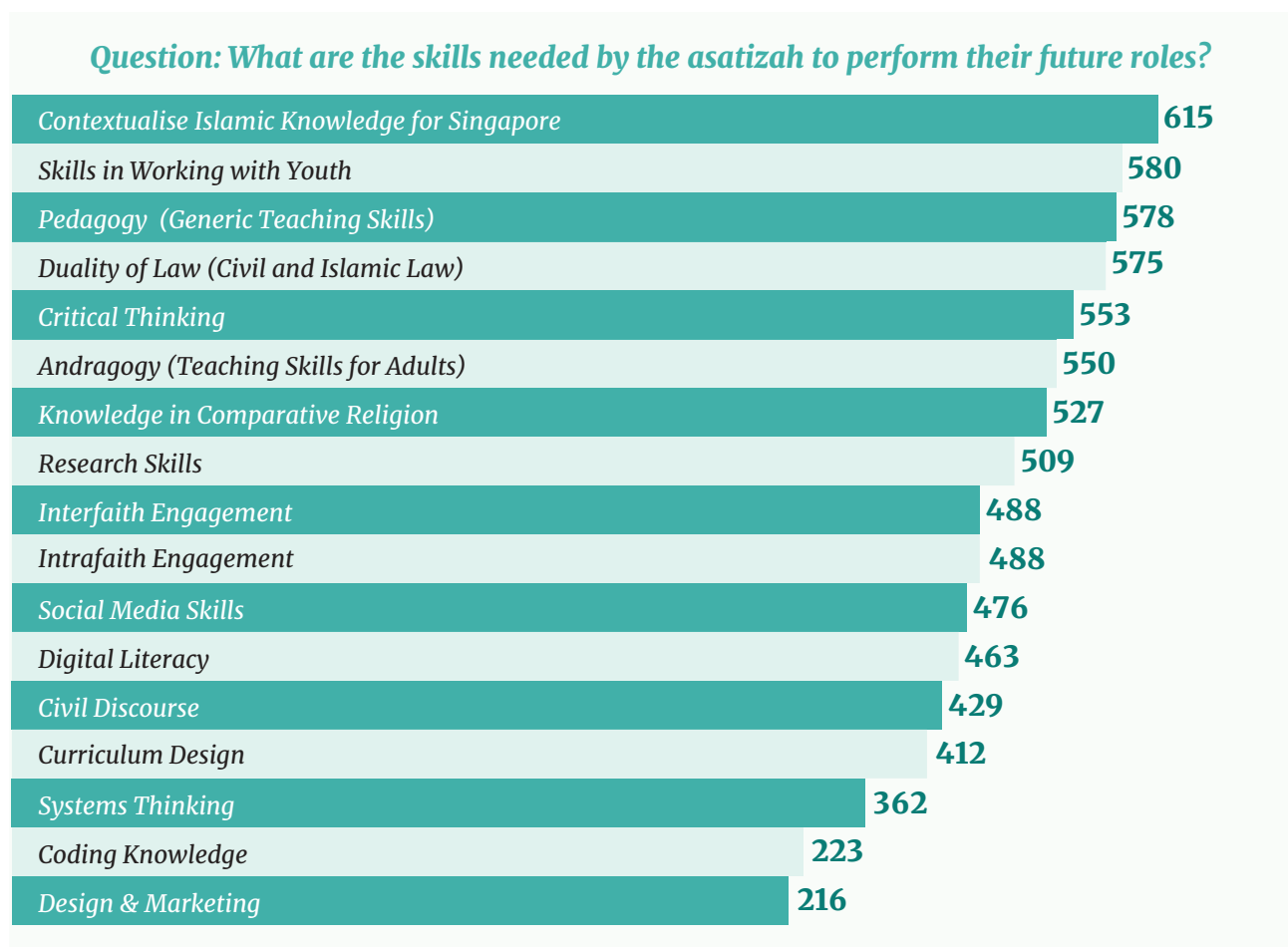


Figure 1: Findings from the Future Asatizah Online Survey on skills required of future asatizah (April to October 2019, n=901)

“

Renew ourselves by engaging critically with our own tradition...and by reconnecting ourselves with the core values of our religion in contextualised ways.”

Mufti, Dr Mohamed Fatris Bakaram

“

Asatizah need to be guided and instilled with the necessary attitudes to appreciate lifelong learning and development.”

Ustazah Sukarti Asmoin, Dean of Islamic Studies, Madrasah Al-Ma'arif Al-Islamiah and member of Asatizah Recognition Board

45. Mirroring the survey finding is the experience shared by young asatizah who participated in the COFA discussions. Some expressed the pressure they face in having to answer a variety of religious questions which stretch across a broad array of disciplines within Islamic tradition and scholarship. While some questions may be seemingly straight-forward as there are established consensuses, others may require deeper and broader knowledge, study and understanding. In fact, even seemingly straight-forward answers might be revealed to be much more complex and multi-faceted upon deeper intellectual scrutiny.

46. Likening their sense of the pressure from the community to being a “walking FAQ resource” on Islamic matters, the group of young asatizah expressed hopes for the community to be more understanding in this regard, given that Islamic graduates traditionally specialise in different areas, are not generalists, and may not be fully-equipped to offer advice on an entire range of issues facing the community. Undeniably, a multi-disciplinary form of training is required of future asatizah, and this must be designed and incorporated into the educational experience of future asatizah.

“

My hope is that we can produce graduates who are multi-disciplinary; meaning they are trained in the Islamic sciences and also have qualifications in the contemporary fields (such as) economics, engineering, data science, medicine, etc. Similar to the great ulama of yesteryears such as Ibn Khaldun, Ibn Sina, et.al. In doing so, we produce asatizah who have a wider perspective on things, greater skill sets to address issues facing the community, as well as create more career pathways for our madrasah graduates.”

39-year-old male survey respondent

47. Additionally, religious expertise is considered as an important defence against extremist, absolutist and radical ideologies which are promulgated via avenues such as social media. This has placed a much higher expectation on current and future religious leaders to counter and correct these misconceptions and collectively preserve the stability and peace in Singapore.

48. In a more open and interconnected world, our socio-religious life will become further exposed to foreign influences, ideas and orientations. In such an environment, the authority and credibility of religious leaders need to be earned through the provision of competent, relevant and effective guidance on the issues and challenges encountered by the Muslim community.

It is therefore imperative for future *asatizah* to enhance their credibility and bolster their authority as respected religious leaders and as local sources of reference on matters relating to the practice of Islam in Singapore. In this regard, future *asatizah* need to be able to interpret the principles, values and doctrines of Islam in the context of our unique local environment, in particular, our multi-religious society operating under a secular mode of governance. Singapore has an advanced economy, and continues to pursue cutting-edge technological and financial developments. In this context, the Singapore Muslim community will continue to encounter new and unique challenges in their practice of Islam in their lives.

49. To provide effective and relevant guidance, future *asatizah* should acquire the ability to interpret the sacred sources of Islam and apply the methodologies in classical Islam in the Singapore context. This process of contextualisation requires a rethinking of the relevant approaches and methodologies in understanding the classical heritage, not as an end in and of itself, but as a set of foundations that can be expanded, harnessed and developed in guiding the Singapore Muslim community. More specifically, the unique context of Singapore presents *asatizah* with two key priorities in the present and future.

- (a) First is to offer a fresh theological reading that recognises the interreligious culture and heritage of Singapore, encourages peaceful co-existence and strengthens social cohesion. This is critical because a non-contextual theology may, over time, plant the seeds, and perpetuate notions, of religious and cultural superiority between communities which is inimical to good and peaceful relations. In fact, such ideas have been appropriated to the extreme by radical and terrorist groups to preach enmity and hatred on the basis of one's creed and religion. The teaching of theology should therefore be both contextual and progressive, in that it should always be sensitive to contemporary and future challenges and seek to respond to them in robust and convincing ways. To do this, future *asatizah* should be equipped with a good sociological understanding of the make-up of our social fabric and its diversity. Against this backdrop, theology becomes a very potent tool to strengthen understanding and cooperation between communities as we see diversity not as a threat but as a sign of God's greatness and power. The role of religious leadership here is to find ways to make diversity work for us and not against us.

(b) Second is to offer a progressive and relevant understanding and interpretation of Islam, its laws and practices in the context of a unique socio-political environment such as Singapore. In this regard, the teaching of Islam should not create inner conflict and discomfort in Muslims because they live in a secular state, but instead offer them courage and confidence to live and contribute to nation building as full citizens. Future asatizah can draw on the *maqasid* approach (higher objectives of Muslim law) to develop new and fresh understanding of the place and role of Muslims in a socio-political context which is not as common in Muslim history and tradition where Muslims were often the dominant majority, and subsequently guide the Muslim community based on these interpretations. The works and accomplishments of the Fatwa Committee in this regard are instructive. As such, future asatizah should be more attuned to the workings and decisions of the Fatwa Committee to familiarise themselves with new approaches and methods in interpreting Muslim law and in exercising *ijtihad* (independent legal reasoning). Indeed, *ijtihad* as a noble and novel way of coming up with new and/or updated guidance and solutions in new contexts will become increasingly important in the future, and asatizah should be at the forefront of this enterprise whilst remaining guided by the principles, values and traditions of Islam.

(ii) Partnering Others to Address Wide Ranging and Cross-Cutting Issues

50. There is also the recognition that asatizah cannot function alone to contribute to the understanding of the range of emerging issues. Such issues require broader and deeper knowledge to diagnose and define related problems, as well as to offer solutions that require complex trade-offs. In the short term, it will be necessary for asatizah to partner with intellectuals, intelligentsias, specialists, experts, thought leaders and professionals from the adjacent sectors, to help the community resolve new and emerging issues while continually addressing longstanding problems. This was repeated at several COFA discussions with voluntary welfare organisations, the Islamic Education Centers and Providers (IECPs), mosques, madrasahs, professionals, and young adults.

51. The hope for future asatizah to function as discourse leaders who proactively partner both the public and relevant intellectuals, intelligentsias, specialists, experts, thought leaders and professionals in addressing contemporary issues was a theme that was discussed frequently at the COFA engagements.

As expressed by a 50-year-old member of the public, “future *asatizah* should be able to relate to the community beyond the basic religious teachings (and be) able to engage professionals and the community at large in discussing current affairs”. To function as discourse leaders, wide and deep reading needs to be embraced fully by future *asatizah*. Intellectual

discourse leadership cannot happen if the reading, thinking and discursive habits are not inculcated. As future discourse leaders, *asatizah* need to be well-informed of the multi-faceted considerations of the phenomenon in question and be confident to engage with a range of stakeholders.

52. There are also suggestions that extending relief and support to those who are suffering physically, mentally, spiritually or emotionally is also a role of the *asatizah*. As observed by a member of the social service sector, some clients expressly requested for counsellors with religious training to help address their concerns over socio-religious matters. Some participants also appealed for future *asatizah* to consider modern bodies of research, knowledge, skills and competencies in the provision of religious guidance to effectively support individuals with personal, familial, relationship, mental or physical health problems.

53. For example, in the treatment of mental health problems, *asatizah* who attempt to intervene in any way, whether they were approached to do so or otherwise, would need to collaborate with mental health professionals and refer to contemporary and scientifically validated approaches to mental health treatment, while bearing in mind the complex discourses on mental health from philosophy, social sciences and the broader humanities which touch on issues such as ethics and the

“

*An **asatizah** community that emphasises academic awareness and research, promoting questions and not shying away from them. Lessons based on proper cross-referenced research...instead of just one book.”*

29-year-old professional

“

*Future **asatizah** should also be adept at recognising the issues which may not be amenable to their expertise, skills and competencies, and to defer such issues to the relevant experts, partners or professionals, while working collaboratively with them where appropriate.”*

38-year-old activist

responsibility of wider society for mental health issues. The development of expertise in an area such as the socio-religious contribution to mental health however, will require a dedicated number of years for relevant skills upgrading and certification in order to fulfil these extended functions in the social service sector.

(iii) Contributing to Nation Building through Adjacent Fields

54. Expanding the asatizah connection to the adjacent fields was a growing aspiration for asatizah to contribute more towards nation-building in Singapore. There was a strong sentiment for future asatizah to be motivated to serve humanity in general and contribute beyond the Muslim community, both locally and globally. This is encapsulated by the aspiration for future asatizah to serve as “(v)isionary religious leaders who are driven by humanitarian goals” (55 year-old, male, non-asatizah).

55. Our asatizahs’ strength in the Arabic language and familiarity with the Middle Eastern and the Malay-Indonesian cultures also put them in a good position to venture into businesses that are connected to the Arabic and Malay speaking parts of the world. They could also effectively value-add to Singapore’s

“

People have their own strengths and niches, not everyone is eloquent in speech and can conduct (religious) classes. Some gain knowledge and can go into translation of books and filmmaking. As long as it is within shari’ah boundaries, it is okay.”

Ustazah Farhana Munshi

leisure and medical tourism industries serving clientele from the Malay-Indonesian world, the Middle East and North Africa. This would help contribute to Singapore’s relationships with these areas of the world through asatizah’s cross-cultural and linguistic abilities, effectively positioning Singapore in a more advantageous vantage point and standing in the global arena.

B. STRONGER INSTITUTIONS

(i) Completing the Local Islamic Education Value Chain

56. The aspiration for a vibrant socio-religious sector requires strengthening of the educational and career pathways for individuals as well as offerings from Islamic learning institutions. At present, the developmental experience of an ustaz or ustazah typically involves attending a local full-time madrasah for twelve years followed by a four-year degree programme in an Islamic university overseas.

57. The community views the establishment of an institute of higher learning (IHL) as an initiative that is long “overdue”. From the online survey, 92% of the 901 respondents

indicated support for a local IHL that offers Islamic studies at the undergraduate and/or postgraduate levels. This was further corroborated by the street survey where 97% of the 505 respondents expressed similar support.

58. Senior asatizah expressed aspirations for an Islamic IHL that is credible and well recognised internationally at the COFA round table in March 2019. Echoing this sentiment, a 42-year-old female respondent stated, *“Let’s hope for the Singapore Islamic College to be prestigious and well-regarded”*.

“

The Muslim community needs systematic leadership and guidance on the true teachings of Islam, and there needs to be a younger generation to succeed the current asatizah. I hope the college will teach about socio-political and geo-political issues as well. We, as a community, need to keep up with the times, and I hope the college will be a place where we can nurture future leaders to take up the mantle and pave the way for the community, insha-Allah.”

29-year-old female survey respondent

59. Although there is strong consensus for the set-up of a local Islamic IHL, it is pertinent to consider the concerns of the minority. For example, a 24-year-old female respondent observed, *“the term Islamic college itself is ironically making Islamic knowledge disparate from ‘secular’ knowledge, but knowledge for Muslims should be holistic. There shouldn’t be such a distinction and having a college adds to the distinction”*. Future asatizah who will be able to model holistic learning and lead discourses effectively, in collaboration with experts from other fields may be the solution. This however, will require time and a robust curriculum supported by an inclusive and integrated learning philosophy.

(ii) Revitalising the Madrasah for Future Pathways and Skills

60. The completion of the educational value chain with an Islamic IHL must go in tandem with efforts to strengthen the learning and development experiences in the madrasah. As observed by a 40 year-old mother, *“I have children who attend full-time local madrasah. I am happy that Singapore madrasahs today have undergone numerous changes and are given uplifting support and recognition. However, there is still much more that can be done”*.

61. The facilitation of students' growth, development and a sense of responsibility towards others will continue as an underlying philosophy for the local madrasahs. The aspiration for moral and academic excellence is expected to grow, parallel to the expectation for future religious leadership to steer the course and propose possible answers to the emerging religious queries. COFA believes that the madrasah is a resilient institution and is ever-ready to embrace change and shifting expectations to produce future-ready graduates. The visionary leadership from madrasah leaders targeting the strengthening of the curriculum and the creation of pathways had started way back in the 1960s and this trend is expected to continue.

62. It is undeniable that madrasahs have been charting the course to prepare graduates for success. Beneficiaries of the system and close observers will be able to account for the positive changes in the past few decades. COFA participants however, alluded to the need to review the learning experiences in the madrasahs. For example, some highlighted that rote learning needs to be replaced with more advanced pedagogies that will provide a more holistic learning experience where both knowledge and skills can be acquired at the same time, while constantly striving for higher order thinking skills.

63. Beyond the need to strengthen the learning experiences in the classrooms, COFA participants underscored the need to remove the dichotomous perception of the 'sacred' from the 'secular'. They perceived this as a major stumbling block in the curriculum design and learning philosophy of madrasahs. Participants highlighted that pursuing knowledge, including mathematics and science, is an activity that is enjoined by the religion. In addition to this, contrary to the belief that the study of science is antithetical to the study of religion, scientific discoveries actually pave the way for students to marvel at the mysteries in this world and get closer to the Creator.

64. What success means and looks like for future religious graduates will need to be unpacked further. The ideal qualities and competencies required of future graduates and how those are to be achieved, will need to be articulated with greater clarity. Policies and programmes that are informed by the desired outcomes of madrasah education will need to be formulated and implemented with strong

“

I believe we must work more on strengthening the current madrasah practices, teaching pedagogies and syllabus, so that we have a more robust system that equips the students with relevant knowledge that they need in facing future challenges.”

44-year-old female survey respondent

commitment and conviction, sound public and educational policy thinking with smooth operationalisation, and integrated and scaffolded public engagement and communication.

65. Future *asatizah* will require strong knowledge in Islamic studies and this will continue to remain as the fundamental responsibility of the *madrasahs*. At the same time, students will need to be equipped with skills of the future to serve effectively and thrive. The study conducted by Muis on graduates' employment choices sheds light on some strengths and gaps in the existing skill sets of the graduates from the employers' point of view. While employers appreciate their religious graduate staff's strong foundation in Islamic knowledge, they had observed gaps in the following skill sets:

- a) Tech Savviness and Modern Teaching Methods
- b) Ability to Empathise and Contextualise
- c) Ability to Govern and Manage

66. The addition of new skills or subjects into the curriculum was viewed with apprehension by some members of the public and the *asatizah* fraternity who were concerned over the possible "dilution" of the existing curriculum. This however, need not necessarily be the case, and the learning experience of students should not be regarded as a zero-sum game where the new replaces the 'old'. Creative use of technology, time and appropriate pedagogies may pave the way for the nurturing of individuals who are dynamic, steeped in the Islamic sciences, equipped with multi-disciplinary lenses and collaborative skills to address the future and current longstanding socio-religious matters which are complex and multi-causal. This is in tandem with the views of the survey respondents, where the majority (97%) indicated that *asatizah* should develop a wider range of skills for the future.

97% agreed that future *asatizah* should develop a wider range of skills

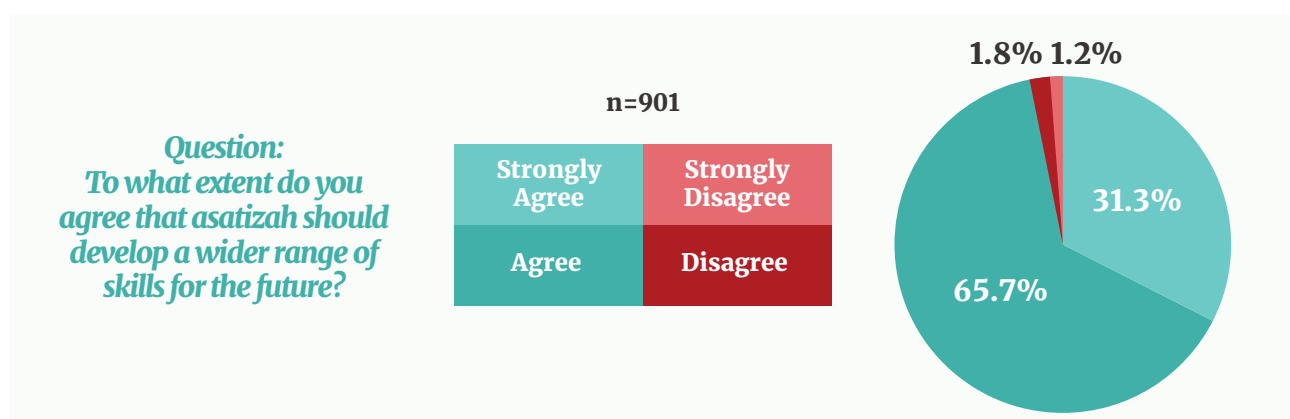


Figure 2: Findings from the Future *Asatizah* Online Survey on the development of a wider range of skills for future *asatizah* (April to October 2019, n=901)

67. The vision of future *asatizah* needs to be aligned with the desired learning outcomes for madrasah graduates. This is a complex endeavour that will require substantive and collaborative efforts by the six full-time madrasahs to address existing gaps and chart appropriate strategies for the future. Their success will be dependent on support from partners and the community. The first important step is the acknowledgement that more can be done and should be done. The second major step is to bring together the right people to review and identify ways to reinvigorate the madrasah education system to create conditions necessary for the flowering of wisdom and to produce graduates of excellence of the future, who exhibit care, compassion and concern for others.



*It's a tough act for the *asatizah* community... The bigger concern is, are our madrasahs equipped with the pedagogy and curriculum developers to design such an educational programme relevant for a decade, while not being overly pressured to meet passing requirements plus expectations (or misexpectations of other stakeholders - especially parents)?...It's a tall order."*

38-year-old male survey respondent

C. VIBRANT AND PROFESSIONALISED SECTOR

68. The COFA discussions, surveys and interviews all point to the aspiration for a more vibrant socio-religious sector which supports a lively Islamic learning environment that embraces inclusivity amidst diversity, and offers attractive employment and meaningful growth opportunities for individuals who strive for excellence in carrying the message of Islam. Professionalising the *asatizah* sector is hence fundamental.⁸

(i) Preserving Relevance by Meeting the Community's Needs

69. Based on the street survey, it was gathered that the Singapore Muslim community relies on *asatizah* in four key areas: (a) access to knowledge on Islam; (b) practical daily concerns such as issues on permissibility; (c) socio-emotional needs including relationship counselling and spiritual upliftment; and (d) facilitation of rituals at different life-stages.

70. Sector relevance in this report refers to the ability to meet the needs of the Singapore Muslim community. For the question, "What are your hopes and aspirations for the future *asatizah*?" one survey respondent put it simply, "*just like any other graduates in any other field, to ensure that they (future *asatizah*) are relevant to their stakeholders*" (44-year-old non-*asatizah*).

71. There is strong concurrence for *asatizah* to continue providing core religious teaching and guidance. 89% of 505 respondents from the street survey indicated agreement to the question, “Do you agree that providing religious guidance and teaching should be the core role of future *asatizah*?” Similarly, for the open-ended questions of the online survey, the majority of respondents underscored the need for religious guidance in the future.

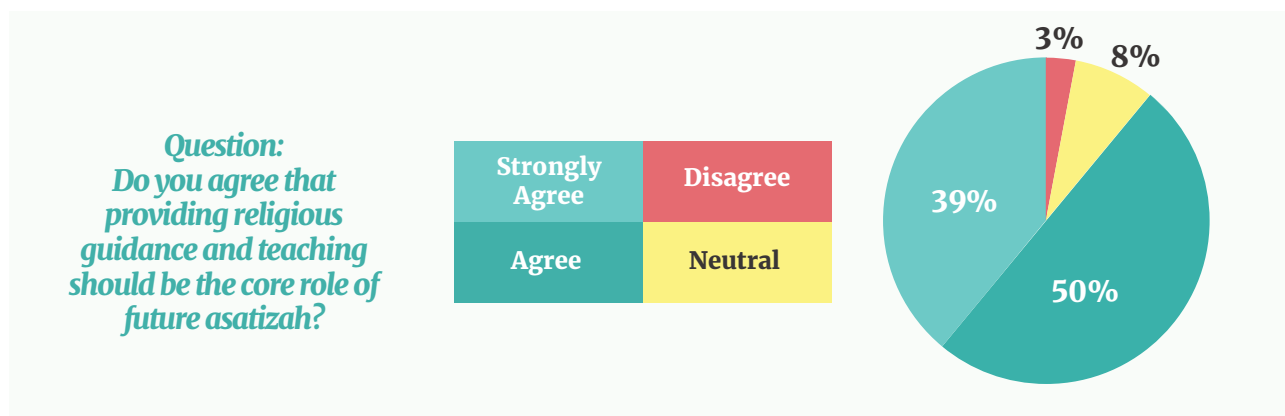


Figure 3: Findings from the street survey on the core function of future *asatizah* (n=505)

72. As observed by a 23-year-old female Islamic graduate, it is important for future *asatizah* to “understand the religious struggles that (the community) faces in life”. The demand for more outreach, relatability and dynamic discourse was a recurrent theme expressed in a variety of forms during the COFA discussions and the online survey by members of the public. To be able to serve the Muslim community well, it is important for future *asatizah* to first appreciate the nuanced and multi-faceted needs of different stakeholders. Social work experts observed that it may be necessary for all future *asatizah* to be equipped with basic counselling skills to be able to serve their respective stakeholders facing common or unique issues at the different life stages – childhood, adolescence, adulthood, seniorhood – well. This however, does not mean that *asatizah* with only basic counselling skills qualify to and are able to act as certified, professional and accredited counsellors.

73. Gaps in the provision of Islamic education should remain as the priority since this is where the needs of the community continue to persist. At the focus group discussion with mosque leaders and volunteers, the needs of the elderly, youths, minority, vulnerable populations, families, new Muslims, and those with special needs were explored and discussed in detail.

74. At the far end of the spectrum are the neglected segments of the community who do not have the time, health, resources, support, inclination or motivation to attend religious classes. At the other end of the spectrum are those who possess

a strong foundation of Islam and have moved beyond rituals and fixation with outwards markers and forms of religiosity such as exclusivist identity markers. This group is interested in more intellectual, ethical and moral discussions framed along issues such as socio-historical developments, the concept that religion and religiosity do not exist in a vacuum (i.e. are influenced by many factors such as politics, socio-historical trajectories, economy and so on), and the perspectives of different *mazahib* (schools of thought) or orientations in Islam.

75. In general, the preservation of the sector's relevance is connected to the general sense of urgency to identify the gaps in current local *asatizah* service offerings, and to catch-up with the advancements observed of other industries and religious communities.

(ii) Focusing on Youths and Inclusive Language

76. COFA participants from all the engagement platforms indicate that the youth require special attention from future *asatizah*.⁹ The youth population is a diverse category. According to Ustazah Farhana Munshi, there are those who are experiencing a “*crisis in aqidah (belief)*” where their limited understanding of Islam puts them in a difficult position to reconcile what they are seeing in the world and what they have learnt in the weekend madrasah. This segment requires and appreciates intellectual mentorships. There are others who are keen to hone their reading and understanding of the Holy Quran. There are also those who need help to refine and develop mindfulness or concentration in their daily prayers. The needs of Muslim youths who had never attended any structured Islamic education programme throughout their childhood and adolescence were also raised as a concern. Elaborating on this aspect, a 27-year old female survey respondent commented, “*It is necessary that our asatizah keep up with current events in order to facilitate or discuss with younger audiences, especially millennials, as they're exposed to various media platforms and content at this day and age*”.

77. COFA participants expressed that it is critical for future *asatizah* to be inclusive especially in their choice of language so that segments of the Singapore Muslim community

do not feel excluded. Fundamentally, it is essential for *asatizah* to strive to remain relevant amidst rapid advancements in technology, the reduction of barriers in information flow, the democratisation



There (is a) lack of mosques which support Indian speaking congregants... Indian Muslim children also find it difficult to get madrasah education.

President of an Indian Muslim organisation

of knowledge¹⁰, the increase and decrease on the reliance on traditional authority among a more educated populace, charismatic or influential asatizah from other countries with different contexts, and many other local and global trends impacting the Singapore Muslim community.

“

I hope that there will be more asatizah teaching...Ulum al Quran/Sirah/Tasawwuf in different languages be it in Tamil, English and Chinese...and more [Friday] sermons in different languages (should be provided) so more converts and foreigners can benefit from them...A lot of converts do not know who the Islamic scholars in Singapore are, please get these scholars to reach out to the new Muslims to share their fields of knowledge...Encourage madrasahs to introduce Mandarin, Tamil, Korean, Japanese or other languages so these future asatizah are ready to reach out to non-Malay speaking audiences.”

47-year-old Chinese ustazah

(iii) Enhancing Sector Attractiveness for Potential Talent

78. COFA participants pointed out the importance of enhancing the attractiveness of the socio-religious sector in order to secure adequate quality talent. Through this, both the immediate and long-term needs of the Singapore Muslim community would be better met. While the asatizah in Singapore are held in high esteem as guides in the socio-religious lives of Singapore Muslims, there is the aspiration for future asatizah to move towards the status of well-respected professionals who possess a high moral standing, strong academic credentials and earn a competitive income comparable to counterparts offering similar services.

Question: Think about the next generation in the future, what qualifications should the future asatizah possess to serve them well?

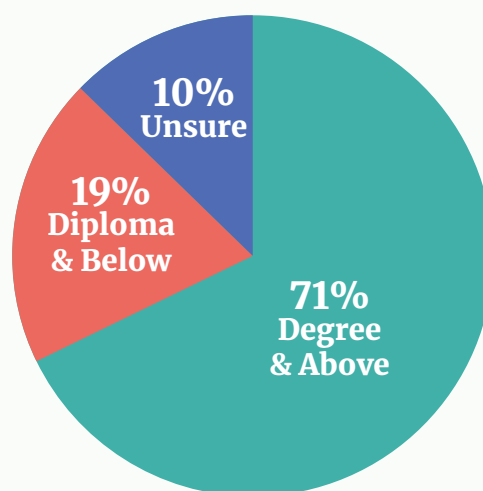


Figure 4: Findings from the Future Asatizah Online Survey on expected qualifications of future asatizah (April to October 2019, n=901)

79. Enhancing the career prospects of future *asatizah* was discussed extensively during the COFA discussions. Aspirations for better pay was also an area of concern reiterated on several occasions. As underscored succinctly by a 20-year-old Polytechnic student in response to the survey question, “What are your hopes for the future *asatizah*?”, she expressed hopes “*for future asatizah to have a wider job scope and more attractive pay*”.

80. The provision of fair remuneration for future *asatizah* is a critical endeavour as part of the efforts to professionalise the sector. In the current situation with uncompetitive salaries, talent leakage is an unfortunate phenomenon. Salaries that commensurate with the appropriate skills sets and benchmarked against similar fields will be able to remediate the situation and revitalise the sector. Most immediately, key Muslim institutions such as mosques and madrasahs will benefit from the hiring of good talents. A strong talent pipeline in turn could potentially lead to better services and programmes for the Singapore Muslim community – both in the shorter and longer terms.

81. While centralised coordinated efforts can be undertaken to improve the compensation and benefit schemes for full-time and part-time positions in the key Islamic institutions, there were also calls for the review of the honorarium rates of those who are providing freelancing services in the Islamic religious sector’s gig economy. Potentially, such a review may be undertaken organically by the civic community or the *asatizah* fraternity.

82. To ensure appropriate recognition of the value of *asatizah*’s services and the related community resourcing, there is a need for the community and sector to value the services rendered by *asatizah* equitably. Eventually, this would lead to the right levels of compensation for *asatizah* services.

(iv) Balancing Supply and Demand

83. There is also the need to find the optimal point of supply and demand to improve and sustain the sector’s attractiveness. Interestingly, there is the common perception of an oversupply of *asatizah* among those who are currently serving in the sector. On the contrary, more than 68% of the street survey respondents indicated that there is “insufficient *asatizah* today in the religious sector in institutions like mosques, madrasahs, the ROMM, the Syariah Court, Muis and others”. This demand from the community needs to be examined more carefully and the creation of positions where necessary could be explored further.

FROM ISSUES TO ACTION

84. Inputs from the engagements and feedback channels were synthesised with the aim of developing actionable recommendations. Where relevant, certain concerns highlighted were prioritised. Thereafter, preliminary strategies to address the issues were discussed at COFA town hall sessions. The key ideas were also shared with the general public via media reports of these events. The recommendations were refined through the amalgamation, analysis, synthesis and incorporation of responses and suggestions from partners and stakeholders. Details are presented in the next chapter.





CHAPTER 4

**KEY THRUSTS &
RECOMMENDATIONS**

SECTORAL, INSTITUTIONAL AND INDIVIDUAL STRATEGIES

85. Considering the Singapore Muslim community's and asatizah's expectations and aspirations, COFA puts forth ten (10) recommendations from three (3) key thrusts – sectoral, institutional and individual, to achieve the vision of the future asatizah. Collectively, the recommendations aim to strengthen the development of the asatizah workforce and improve the sector's attractiveness and vibrancy.

THRUST 1: PROFESSIONALISING THE ASATIZAH SECTOR

86. Fundamentally, it is important to improve the attractiveness of the core religious sector, and to create specialisations, pathways and opportunities to meet the range of expectations for the future. Insights from the Study on Employment Choices of Religious Graduates (SECRG) show that limited career opportunities, progression and pathways were among the key issues impacting attractiveness of the religious sector.¹¹ Current systemic conditions had induced a segment of the religious graduates to prefer jobs outside of the socio-religious sector and others do so while continuing to teach religion on a part-time basis. According to the religious graduates, displacement to the non-religious sector is largely due to the lack of job diversity in the core religious sector which contrasts starkly to the array of opportunities available outside the socio-religious sector. Currently, teaching is the predominant job in the sector, as evident from the large proportion of educators who make up close to two-thirds of the total asatizah population. Employers too expressed similar concerns on the need to provide more diversified, dynamic and well-defined career pathways, particularly for the full-time asatizah.

87. A more educated populace, heightening religiosity and the increasing expectations and opportunities for future asatizah all point towards the need for the revitalisation of the asatizah sector. Sector revitalisation through the human resource planning lens offers the potential for human capital optimisation. Creating an environment where future asatizah feel well-regarded, connected and motivated to contribute well and thrive in their respective areas of expertise is the way forward. COFA envisions a future where the fraternity will be able to function and lead nimbly and dynamically, harnessing their individual and collective expertise, networks and wisdom. To this end, COFA puts forth four recommendations for systemic enhancements at the sectoral level.

Recommendation 1: Develop a structured talent management programme focused on grooming future asatizah to fill different leadership positions in the sector, including those who will helm apex roles in key religious institutions.

88. Asatizah in apex public institutions like Muis, the Syariah Court and the Registry of Muslim Marriages have played a significant role in positively shaping the socio-religious life of Muslims in Singapore through religious content development, policy formulation and administration of the statutory provisions within the Administration of Muslim Law Act (AMLA). Likewise, the core leadership that emanates from mosques, madrasahs and other Muslim organisations provide religious guidance and direction to their respective stakeholders. The community's ability to benefit from these asatizah leaders today is a result of past efforts in developing an integrated talent pipeline from the madrasahs to tertiary institutions, and subsequently, efforts in capacity building of the asatizah workforce.

89. As mentioned earlier, the community expects future asatizah to function as discourse leaders. There is also the aspiration for the development of specialists in various domains. Taken together, these two aspirations point to the community's recognition that the issues of tomorrow are expected to be highly complex in nature, demanding for discourse leadership that is informed by expertise in several domains, steeped in socio-historical understanding and connected to the current lived realities of the Singapore Muslim community.

90. Within this context, a leadership approach that allows different individuals to contribute fully based on their unique strengths and talents is of paramount importance. Indeed, the discourse leadership that leverages the combination of skills, experience, wisdom and knowledge of different individuals will unite the community and boost the spirit of togetherness in actions or decisions undertaken for the benefit of the Singapore Muslim community and the larger Singapore society. In the future, phenomena with socio-religious considerations and implications are also expected to emerge and evolve at a faster rate, demanding for improvements in the timeliness of the review and implementation of *fatwas* (legal rulings) and *irsyads* (religious guidance).

91. Asatizah leadership development cannot be left to chance and has to be managed in an intentional, structured and comprehensive manner so that key religious positions are helmed by the best talents who will receive the necessary training and expertise development in order to excel in

their respective roles. In several COFA engagements, participants suggested reviewing and adopting best practices in talent management from the public or private sectors. This will enable the community to systematically attract, develop and retain individuals with calibre and potential. Asatizah under this talent programme could be groomed to fill key roles within the sector such as religious scholars and thought leaders, as well as organisational leaders in key Muslim institutions in Singapore.

“

My aspirations for the future asatizah... To live and role-model the Islamic way of life - upholding the Qur'an and Sunnah to positively impact everyone they interact with (from the cleaner on the street, to the student at the corridor, to the high ambassador from a foreign land)... To be competent, constantly upgrading and equipped with the pedagogical know-how to meet the needs of future generations.”

36-year-old female survey respondent

92. In a COFA session with other faith leaders, some highlighted their difficulty to attract talent into their leadership ranks, especially from the younger generation. Others who are reliant on foreign talent are faced with some tension in handling cultural differences between the local and foreign priests. The need for faith scholars who are steeped in religious knowledge and equipped with strong communication skills was also emphasised.

93. Hence, COFA recommends the development of a structured talent management programme focused on grooming future asatizah to fill different leadership positions in the sector, including those who will helm apex roles in key religious institutions. Scholarships could be awarded under this scheme to identify and develop such individuals. Structured learning roadmaps could be produced to provide aspiring and existing asatizah with clear guidelines and milestones on how they could develop and improve their skills and knowledge. The learning roadmaps could also be aligned to a corresponding database of development programmes. Milestone leadership courses and developmental opportunities should also be embedded into the talent management programme to build the competencies required for the various positions. Besides formal training courses, interventions may also include e-learning, study trips, attachments and job rotations. In relation to these potential opportunities for future asatizah, the former Mufti, Shaikh Syed Isa Semait observed and advised:

“Today, there are many opportunities and support given to asatizah. Asatizah should be grateful and seize these opportunities to learn as much as possible”.

Recommendation 2: Develop a skills framework (that includes a career map and competency framework) for future asatizah that is anchored on roles in the core religious sector with access to pathways to adjacent sectors.

94. In many sectors within Singapore's workforce (e.g. social service, early childhood development and education, financial services, infocomm technology), the skills framework is an integral component of the respective Industry Transformation Maps. The skills framework is a useful guide for employees, employers and training providers as it outlines the core and functional skills for one to effectively perform the different job roles specified in the career map. This document also serves as a frame of reference for supervisors in managing the performance and developing the careers of their staff. It will also guide institutions in the development of their hiring and training policies.

95. **COFA recommends the development of a skills framework for the asatizah sector that is anchored on roles in the core religious sector with access to pathways to adjacent sectors.** The skills framework will detail the jobs that future asatizah can perform within the religious sector in Singapore and delineate competencies required for the respective roles. It will also feature a career map that shows how future asatizah can progress in their careers in the core religious sector and potentially cross-over to adjacent sectors based on the experience and skill sets requirements.

96. Such a framework is in line with findings from the COFA engagement with the senior asatizah group who emphasised the importance for future asatizah to embrace lifelong learning and for continuous professional development opportunities to be made available to them. It is only through this reciprocal connection at the systemic and individual level, can future asatizah provide relevant religious guidance and solutions.



(We) need to create the support industries for future asatizah... there is (also) the need for clear pathways and its requirements (i.e. career map) so that asatizah can be more informed in making decisions."

Participant from the
COFA Engagement Exercise

97. The framework could also elaborate on the skills required for leadership roles and specialised functions, aligned to COFA's first recommendation. Collectively, most, if not all jobs within the core religious sector should be covered in the skills framework. This will help determine the relevance and adequacy of services provided by future asatizah at the sectoral level, thus achieving the attractiveness and vibrancy that COFA participants hoped for.

Recommendation 3: Introduce common salary guidelines and improve the compensation and benefits for asatizah in key religious institutions including madrasahs and mosques, in tandem with efforts and opportunities for upskilling.

98. The attractiveness of salaries for some positions in the socio-religious sector was a prominent theme repeatedly surfaced during the COFA discussions and surveys. As pointed out by a 37-year-old ustazah, “*salary should be increased so that more will be motivated to come in*” (i.e join the sector). Echoing this sentiment, another 35-year-old ustazah commented, “*my hope for future asatizah... includes career development and where their salary is matched to their expertise*”.

99. Currently, the institutions within the formal religious sector (e.g. Muis, mosques and madrasahs) operate with different employment schemes. Thus, graduates with similar qualifications will receive varying starting salaries depending on where they are employed. Remunerating asatizah appropriately is important to give due recognition to their knowledge, skills and competencies, and will incentivise continuous self-upgrading, which in turn, will result in higher quality programmes and services for the community. The introduction of a career map and competency framework for the sector has to be accompanied by common salary guidelines. A common salary guideline could also facilitate the movement of talents between different job roles and enhance individuals’ exposure, perspectives and skills.



Asatizah at an Asatizah Recognition Scheme’s (ARS) Code of Ethics briefing in 2017

100. Hence, COFA recommends the introduction of common salary guidelines and the improvement of compensation and benefits for asatizah in key religious institutions including madrasahs and mosques, in tandem with efforts and opportunities for upskilling. This will also be a possible impetus to holistically improve compensation and benefits. The development of salary guidelines benchmarked against relevant sectors will be an important step forward. If the key socio-religious institutions pay competitively, they will be able to attract and retain better talent, ensuring that the sector benefits from the employment of the best talents.

101. While salary is clearly not the prime motivation or consideration for individuals choosing to be asatizah, this is nonetheless an important practical issue to be addressed in order for the sector to retain its fair share of talent. This will also better position the asatizah sector as a professional sector that is valued by society, and where there is a strong emphasis on asatizah professionals as individuals with proper qualifications and access to skills upgrading and professional learning opportunities.

Recommendation 4: Review and revitalise community assets (e.g. MBMF for religious education and wakafs such as Wakaf Ilmu) and engender ground-up community contributions to better support asatizah development.

102. Achieving the long-term COFA vision through the respective strategies will require significant resources. In particular, the projects aimed at establishing new institutions, strengthening existing ones, instituting salary benchmarking exercises and revisions, as well as the expansion of skills upgrading opportunities, are resource intensive. Education and workforce development are long-term investments which must be supported by sustainable funding mechanisms.

103. COFA recognises that the various strategies and initiatives to support the asatizah sector require long-term financial commitments, and as such, generating sustainable resource streams will be critical. Sustainable funding instruments such as endowments are preferred over one-off donations as the principal amount can be preserved over a longer period. This however, requires significantly larger initial start-up costs.

104. Hence, COFA recommends reviewing and revitalising community assets (e.g. Mosque Building and Mendaki Fund (MBMF) for religious education and wakafs such as Wakaf Ilmu) and engendering ground-up community contributions to better support asatizah development. These initiatives require a shift in mindset beyond “hardware” infrastructural investments, towards the funding of quality “software” which includes systems and programmes. While it is critical to fund both these aspects, current inclination gravitates toward the former, as evident from the support for the physical construction and upgrading of mosques and madrasahs. Moving forward, it is imperative for the community to recognise the importance of asatizah development and rally together to increase support for this endeavour in a holistic manner. Channeling community assets towards a corpus fund is a viable solution where returns could be channeled to support the running of major initiatives.

105. Centralised efforts in the provision of funding streams for future asatizah development can be complemented by initiatives driven by local communities, informal groups, organic efforts, individuals and ground-up movements. The spirit of giving and potential contributions from these partners should be harnessed and cultivated.

106. COFA recommends leveraging new and innovative platforms and modalities to encourage community giving, contributions and ownership towards future asatizah development. This can be in the form of fund-raising campaigns, mentor-cum-sponsorship programmes involving philanthropists, and community-based scholarships to support talented asatizah to pursue their interests in the core and adjacent functions.

107. Just as how the present generation has benefited from the foresight and sacrifices of Singapore Muslims of the past through the development of the MBMF, wakafs in Islamic education and the administration of Muslim affairs, it is the *amanah* (i.e. responsibility) of today’s generation to pay it forward to the communities of the future.

THRUST 2: STRENGTHENING INSTITUTIONS

108. The implementation of sustainable structural support is required to achieve far-reaching sector professionalisation. It is essential to strengthen the religious educational institutions, given that the skills and competencies of future asatizah are based on their educational and developmental experiences in the institutions that they interact with. Proactivity is essential for future asatizah to navigate and lead well in the future. They need to stay ahead of the curve so that the well-being of the community is preserved. The vision of the future asatizah can only be achieved through robust institutions. Hence, we need to strengthen existing institutions and establish a new one, which will lead to the future we envision together. Hence, COFA puts forth the following three recommendations at the institutional level.

Recommendation 5: Establish a liaison office for aspiring and current asatizah to discover opportunities and pathways for career and professional development, both in the core religious and adjacent sectors.

109. COFA participants noted that the expectations on future asatizah may seem overwhelming with the conception of the asatizah as “*a superman to save them all*”. This should not be the case. Careful planning that balances centralised coordination and complemented by ground-up initiatives, is a potential solution. What is critical is for the prioritisation of strategic partnerships to be informed by research and data.

110. COFA recommends the establishment of a liaison office for aspiring and current asatizah to discover opportunities and pathways for career and professional development, both in the core religious and adjacent sectors. Most fundamentally, this office may be able to meet the aspiration for the development of specialisations in the core and adjacent functions. A 35-year-old ustazah expressed hopes for future asatizah to develop specialisations based on their respective interests. She acknowledged that the development of expertise requires time. She stated, “*asatizah have to be supported to develop mastery...in their respective field(s) of choice... engagement with the veterans is important for the future, given new challenges*”.

111. Through the development of specialisations, this office may offer the opportunity for asatizah to identify and fill the gaps in the provision of Islamic education and guidance, and meet the community's needs in emerging areas that were discussed in the previous chapter. Serving as a resource hub, the office may offer future asatizah access to curated materials on emerging areas where asatizah can address the diverse and nuanced needs of community stakeholders, and link asatizah to platforms where they may contribute to national and international causes.

112. To this end, exploring partnerships both nationally and internationally to complement their strategic efforts may be necessary. Partnerships with research institutes, universities, governmental and non-governmental organisations are possible options to enhance understanding of phenomena such as the deep and complex structural issues impacting specific segments of the community (e.g. the marginalised poor and those with other disadvantages such as mental or physical concerns). Opportunities for asatizah to collaborate in the research and creative industries in knowledge advancements are also important gaps to be filled.

113. The future asatizah liaison office offers great potential in meeting the community's expectation for future asatizah to serve as dynamic discourse leaders with the confidence and ability to discuss difficult topics (such as changing social and family norms, and mental health issues) and bring the spiritual, emotional and intellectual experiences of the Singapore Muslim community to greater heights.

“

I hope for the future asatizah to be critical thinkers and ready to engage with others (of) different worldviews, (and...) practise and exude adab as they respond or share their thoughts with others who may have different opinions from them.”

30-year-old female survey respondent

Recommendation 6: Enhance career guidance and internship programmes for students in madrasahs to support their holistic development and allow them to make more informed choices in their educational pathways.

114. Significant efforts have been made in strengthening the madrasah sector and raising the professionalism of Singapore's asatizah. Nonetheless, in view of the current economic and employment trends, changing socio-religious landscapes, evolving needs of the community, and growing aspirations among madrasah graduates, a sectoral approach in planning and developing the asatizah manpower is an urgent imperative. This is in view of the need to increase educational quality and standards.

115. Madrasah-led educational innovations related to curriculum design, technological appropriations, pedagogical approaches and holistic student development programmes have been progressing positively. Despite the relatively high curriculum workload, the achievements of the madrasahs in educational performance in the past decade is indeed impressive. The community's faith and expectation that madrasahs will be able to meet the needs of the future and produce graduates of high moral and academic calibre, are high. As the key institutions responsible in nurturing future asatizah, madrasahs will need to review and enhance the learning experiences to match the expected competencies required for them to function effectively in the future.

116. **COFA recommends enhancing career guidance and internship programmes for students in madrasahs to support their holistic development and allow them to make more informed choices in their educational pathways.**

117. COFA notes that there have been many initiatives in the madrasah sector to prepare students for the workforce. Examples include madrasah-based career talks and workshops, the Madrasah Student Seminar, and the MASDAR.¹² In the short term, collaboration with madrasahs to develop a career guidance framework will be a positive step forward. A career guidance framework can be introduced at the primary level, allowing students the opportunity to explore potential career pathways that are well aligned to their respective interests and strengths. Structured internships after post-secondary education may also widen students' perspectives of the working world and develop their soft and interpersonal skills.



Students at the Madrasah Career Seminar organised by Muis in 2018.

118. COFA acknowledges that achieving the desired outcomes will require conversations and collaborative efforts among madrasah leaders and stakeholders to map out the potential educational and career pathways. This may also require the madrasahs to review existing programme offerings and assess their relevance and adequacy in relation to the vision of the future *asatizah*.

“

*My hope is for pathways that will enable and support young *asatizah* in their career development and lifelong learning journey.”*

40-year-old ustaz

“

(There) should (be) a career fair for the Islamic graduates where they could invite potential employers to open up booths to promote their companies. Not only in the religious sector but in other sectors as well”

25-year-old male survey respondent

Recommendation 7: Support the vision for a credible, world-class institute of higher learning offering undergraduate and/or postgraduate programmes in the Islamic religious sciences.

119. As mentioned in the previous chapter, there is the aspiration from the Muslim community for the establishment of a local institute of higher learning (IHL) for Islamic studies. The need to produce religious leaders of tomorrow who are grounded in Islamic knowledge and equipped with a multi-disciplinary lens and contextualisation skills, was expressed by many COFA participants. On an aspirational note, a 35-year-old ustazah stated, that the local Islamic IHL “*would represent the strength (in terms of Islamic knowledge and skills) of the Muslim community here (in Singapore). It can help to balance theoretical knowledge with the local context*”. In a similar vein, a 23-year-old ustazah underscored the importance of critical thinking for the future when she noted, “*Understanding the context and issues of the place that the *asatizah* live in and will serve in the future is important to generate critical thinking of the existing future and religious problems...having Singapore’s very own Islamic college is something that I will support*”.

120. Indeed, the establishment of a local Islamic IHL will be able to complement and complete the local Islamic education system and produce dynamic religious graduates who will function as models for the region and the world. Singapore’s Muslim community and the broader Singapore context provides for a unique case, whereby a Muslim minority can freely practise religion with substantial support in terms of infrastructure and administration. In addition, the composition of the Muslim community itself is

diverse. For example, it is diverse ethnically and in terms of mazhabs, sects and orientations. The unique contexts and facilities provide a conducive environment for the advancement of Islamic knowledge and the development of new contextualised Islamic scholarship.

“

(E)ach country has its own story: history, cultures, society, and political needs. Learning overseas may add more knowledge to our traditional Islamic knowledge, but again, everything should be applied to our context.”

27-year-old ustazah

121. Hence, COFA supports the vision for a credible, world-class institute of higher learning offering undergraduate and/or postgraduate programmes in the Islamic religious sciences. The plan to establish an Islamic IHL was anchored on the vision to train future generations of religious teachers who are anchored in Singapore’s multi-racial, multi-cultural, multi-religious and deeply plural context, and yet remaining rooted to Islamic traditions and ethical principles. This vision is a possible reality and as observed by a 26-year-old ustaz, “Singapore, until very recently had been a centre for dissemination of Islamic knowledge in the Southeast Asian region, thanks to local luminaries such as Sidi Abdul Rashid Al-Linggi and Ustaz Syed Abdillah Aljufri...Additionally, being one of the few nations of the world with an indigenous Muslim minority, we should develop an institution capable of addressing global issues in a world with a relative Muslim minority. With globalisation, boundaries are disappearing, and our intelligentsia should reflect this. We should be able to provide a perspective of the truth that other established Islamic institutions lack, due to our unique circumstances”.

“

We need to develop our own asatizah locally; one who thinks globally and act locally.”

53-year-old ustaz

122. With a credible Islamic institute of higher learning in Singapore, future asatizah with postgraduate degrees in the Islamic sciences will have an opportunity to practise and contribute in new roles, beyond those that are offered today. This could ensure enough specialist asatizah who will be equipped with research skills to address the complex socio-religious issues of tomorrow.

“

I believe this (Islamic IHL) will be a good development, especially for those who are unable to travel abroad to continue their studies. I will be supportive of this college as I’m proud of the Islamic education development in Singapore, and it shows a growing desire of the community in the enhancement of Islamic knowledge in Singapore.”

25-year-old ustazah

THRUST 3: NURTURING INSPIRING RELIGIOUS GRADUATES

123. In a globalised, plural, multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious Singapore, we need religious scholars who are confident in their own religious identities and knowledge, aware of their plural and multi-faceted identities and possess knowledge that is contextual and inter-disciplinary. Considering the range of aspirations related to the expansion of career opportunities, the systematic examination of current service gaps and the creation of future roles and specialisations in both the core and adjacent sectors, the vision for the *asatizah* fraternity to continue serving as spiritual guides for the community remains as a bedrock. This is represented by the sentiments of a 34-year-old *ustaz* when he stated, *“Hopefully all asatizah will be given the chance to develop professionally in the areas of their choice. (I look forward to) opportunities for them to explore other areas of community needs where they can serve as the compass or guide for the Singapore Muslim community”*.

124. While initiatives such as the skills framework, liaison office, and Islamic IHL are projects whose outcomes may only have an impact in the longer term, initiatives that can be implemented quickly with more immediate outcomes that lead to the vision of the future *asatizah* need to be identified. Hence, the next three (3) recommendations focus on enhancing the development of skills and competencies of the future *asatizah* via existing platforms.



Attendees at the Symposium on Muslim Family Law in 2019.

Recommendation 8: Strengthen knowledge and skills development via the Asatizah Recognition Scheme's (ARS) Continuous Professional Education (CPE) platform to better address existing or newly emerging fields.

125. COFA acknowledges the efforts in the provision of the ARS' Continuous Professional Education (CPE). The existing courses, aimed at strengthening asatizahs' content and pedagogical knowledge, are observably relevant and beneficial. Nonetheless, there are areas for further refinements. For example, in the development of dynamic discourse leaders of tomorrow, it is imperative to nurture critical and creative readings of religious traditional texts, and contextual readings of religious sources in dealing with emerging and longstanding issues, with broader and deeper comprehension of the philosophy, socio-historical understanding, and purposes of Islamic principles and teachings. It is also important to ensure that current and future asatizah have the skills to provide religious guidance that is contextualised to Singapore's multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-religious and diverse society. By appreciating the nuanced and multi-faceted needs of our plural society, this will allow asatizah to better serve the needs of the Muslim community in Singapore and help build a more cohesive Singapore.

126. It ought to be acknowledged that there are individuals who possess an advanced appreciation of the socio-historical context of revelations and are able to apply these texts to the current context, equipped with a keen awareness of their own socio-historically conditioned positions, biases, assumptions and worldviews. Generally, the combination of these skills and knowledge exist at the tacit level. It is necessary to unpack these tacit skills and knowledge and make them accessible to others. This requires dedicated time and focus that may be afforded through the establishment of mentoring structures where novices are matched to more knowledgeable and experienced asatizah.

127. An alternative to one-on-one mentoring is the set-up of communities of practice where many novice learners may be able to learn in a group setting while they are steeped in an actual problem-solving activity and experience real-life application of advanced hermeneutics and reflexivity in the interpretation and application of tradition and text to the lived reality of Muslims. As observed by Ustaz Hasbi Hassan, President of Pergas, *"Islamic religious studies in Egypt... besides attending formal lectures and studies in the University of Al-Azhar, our students have the opportunity to undergo studies and lessons which are conducted by sheikhs. These learning opportunities are held extensively in mosques and centres which are accredited and recognised by the authorities of the University of Al-Azhar. Through these*

formal and informal lessons, our students receive the guidance and suhbah (mentorship) from these sheikhs”.

128. There is value in structured mentorships and the expansion of platforms for professional development and coaching through communities of practice. These approaches may support the articulation of tacit knowledge, reflective observations and lead to knowledge building through discursive, dialogic and dialectic modalities. Adopting a systematic and collaborative approach to the construction of knowledge in a reciprocal manner will most likely lead to successful and effective knowledge sharing.

129. In light of these considerations and possibilities, COFA recommends **strengthening knowledge and skills development via the ARS’ CPE platform to better address existing or newly emerging fields**, and introduce mentoring and coaching in relevant areas, while ensuring the teachings are contextualised to Singapore’s multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-religious and diverse society.

130. The curation of relevant content to enhance the ARS’ CPE curriculum to equip the future asatizah well, needs to be undertaken with some level of urgency. Equally important is to recognise that non-typical knowledge building and skills upgrading platforms such as mentorships, communities of practice and learning journeys hold important value and needs to be incorporated into the ARS certification renewal process. This shift in paradigm in relation to asatizah’s learning and development needs to take place and is indeed aligned to the expectations from younger asatizah for “lesser rigidity and more flexibility” to the ARS.

Recommendation 9: Strengthen fresh graduates’ skills in contextualisation, facilitate career skills and development, and offer work-based experiences through the Postgraduate Certificate in Islam in Contemporary Societies (PCICS) initiative.

131. COFA supports the initiative by Muis to introduce the new PCICS, which has significant potential to uplift and professionalise the asatizah sector by **strengthening fresh graduates’ skills in contextualisation and leadership qualities** to effectively guide the Muslim community who live in a multi-cultural and plural society, facilitate career skills and development, and offer work-based experiences. Such a programme is an important investment to strengthen Islamic graduates’ competencies and the tertiary Islamic education they had received from Islamic universities overseas, and prepare them for the changing societal needs of the future. As explained by a 43-year-old ustazah via the online survey, “*most of them return as scholars of text. We need them*

to be scholars of context as well". In a similar vein, a 26-year-old ustazah opined that *"many of the madrasah graduates have very little background or experience of the Singapore Muslim demographic at large. This (PCICS) could help them understand the community they are serving/will serve better"*.

132. The programme will deepen and broaden fresh graduates' skills in contextualisation which would be an important foundation for their collective religious leadership. Appreciating the context will require a multi-disciplinary and integrated studies in two branches of knowledge - *"al 'ulum al 'aqliyah"* and *"al 'ulum al naqliyah"*. *"Al 'ulum al 'aqliyah"* or the rational or intellectual sciences include the fields of knowledge such as the social sciences, the natural sciences, philosophy and the humanities. *"Al-'ulum al naqliyah"* or the traditional sciences, delve into revealed knowledge such as the sciences of Quranic and hadith interpretation.

133. Skills, competencies and knowledge gleaned from both the above two branches of knowledge will be offered in the PCICS. These will provide a strong bedrock for our future asatizah to develop and hone their leadership qualities to effectively guide congregants and the laity in their lived realities as Muslims who navigate, live together, and contribute to a plural multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious society. The asatizah fraternity will be part of the network of collective multi-religious leadership who contribute to Singapore's social cohesion and continued progress. These leadership qualities based on contextualisation founded on an integrated and holistic framework of the two branches of knowledge will set our asatizah to be examples for the world, of a collective religious leadership who guide the people and effectively contribute to the progressive development of the Muslim community, other communities, the nation and the world.

134. COFA noted that a work experience scheme to match students to selected jobs in the religious sector (mosques, madrasahs, Muis and its subsidiaries) as well as adjacent fields like the social sector has been incorporated as an integral part of the PCICS. The programme will be invaluable for the sector's talent management process and will offer due recognition to the returning graduates' basic degrees and existing skills. In addition, the work experience opportunities in adjacent sectors would encourage students to move beyond their comfort zones and interact with the broader society. This would only serve to enable asatizah to build a stronger support network, both for personal development as well as in their work as religious leaders for the Muslim community. The work-based training in service to the Muslim community under guidance and supervision from

their teachers and mentors will be invaluable. To make available a sizeable number of internship positions, Muis may consider incentivising employers with grants to provide a positive experience for the students.

135. The experience from the PCICS programme will be an important stepping stone for the design of the Singapore Islamic IHL. The partnerships with well-regarded Islamic and local universities in the curriculum design and delivery will pave the way for the exploration of the philosophical framework and specialisation possibilities for graduates of the Singapore Islamic IHL. Support from the community and beneficiaries is important. Together, we should work towards the constant review and improvement of the PCICS programme for the benefit of its upcoming cohorts of students, with the longer term view to achieve the vision of the Islamic IHL, unique to Singapore and with the potential to serve Singapore, the region and the world with excellence.

“

The postgraduate programme will ultimately benefit asatizah in handling contemporary issues. With the era that we are living right now... it is crucial to have it.”

21-year-old madrasah alumni

“

The PCICS is important for fresh graduates to understand the Singapore context in terms of religious guidance and interfaith relations.”

31-year-old ustaz



Students at the COFA engagement session in Cairo, March 2019

Recommendation 10: Increase support for overseas religious undergraduates and postgraduates in skills upgrading during their period of study.

136. A critical stage in the development of future *asatizah* is the undergraduate phase. With the right attitude, knowledge, and experiences, an aspiring *ustaz* or *ustazah* will be able to transit well from student life to the working world. During these years, students have the opportunity to not only master the baseline competencies required to thrive in the socio-religious sector, but to also deepen their understanding of the community's needs, affirm career aspirations, and strengthen professional networks.

137. Overseas Islamic studies undergraduates have been benefiting from the support rendered by Muis' Student Liaison Officers (SLO) who are based overseas, as well as programmes driven by the Student Career and Welfare Office (SCWO) in partnership with the respective student societies. These include regular engagements on current issues, dialogues with community leaders and political office holders, professional development workshops and internship programmes. In anticipation of the roles and competencies expected of future *asatizah* as envisioned by COFA, there is room to enhance support for these students.

138. **COFA recommends increasing support for overseas religious undergraduates and postgraduates in skills upgrading during their period of study.** Student support packages, possibly in the form of training credits or project grants could be provided to incentivise undergraduates to participate in developmental programmes when they return to Singapore during term and semester breaks. The impetus is to enable them to acquire relevant skills as highlighted by the COFA process, while increasing awareness of career options. COFA recognises the value of celebrating students' exemplary efforts in competency-building and community involvement. This will inspire other students to emulate the positive actions and build a culture of excellence within the fraternity. To achieve the objectives, platforms such as annual events, awards and sharing sessions could be explored to honour and recognise the achievements of overseas graduates, once they complete their studies and return to Singapore.

CONCLUSION

139. Achieving the desired outcomes from the recommendations presented in this report requires careful planning and systematic coordination, primarily by Muis and its strategic partners, coupled with the valued organic contribution and participation of individuals, families and the community. Support from asatizah, employers, students, parents, community leaders and the Singapore Muslim community at large is paramount.

140. To sustain the momentum that has been built through the COFA engagement exercise, it is important for the implementation roadmap, and expected key milestones to be well communicated to the public. Timely updates on the impact of the initiatives would give our partners the confidence that progress is being made towards realising the shared vision, and ensure accountability and ownership on the part of the larger community.

141. Through these efforts in sector revitalisation, institution building and talent development, our hope is that future generations of Muslims in Singapore would be able to practise their religion confidently and meaningfully. These efforts would empower Muslims in Singapore to lead successful lives with altruistic care, concern and compassion not just for their individual selves but for others, including their families, friends, neighbours and other individuals and communities, regardless of religious affiliation, ethnicity, language or other variables of identity and diversity, for the betterment of society, humanity and the world.

142. As competent professional religious guides, it is hoped that future asatizah will serve as the religious ballast leading the way towards the ideal Muslim community of success with a high, deep and broad level of understanding, appreciation and observance of Islam, while living in harmony with others with the zeal to contribute as active local and global citizens. The future asatizah will lead the way in forging deep and strong relations within the Muslim community and with other communities for Singapore's continual progress, and to build a better world.

143. COFA is confident that the Singapore Muslim community together with the asatizah fraternity will continue to proactively search for opportunities of growth and success. Appreciating this visionary growth as a work in progress is important as we chart the steps into

the future. We need to strive to contribute positively and collaboratively with other individuals and communities, co-creating cohesive communities of success for Singapore and for the rest of the world.

144. Our future asatizah will continue to play important roles as leaders, professionals and role models in developing the community's religious confidence in a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-religious and deeply plural society, while contributing to nation building. This needs to be a long-term sustained, concerted and collective effort, but when realised, will ensure our asatizah remain an important institution for the community for many more generations to come.



ENDNOTES

CHAPTER 1

¹ Asatizah is the plural and collective form of ustaz and ustazah.

² Data from the Asatizah Recognition Scheme Office, as of October 2019.

³ On asatizah development and the introduction of the Asatizah Recognition Scheme (ARS), see Mohammad Hannan Hassan and Irwan Hadi Mohd Shuhaimy, “Developing Asatizah in Singapore Through the Asatizah Recognition Scheme,” in Norshahril Saat (ed.), *Fulfilling the Trust: 50 years of Shaping Muslim Religious Life in Singapore*, (Singapore: World Scientific, 2018).

⁴ On the development of madrasah education in Singapore, see Farah Mahmood Aljunied and Zalman Putra Ahmad Ali, “Madrasah Education: A Journey Towards Excellence,” in *ibid.*

⁵ 2018 survey conducted with pre-university students from the full-time madrasahs with a total of 92 respondents.

⁶ At present, graduates of Islamic studies with similar qualifications may get varying starting salaries depending on where the individual is employed.

⁷ Findings gathered from one-to-one career coaching sessions conducted by Muis’ Student Career and Welfare Office (SCWO) and COFA engagement discussions.

CHAPTER 3

⁸ Professionalising the asatizah sector refers to the introduction, management and improvement of processes and systems for the optimisation of human capital, which consequently offer the potential for higher engagement and satisfaction where talents develop and thrive.

⁹ Beyond just youths, the online survey respondents recommended for future asatizah to look into the needs of children, the elderly, converts, the less privileged, migrant Muslims and others. Interestingly, respondents from the street survey suggested prioritising children and youths for socio-religious interventions if the community is limited by resources.

¹⁰ Democratisation of knowledge refers to the spread of knowledge amongst the common people, not just privileged elites such as clergy and academics.

CHAPTER 4

¹¹ The SECRG was conducted from Oct 2018 to Nov 2019 to better understand the factors that determine religious graduates’ employment within and outside the religious sector. The study aimed at providing insights into how Muis may enhance the attractiveness of the religious sector to better retain talent and support religious graduates in filling full-time key positions in the sector.

¹² Muis introduced the Madrasah Student Development and Aspirations (MASDAR) scheme in 2018 to support the holistic development of our madrasah students. MASDAR provides strategic direction on the range of non-academic student development programmes offered in the madrasahs. This is to adequately prepare full-time madrasah students to serve the community in the future, as asatizah and/or professionals. Efforts in MASDAR complement other Muis initiatives to strengthen the madrasah sector such as capability development of teachers to improve academic performance and funding for infrastructure. With MASDAR, the range of student development efforts for madrasah students has expanded to include service-learning projects, outdoor education and media literacy workshops.

ANNEX A: BECOMING AN ASATIZAH

1. The typical education and employment pathway for asatizah starts with full-time madrasah education, leading to graduation from tertiary Islamic studies and subsequently, employment in the asatizah sector, a subset of the broader Islamic religious sector. While there are some asatizah who do not come from this pathway, the majority of asatizah come from this pipeline.
2. In Singapore, individuals aspiring to be asatizah must be accredited by the Asatizah Recognition Scheme (ARS).¹ Section 87 of the Administration of Muslim Law Act (AMLA) requires any individual teaching Islam in Singapore, and any provider that offers Islamic education programmes, to be registered with the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore. This requirement was made mandatory from 1 January 2017. Those registered under the ARS are subject to the ARS Code of Ethics. Asatizah registered under the scheme are to comply with the general principles of Integrity, Professional Competence and Professional Conduct.²
3. From 2017 to 2019, the Certificate in Islam in Context (ICON) was introduced as a mandatory course for new applicants of the ARS. Applicants to the ARS were accredited upon successful completion of ICON, after being deemed as meeting the stipulated criteria for the relevant tier and category, and subject to the deliberation and the decision of the ARB.
4. From 2020 onwards, ICON was replaced with the Postgraduate Certificate in Islam in Contemporary Societies (PCICS). The PCICS aims to nurture a generation of confident, compassionate, and competent professional asatizah with the requisite knowledge and skills to provide relevant religious guidance in a highly diverse, plural and interconnected world.

¹ The ARS comprises two tiers: 1) Islamic Teachers (asatizah) and 2) Quranic Teachers. The two tiers are broken down further into categories. Successful accreditation for each tier and category is subject to the Asatizah Recognition Board's deliberation and decision whether the individual meets the criteria stipulated for each category under each tier, such as relevant qualifications accorded by Islamic institutes of higher learning or other recognised institutions. Details of the criteria can be found in Annex A. Individuals accredited with the first ARS tier can teach any subject on Islam depending on qualifications and competencies. Individuals accredited with the second ARS tier can teach Quranic Literacy and Basic Fardhu 'Ain (Obligatory Acts) based on the Al-Quran and Islamic Learning (AQIL) curriculum.

² More details of the ARS Code of Ethics can be found in Annex C.

ANNEX B: ASATIZAH RECOGNITION SCHEME (ARS) TIERS AND LEVELS OF TEACHING

ARS consists of two tiers: (1) Islamic Teachers (Asatizah) and (2) Quranic Teachers. For more details on the various categories within each tier and the criteria and requirements, please refer to the table below.

TIER	CATEGORY	CRITERIA	CPE REQUIREMENTS
Asatizah (Islamic Teacher)	Fellow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special category in recognition of the significant contribution and knowledge of senior Asatizah. • Individuals in this category shall be conferred status of fellow based on nominations only. 	Exempted
	Graduate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Degree in any discipline of Islamic Studies from a recognised tertiary institution. • Minimum Arabic Language competency at a level equivalent to the GCE 'A'. • Attend interview. • Complete PCICS. 	30 Credit CPE hours
Quranic Teachers	QT 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diploma in any discipline of Islamic Studies from a recognised tertiary institution. • Minimum Arabic Language competency at a level equivalent to the GCE 'O'. • Attend interview. 	15 Credit CPE hours
	QT 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certificates in Islamic and Quranic Studies. • Attend Interview. 	

W.e.f. 1 Jan 2020

ANNEX C: ARS CODE OF ETHICS

General Code of Conduct

All asatizah registered under the scheme shall comply with the following general principles:

- (a) **Integrity** – to demonstrate both religious and moral integrity by adhering to the moderate teachings of Islam and by exemplifying good character at all times.
- (b) **Professional competence** – to exhibit a sound grasp of religious knowledge that is being imparted to students whilst being mindful of contextual considerations in the interpretation of religious teachings.
- (c) **Professional conduct** – to act in ways that retain the trust and confidence of the Singapore Muslim community towards religious teachers and to protect the profession from any form of disrepute.

Religious Doctrines

- (1) Asatizah shall recognise that there are diverse opinions and schools of thought in Islam, and may choose to adopt and teach such opinions and schools as they think fit so long as these are not to the detriment of the well-being and harmony of the society.
- (2) In matters of religious doctrine, asatizah shall remain guided by the decisions of the Legal Committee on opinions and schools which are considered unacceptable.
- (3) Asatizah shall remain committed to preserve the well-being and harmony of the society at all times.
- (4) Asatizah shall not teach the following:
 - (a) Rejecting opinions and practices within Islam on the basis that these are unacceptable and or deviant, unless the Legal Committee has expressed the same in its formal rulings;
 - (b) Denigrating any individual, groups, or community, including non-Muslims, using concepts, terms and descriptions that may erode social harmony and threaten the social fabric of Singapore;
 - (c) Advocating any political idea that may encourage extremism or violence, whether directly or indirectly.

ANNEX D: THEMES FROM COFA FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS, ROUND TABLES AND TOWN HALLS

NO.	DATE	ITEM/CATEGORY	TOPICS
1	26 January 2019	(COFA Pilot) Engagement with Madrasah Parents and Students 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roles and skills for future asatizah. • Core knowledge and future skills. • Aspirations for the Islamic institute of higher learning.
2	1 February 2019	(COFA Pilot) Engagement with Madrasah Parents and Students 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roles and skills for future asatizah. • Core knowledge and future skills. • Aspirations for the Islamic institute of higher learning. • Emerging fields and skills of the future. • Characteristics and competencies of the ideal future asatizah.
3	10 March 2019	COFA Engagement with Undergraduates in Cairo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students' interest to explore non-traditional job roles for asatizah as well as careers in adjacent sectors. • Importance of contextualising religious teachings. • The Postgraduate Certificate in Islam in Contemporary Societies (PCICS) and opportunities for learning new skills and competencies. • Exposure to career development opportunities in non-traditional areas and competitive salaries.
4	12 March 2019	COFA Engagement with Undergraduates in Jordan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students' interest to explore non-traditional job roles for asatizah as well as careers in adjacent sectors. • Importance of contextualising religious teachings. • PCICS and opportunities for learning new skills and competencies. • Exposure to career development opportunities in non-traditional areas and competitive salaries. • Future needs, skills and competencies. • Internship and mentoring as potential approaches.
5	29 March 2019	COFA Engagement with Senior Asatizah	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nurturing and aligning talent to emerging fields. • Equipping future asatizah with sufficient knowledge and skills in non-religious domains. • Aspiration for the Islamic institute of higher learning to be the best in the region and collaboration with the local autonomous universities. • Improving salary attractiveness. • Skills of the future including strong language, presentation skills and contextualisation.

NO.	DATE	ITEM/CATEGORY	TOPICS
6	26 April 2019	COFA Engagement with Academics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Future needs, skills and competencies. • Internship and mentoring as potential approaches. • Nurturing and aligning talent to emerging fields. • Equipping future asatizah with sufficient knowledge and skills in non-religious domains. • Aspiration for the Islamic institute of higher learning to be the best in the region and collaboration with the local autonomous universities. • Improving salary attractiveness. • Skills of the future including strong language, presentation skills and contextualisation.
7	8 May 2019	COFA Engagement with Professionals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structured opportunities for asatizah to address community's emerging needs. • Need for baseline skills and customised advanced skills for specialisation. • Emerging areas/fields for future asatizah (e.g. social work, counselling, palliative care, children with special needs). • Sustaining a strong pool of potential asatizah through the madrasahs and introduction of career guidance framework. • Salary guide and career progression. • Increase opportunities for social mixing so that asatizah could interact with people from non-madrasah backgrounds.
8	17 May 2019	COFA Engagement with Voluntary Work Organisations and Islamic Education Centres & Providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve career prospects and remuneration. • Refine roles and enhance opportunities for upskilling. • Future asatizah as active contributors to matters of social cohesion and develop interreligious/interfaith competencies and skills. • Networking platforms between asatizah and professionals from different backgrounds. • Enthuse asatizah to explore professional development beyond religious disciplines.
9	24 May 2019	COFA Engagement with Young Adults (Young Asatizah and Youth Leaders)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to re-examine learning experience in the madrasah and set high standards. • Review madrasah curriculum to reduce rote learning and develop future skills such as knowledge synthesis and application of religious knowledge in context.

NO.	DATE	ITEM/CATEGORY	TOPICS
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The creation of platforms for asatizah to collaborate with experts from other knowledge domains. • Better remuneration and upskilling opportunities. • Harness potential of madrasah graduates working in non-religious sectors. • The importance of engaging pedagogies suited to the needs of different stakeholders. • The rethinking of mosques' roles and spaces in reaching out to the minorities and youths. • Fostering of social cohesion and outreach to non-Muslims through future asatizah and future mosques. • Reduce ARS' rigidity.
10	28 June 2019	COFA Engagement with Madrasah Sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anticipated greater diversity of views on socio-religious matters, with congregants who are more educated, savvy and vocal. • Baseline knowledge and skills in areas such as mental health, counselling, social work, sexual orientation and gender identity to be developed. • Enhancing career prospects for future asatizah. • Professional growth and development opportunities through lateral transfers, attachments and exposure across existing institutions and beyond in other relevant fields/industries.
11	13 July 2019	COFA Mid-Term Town Hall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vision statement of future asatizah. • Model consisting of core and adjacent sectors for future job roles. • Future skills and competencies.
12	26 July 2019	COFA Engagement with Undergraduates from Universities in Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Kuwait and Malaysia.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing a community of success includes working in partnerships with professionals in other domains and sectors to address societal challenges and issues. • Recommendations to relook into the salary range of asatizah working in the religious sector in order to attract and retain more talent in the sector. • PCICS as one approach to professionalise and set the standards for the asatizah sector. • Important for religious graduates to take initiatives to participate in programs beyond the familiar religious sector.

NO.	DATE	ITEM/CATEGORY	TOPICS
13	03 August 2019	COFA Engagement with Mosque Sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⦿ Community will face a myriad of pain points ranging from mental and physical health issues to familial problems. ⦿ Need for a strong group of asatizah whose composition and collective competencies strike a fine balance between specialists and generalists. ⦿ The need for asatizah to tap on the elderly's expertise in light of the ageing population and to reach out to the young via contemporary modalities.
14	20 August 2019	COFA Engagement with Faith Leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⦿ Specialisation is key to meet the range of expectations for the future. ⦿ The need to pay special attention to minority and vulnerable groups. ⦿ Maintaining the attractiveness of the core religious function for potential local asatizah is important. ⦿ Strengthening the sector through the lens of human resource management is important. ⦿ Technological advancements which have led to “dehumanisation” make values and religion even more central.

ANNEX E: THEMES FROM COFA INTERVIEWS AND SURVEYS

ASPIRATIONS FOR FUTURE ASATIZAH

1. **[Context]** The profound uncertainties in the post-truth world require future asatizah to be confident navigators equipped with a repertoire of skills and dispositions that is not limited to a specific modus operandi.
2. **[Function]** Future asatizah as discourse leaders - religious guidance to meet the needs of the community; shape and imbue confidence to socio-religious thinking, while simultaneously contributing to nation-building.
3. **[Competency]** Skilfully equipped to connect and guide - equipped with a deep understanding of the Islamic sciences and additional lenses to appreciate the struggles of the common man, the future asatizah must be approachable, empathetic and gentle towards their congregants. They also need to be attuned to local and global trends and policies.
4. **[Approach]** Expectations for proactive outreach – the community’s support for the asatizah sector is strong and future expectations are high. Future asatizah need to be more proactive in their outreach to the underserved and to partner with others to address complex socio-religious issues.

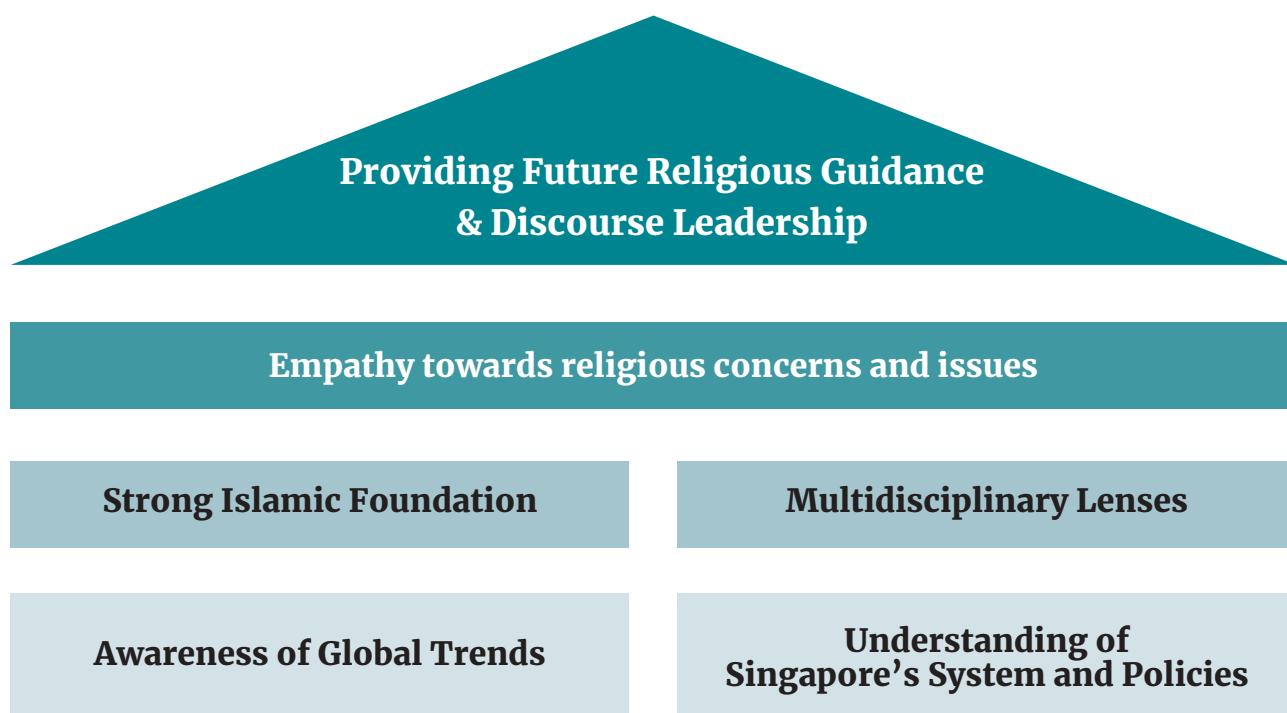


Diagram 5: Core themes from the COFA interviews and surveys

INSIGHTS ON THE CORE AND ADJACENT FUNCTIONS OF FUTURE ASATIZAH

1. **[Systemic – Core Function]** Need to safeguard the nurturing of the core religious leaders.
 - a) In the context where official certifications (diploma, degree, PhD) are highly prized, the Islamic sanad system is losing its place in the education of our future asatizah. Systemic intervention is required to find a solution that will be able to equip future religious leaders with deep knowledge to serve their functions competently. The development of mastery is critical and needs to be examined and understood before it can be factored into interventions.
 - b) Additionally, in light of a critique of the perceived weakening of Islamic studies and the Arabic language in the madrasah curriculum, the provision of a post-secondary Islamic studies diploma may potentially be able to fill the gap.
 - c) To guide a more educated and diversified community, future asatizah need to be knowledgeable of and provide access to the appreciation of the different mazhabs, sects and orientations in Islam, and embrace the concept of unity in diversity.
2. **[Systemic – Adjacent Function]** Systematic talent management to contribute towards the emerging adjacent functions.
 - a) There is a need for a more robust and systematic talent management system to serve the needs of the future community. Developing expertise in areas such as families and the economy is worth exploring.
 - b) The future Islamic institute of higher learning may be designed to develop future specialists. At the same time, the objectives of programmes and pathways need to be very clear.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



Our appreciation and thanks to everyone who took time off from their busy schedules to participate in the COFA engagement exercise. Thank you to those who participated anonymously in the street and online surveys too.



COFA ENGAGEMENT PARTICIPANTS

Ms A'ishah Bte Mohammad Bahrul-Ulum	Ustaz Abu Bakar Sidik Hassan
Mr Abbas Khan Bin Abdul Aziz	Ustaz Abu Huzaifah Abd Rahim
Ustaz Abbas Umar	Mr Adam Ahmad
Mr Abd Rahim Mawasi	Ms Adlina Izzah Abdul Ghani
Mr Abdul Aziz	Ms Afiqah Kamarazaman
Ustaz Abdul Ghani Bujang	Mr Afzhalur bin Abdul Jaleel
Mr Abdul Ghani Mohd Isa	Mr Ahmad An-Nafees
Mr Abdul Hadi bin Jamil	Mr Ahmad Harith Ahmad Kalil
Ustaz Abdul Hakeem Mohd Ismail	Mr Ahmad Kalil Mohamad
Mr Abdul Malik	Mr Ahmad Mursyid
Mr Abdul Rahim Ghaus	Mr Ahmad Nizam Abbas
Mr Abdullah Roslee	Mr Ahmad Ubaidillah
Ustaz Abdur Rahman Latiff	Mr Aidil Hadri Sakdullah
Mr Abu Bakar Assiddiq	Ms Aini Safuan

Ms Aisha Abdul Manaf
Ms Aisha Shaul Hamid
Ms Aisyah Amad
Ustazah Aisyah Chen
Ms Aisyah Yusof
Mr Ali Abdul Rahman
Ustazah Amalina Abdul Nasir
Ms Ameena Munavvar
Mr Amirul Fahmi
Mr Amirul Syawal
Mr Ammar Mustafa
Mr Amrullah bin Mohd Zain
Ms Aneesa Faruvin
Ms Anisa Ismail
Mr Anwarul Mujahid Damanhuri
Mr Ariff Salleh
Ustaz Ashraf Anwar
Ms Asma' Amad
Ustazah Asma Munavara
Ustazah Asmak Awang
Mr Asmawi Mashuri
Ms Asnah Hussain
Mr Aufa Mustafa Ikmal
Ustazah Ayesha Daulath Hakim
Mr Ayra Mohammed
Ms Aysha Gany
Ustazah Azeemah Mustafa
Ustaz Azhari Yaakop
Ms Azidah Kamis
Ustazah Azlina Basri
Mr Azman Lani
Mr Azman Mohd Ariffin
Ustaz Badrul Fata Muhd Ridwan
Ms Baizah Basrun
Mdm Bazitah Abu Bakar
Mr Bediuzzaman Bin Abdul Jaleel
Mr Damanhuri Abas
Mr Daulath Hakim s/o Mohamad Ibrahim
Ms Dian Zuhairah Wydatie Suwandi
Ustaz Diaya Uddeen Deab Mahmoud Alzitawi
Ms Diwi Abbas
Mr Ervad Rustom M Ghadiali
Mr Erwin Shah bin Effandy
Mr Faheem Ahamad
Mr Fahmy Rahmat
Mdm Faizah Abdul Rahman
Mr Fajar Nor
Mr Farhan Shapandi
Ustazah Farhana Munshi
Ustazah Faridah Ali
Mr Farihullah s/o Abdul Wahab Safiuallah
Ustazah Fathima Sidique
Ms Fatihatul Insyirah
Ms Fatimah As'saidah Zainal Muttakin
Ms Fatimah Binte Raziff
Ms Fatimah bte Azmi
Ustazah Fatimah Zohrah
Ms Fatimah Azzahra' Binti Mohd Shukur
Ms Fatin Hamdan
Mr Fayyah Isa

Ms Filzah bte Ramly	Ms Irfana Banu
Ms Filzah Hanani Binte Rahmad	Ms Ita Nursa'adah
Mr Firdaus Abdullah	Mr Izzat Ismail
Ustaz Dr Firdaus Yahya	Mr Izzul Rizqan
Ustaz Fizar Zainal	Mr Ja'afar Junali
Mr Gerald Kong	Dr Jainlavudeen Ibrahim
Ustazah Habiba Binte Djamil	Ms Jamilah Ismail
Mr Hafiz Khairuddin	Ustazah Jamilah Mohd Amran
Mr Haja Maideen	Ms Jayroonesa Afrij Ali
Ms Halimah Assa'adiah	Dr Joanna Lim
Mr Hamzah Mutalib	Ms Junainah Kasmuri
Mr Hanafi Muji	Mr Juraiman Rahim
Ms Hani Nadhirah Abdullah	Ustazah Juyda Noor Mohamad
Ms Hannah Salim	Ms Kamsinah Sadar
Ustazah Harinah Abdul Latif	Ms Kartini Supa'at
Ustazah Hartini Hazim	Mdm Kasumawati Md Kamal
Ms Hasliza Ahmad	Dr Katijah Dawood
Mr Herman Cher Main	Ms Kautsar bte Munain
Mr Herman Yani Mohamed Sani	Mdm Khairiana bte Zainal Abiden
Ms Herni Haji Halipah	Mdm Khairiani bte Jasin
Mr Hilmi Hassan	Ustaz Khairul Anwar
Ustazah Hilwani Mohd Abd Halim	Mr Khalid Shukur Bakri
Mr Hj Hashim Omar	Ms Khamisah Abd Aziz
Mr Hj Ma'mun HMF Suheimi	Ms Khaulah Nur Mujahidah
Mr Hussain Badusha	Ustaz Kyaw Zin Tun
Mr Hussaini Abdullah	Ustazah Latifah Yusoff
Ustaz Ibrahim Samat	Ms Latiffah Bte Mohd
Ms Idayu Said	Ms Li Jinghan
Mr Imran Kuna	Ms Lina Mariah Binte Mhd Said
Ms Inshirah Bte Abdul Mutalib	Ustazah Liyana Musfirah Anwar

Mr Luqman bin Jamal	Ustaz Mohamed Shah Reza
Ms Maisurah Binti Mohamed Rafii	Mr Mohamed Zakaria Bin Mohd Yazin
Ms Majdah Binte Mohd Nizam	Mr Mohammad Jawad Abdullah
Mr Mak Kai Feng Darren	Mr Mohammad Sirajuddin Bin Jamaludheen Maricar
Ustazah Marhamah Senewi	Ustaz Mohd Asysallehan bin Mohamed Ali
Ms Masayu Mashita Maisarah Binte Masagos Zainudin	Mr Mohd Azhar Khalid
Ustazah Masnia Nassim	Mr Mohd Fairus Abdul Manaf
Ustazah Masriah Sambari	Mr Mohd Fammy Ismail
Dr Mathew Mathews	Mr Mohd Fauzi Saini
Mr Mazlan Mahan	Ustaz Mohd Ghouse Khan Surattee
Ustaz Md Aizat Zulkifli	Mr Mohd Najib Mohidu Kunyalee
Dr Md Badrun Nafis Saion	Ustazah Nurol Haslinda Hashim
Ustaz Md Dzulqarnain Aripin	Mr Mohd Rafii Abd Hamed
Mr Md Kutty Thambara	Mr Mohd Roslan Bin Abdul Rahman
Mr Md Nizam Ahmad Khalid	Mr Mohd Sulaiman Mohd Arif
Mr Md Sidek Sudar	Ustaz Moksan Mahori
Ustaz Md Syahid Abdul Latif	Ustaz Muaaz Mohd Abdul Halim
Ustaz Mohamad Hasbi Hassan	Mr Muhammad Abdul Haq bin Mansor
Mr Mohamad Isa Hassan	Mr Muhammad Adil Bin Muhd Kamil
Mr Mohamad Jasmani	Mr Muhammad Afiq Azman
Ustaz Mohamad Noor Samat	Mr Muhammad Aiman
Ustaz Mohamad Noor Samat	Dr Muhammad Arafat Mohamad
Mr Mohamad Saddiq Bin Mohamad Sa'id	Mr Muhammad Arif Tan
Dr Mohamad Shamsuri Juhari	Mr Muhammad Arsyad
Dr Mohamaed Ghazali	Mr Muhammad Azlan Selamat
Mr Mohamed Jaafar	Ustaz Muhammad Azri Azman
Ustaz Mohamed Jasela Sarin	Mr Muhammad Fadhil Azman
Mr Mohamed Muneer Shah Mohamed	Ustaz Muhammad Fadhlullah Daud
Ustaz Mohamed Qusairy Taha	Mr Muhammad Faiz Saharuddin
Mr Mohamed Sa'at Matari	Mr Muhammad Fakhruddin Ahmad Kamal

Mr Muhammad Feroz Khan	Ms Murni Redzwan
Mr Muhammad Firdaus Sedek Maulana	Mr Mus'ab Albakri
Mr Muhammad Hariz	Ustaz Mustazah Bahri
Mr Muhammad Hasan Naveed	Mr Muzafar Muneer
Mr Muhammad Haziq Miswan	Ustazah Muzlithah Masripan
Mr Muhammad Haziq Mohamed Rahmat	Ms Nabila Natasah Binte Osman
Mr Muhammad Haziq Mohd Yasin	Ustazah Nabilah Md Hashim
Mr Muhammad Imran bin Mohammad Yusof	Ms Nabilah Patel
Mr Muhammad Iskandar Muhammad Sabery	Ustazah Nadiyah Binte Tajuddin
Mr Muhammad Jazli Bin Muhamad	Ms Nadiyah Md Yusof
Ustaz Muhammad Khidir Idris	Ms Nadya Izzati Jefferi
Mr Muhammad Luqman Bin Yusoff	Mdm Nafisah Md Ma'mun Suheimi
Mr Muhammad Mirza	Mr Nailul Hafiz Abdul Rahim
Ustaz Muhammad Nasrullah Rifa'ie	Mr Nasrah Mahli
Mr Muhammad Norfarihin Norazman	Mr Nasrul Hadi Bin Said
Mr Muhammad Nur Irfan	Ms Natasha Dahlia Binte Affandi
Mr Muhammad Shakeel Suhaimi	Mr Naveed Ajmal
Mr Muhammad Suhail Tsaqif Bin Mohamed Ishak	A/P Nirmala Karuppiah
Mr Muhammad Syaakir Iqbal	Ms Noor Hanisah Noordin
Mr Muhammad Syukri Ismail	Ustazah Noorfazihan Kasim
Mr Muhammad Zuhilmi Rohaizat	Ustazah Noorul Ain Ahmad Ghani
Ustaz Muhd Aiman Abd Khalid	Ms Nor Bahariah Md Yusof
Ustaz Muhd Ali bin Rohani	Ms Nor Diyana Bte Jamaluddin
Mr Muhd Azam bin Zakaria	Ms Noratiqah Binte Mohammad Hisham
Mr Muhd Fakhrrur Razi Mohd Farid	Ms Norhalizah Rosley
Ustaz Muhd Fazli Naim	Ms Normadiyah Moin
Ustaz Muhd Hanifatunnuman Md Hasbi	Ms Normala Bujang
Ustaz Muhd Taufiq Mohd Ismail	Mr Nufail Bin Rahman
Dr Mukhlis Abu Bakar	Ms Nur Aini Zulkifli
Ms Mukminah Abdul Razak	Ms Nur Aqilah Binte Abdul Rahman

Ms Nur Athirah Binte Zuraimi

Mr Nur Azhar Azman

Mr Nur Hadi Musa

Ustazah Nur Hidayah Azman

Ustazah Nur Hidayah Masri

Ms Nur Humairah Azman

Ms Nur Khairiana Mohamad Malek

Ms Nur Lutfiah Izdiyar Md Ali

Ms Nur Masyitah Hairodin

Ms Nur Nabilah Hairodin

Ms Nur Nadiyah Ismail

Ustazah Nur Naimah Abd Malee

Ms Nur Nasuha binte Mokhtiaruddin

Ms Nur Syafiqah Taufek

Ustazah Nur Syahidah Jaafar

Ms Nur Wahidah Mas'in

Ustazah Nur Wahidah Mohd Hashim

Dr Nurfadzilah Yahaya

Mdm Nurhabibah

Ustaz Nurhakim Md Rezawan

Ustazah Nurhanisa Md Yusoff

Ms Nurhidayah Binti Sari

Ustazah Nurhidia Suzieyanti Sulaimiee

Ms Nurrasyidah Binti Tukiman

Ustazah Nursa'idah Mohtar

Ms Nurud Diyaanah Humar

Ms Nurul 'Izzati Binti Muhamad Sidek

Ms Nurul Ain Gazali

Ms Nurul Fathin Wafda Bte Haron

Ms Nurul Huda Be Mohamed Jasmani

Ms Nurul 'Izzati Muhamad Sidek

Ms Nurul Nabilah Zakaria

Ustazah Nurulhuda Bte Zaini

Ms Nurushshazwani Sabran

Mr Parvitar Singh Khalsa

Mssgr Philip Heng

Mr Phra Goh

Mr Prasad Mogan

Ustaz Qamarul Ariffin

Mdm Rabia Munawar

Ms Rabiatal Adawiya

Ms Rahayu Mohamad

Mr Rahman Sandisi

Mr Raja Mohamad

Ms Raja Nur Zafirah Bte Raja Muzaffar Shah

Mr Rashid Ramli

Ms Raudhah Binti Salim

Mr Rawi Bin Ahmed

Ms Razula Abdul Rahman

Mr Remy Mahzam

Ustaz Ridwan Sarmidi

Mr Rohan Nizam

Ustazah Rohana Ithnin

Ustaz Roslan bin Aman

Mr Roslan Bin Suip

Dr Rufaihah Abdul Jalil

Ustazah Rukiah Saad

Ustaz Ruzi Bin Jaieri @ Jairi

Mr S Ramesh

Mr Saat Abdul Rahman

Ms Saburunnisa Abdul Azeez

Dr Sa'eda Buang

Mr Safarin Amerudin

Ms Sakinah Jumaat

Ms Sakinah Yahya

Ms Samaniah Solehan

Ustazah Saodah Binte Sunan

Mr Sapari Ahmad

Ms Sarah Noor Ain

Venerable Seck Kwang Phing

Mr Selamat bin Rais

Ms Selasih Mohamad Hassan

Ms Shahrany Hassan

Ms Shameema Banu Mohd Sheriff

Ustazah Shameema Sultanah

Ustazah Sharifah Nabilah Abdul Razak

Ms Sharifah Nurul 'Aqilah Binte Syed Khalid

Ms Sharifah Safa' Syed Ibrahim Alsagoff

Ms Shariffa Kadirbee Syed Hassan

Mr Sharifuddin Bin Mohamed Ali

Ustaz Sheikh Mohamad Farouq

Dr Sher Banu A.L. Khan

Ustazah Sidah Haron Shahab

Ms Siti Adilah Selamat

Ustazah Siti A'isyah Ali Borda Khan

Ms Siti Aisyah Zulkifli

Ustazah Siti Farah Umainah Haron

Ustazah Siti Khairunnisa Abdullah

Ustazah Siti Majidah Sainee

Ms Siti Musfirah Binte Wahid

Ms Siti Nahmariah Mohamed Ishak

Ms Siti Noor Mastura Binti Rahmatullah

Ms Siti Nur Atiqah Razali

Ms Siti Nuraini Asmuri

Ms Siti Nuraini Ismail

Ustazah Siti Nursyahidah Saleh

Ustazah Siti Wahidah Redzwan

Ustazah Siti Wahidah Redzwan

Ms Siti Zainab Jefry

Ustazah Sofiyah Said Hussein Mahdar

Ms Sofiyah Mohd Kamal

Mr Solehan Asmore

Ustazah Sri Nurayu Binte Mat Aris

Ms Sri Wahyu Ahmad

Ustazah Suhailah Abdul Jalil

Mr Suhaile Md

Dr Suhaimi Mustar

Mr Suhaimi Salleh

Ms Suhana Salleh

Mdm Suharni Mohd Said

Mdm Suharni Mohd Shariff

Ustazah Sukarti Asmoin

Ustazah Suriyati Safie

Mr Surjit Singh Wasan s/o Wazir Singh

Ms Susi Suhaily Amir

Ms Syafiqah Juraiman

Mr Syahir Bin Samsaimon

Ms Syamilah Ruhaiyyah Roslan

Ms Syazaa Binte Mohamed Nizam

Ms Syazana binte Hussain

Prof. Syed Farid Alatas
Mr Syed Fazal Sakaff
Mr Syed Ibrahim Alsagoff
Ustaz Syed Mustafa Alsagoff
Mr Syed Salleh Hassan Alsagoff
Ms Tahirah binte Syed Sultan
Mr Tan Tatt Si
Mr Tan Thiam Lye BBM
Ms Tazlina Talib
Mr Tengku Hafidzuddin Tengku Ibrahim
Bishop Terry Kee
Ms Umairah Syofiyyah Mohamed Khair
Mr Umar Bahrul Ulum
Ustazah Unaisah Adam
Ms Violet Yang
Ustazah Wahidah bte Isahak
Mr Xerxes Ghista
Mr Yacob Ahmad
Mr Yahya Hashim
Ms Yi Yuan
Ustazah Yusrina Jaikubali
Ustazah Zafirah Dawood
Ms Zahratur Rofiqah Mochamad Sandisi
Mr Zaidan Imtiyaz Ruzi
Ustazah Zalifah Abdul Rahman
Ustazah Zhahirah Mohammad Saleh
Ustaz Ziyaudeen Ahmad Sirajuddeen
Ustaz Zulhilmi Mohamed
Ms Zuraidah Abdul Karim

VOLUNTEERS AND FACILITATORS

Mr Afdzal Ibrahim
Ustaz Afif Pasuni
Mr Ahmad Fakhruddin Fadzuli
Ustazah Amira Abdul Rahim
Mr Asri Aziz
Ms Azlina Manaf
Mr Azman Ariffin
Ms Dhabitah Yusuf
Ms Dhanial Raihana Saheid
Ustazah Diyanah Mohamad Sirat
Ms Dorayuana Jaafar
Mr Fairuz Sudiman
Mr Faizal Abdollah
Ustazah Farah Aljunied
Ms Hanna Taufiq Siraj
Ms Indahsuria Mokhtar
Mr Ismail Farhan Anuar
Mr Izuan Md Rais
Mr Izzairin Swandi
Ms Khairunnisa Abdul Khalid
Ustazah Liyana Rosli Asmara
Ustazah Masitah Mohamed Kamalutheen
Ustaz Md Hafiz Abd Rashid
Mr Mir Farooq Ali
Mr Mohamed Hanifa
Mr Mohd Safie Osman
Ustaz Muhammad Nasir Johari
Mr Muhammad Taufiq Arifin

Ustaz Muhd Abdul Mateen Hisham

Ustaz Muhd Fakhrrur Radzi Mohd Noor

Mr Muhd Farouk MYA AYE

Ms Muzaiyanah Hamzah

Dr Noraslinda Zuber

Ms Nur Aisyah Arshad

Ms Nur Hendriyanty Hidayah

Ustazah Nur Shafiqah Zainal

Ms Nurulhuda Ahmad

Ms Rabi'ah Ghazali

Ustaz Ridhwan Mohd Basor

Ustazah Rozanna Khalid

Ms Siti Nuraini Asmuri

Ustaz Taufiq Majeed

Ustazah Warintek Ismail

Mr Zalman Putra Ahmad Ali

Ustazah Zanaria Jusary

Mr Zulfadhli Ghazali

COFA SECRETARIAT

Mr Azree Rahim

Ms Sharifah Thalha Syed Haron

Mr Faris Ridzuan

Ustaz Abdul Hadi Ali Akbar

Mr Ahmad Zin Hasanusi

Ustazah Nurhannah Irwan

Dr Tuty Raihanah Mostarom

Ustaz Muhd Syazwan El Rani

Ustaz Aufa Salleh Hoddin

Ustazah Noorsakinah Masrawi

Ustaz Muhd Jalaluddeen



