

APPROVED
JUNE 29, 2022

Item #F-4
June 29, 2022

**NEW OPERATING AND/OR DEGREE-GRANTING AUTHORITY
FOR INDEPENDENT INSTITUTIONS**

Submitted for: Action.

Summary: New independent institutions, institutions planning to operate at a new location, including a location outside the higher education region of original operating authority, and out-of-state institutions planning to operate in Illinois for the first time are required to obtain authorization to operate. These institutions are also required to obtain authorization for each new degree program.

Action Requested: That the Illinois Board of Higher Education approves the recommendations to grant degree-granting authority and/or operating authority to the following institution:

Not-For-Profit Executive Summary

Darul Qasim College

- Operating Authority in the West Suburban Region



STATE OF ILLINOIS
BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

**NEW OPERATING AND/OR DEGREE-GRANTING AUTHORITY
FOR INDEPENDENT INSTITUTIONS**

The Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) has responsibility for administration of The Private College Act (110 ILCS 1005) and The Academic Degree Act (110 ILCS 1010). Under these statutes, new independent institutions, institutions planning to operate at a new location, including a location outside the higher education region of original operating authority, and out-of-state institutions planning to operate in Illinois for the first time are required to obtain authorization to operate. These institutions also are required to obtain authorization for each new degree program.

Applications for new operating and degree-granting authority submitted by independent Illinois institutions and out-of-state institutions are reviewed by the staff. Recommendations are developed by applying criteria for operating and/or degree-granting authority, which are defined in the rules adopted for administration of the statutes and Board policies on assessment of student learning and specialized accreditation requirements for student licensure. These criteria encompass educational objectives, institution and degree titles, curricula, facilities, faculty and administrator qualifications, student policies, publications, records, compliance with pertinent laws, and fiscal stability. Staff recommendations are based on analyses of application materials, responses to questions, and site visits. Out-of-region sites are defined as sites located within an IBHE approval region other than the region within which an institution's original operating authority was granted. There are ten IBHE approval regions; each is coterminous with one or more community college districts. Approval to operate within a new approval region entitles an institution to operate throughout the region, and not solely at the site at which the institution initially applied.

This item includes recommendations to grant degree-granting authority to one institution.

Not-For-Profit Executive Summary

Darul Qasim College

- Operating Authority in the West Suburban Region

Darul Qasim College (Darul Qasim or the College) requests authorization to operate in the West Suburban Region. Darul Qasim is a private non-for-profit entity that began as a community-based learning organization offering enrichment courses and programs to community members to educate them about Islam and its main principles. Darul Qasim serves students seeking knowledge of traditional Islamic and Arabic studies with applications to numerous fields including serving as Imams (spiritual leaders) for Muslim communities, counselors, and chaplains. Darul Qasim now seeks to expand its mission to become a recognized higher education institution. Should authorization as a postsecondary institution be granted, Darul Qasim will seek authorization to offer a master's-level degree in Islamic Law and Theology. Consistent with its mission to offer students seeking knowledge of traditional Islamic and Arabic studies, the College primarily serves Muslim students from diverse ethnic minority groups. The College collaborates with community-based organizations

to connect with and recruit prospective students and has strategies in place to increase diversity by providing direct financial support to students and instituting an open policy measure to accept all students regardless of ethnicity or socio-economic background.

In its proposal for operating authority, Darul Qasim has articulated the implementation of multiple strategies and initiatives to serve historically underserved communities, including the following:

- Identifying low-income communities and offering traveling academic seminars as a means of connecting with low-income communities and prospective students, relieving students' needs to arrange for transportation to the College;
- Implementing a scholarship fund for the sponsorship of individual students in their studies at Darul Qasim;
- Offering tuition discounts determined by student income for families that are financially challenged; and
- Instituting a tuition waiver that is approved on a case-by-case basis based on the economic profile of the student and their family.

Darul Qasim has laid out goals and plans for the enrollment, retention, and completion of underrepresented and underserved populations. As an entity serving predominantly minority students in the on-going enrichment programs, Darul Qasim has experience serving minority students and plans to expand its pool of diverse students in the degree operation through providing direct financial support to students and supporting their academic growth. The College allocates a minimum of \$100,000 annually for tuition assistance and has supported more than 144 students in their religious enrichment classes from 2019 to 2021.

Darul Qasim College's academic collaborations and partnerships with institutions of higher education, including collaboration to co-sponsor bioethics conferences, seminars, and lectures, have contributed in furthering the College's mission to educate the community about Islam to understand the functionality and role of Islamic traditions. Future master's-level students will benefit by attending high-level discussions on bioethics and applying their knowledge of Islamic law and Islamic theology, enabling students to network and develop relationships that would be useful in their careers. Graduates of the future program would be able to find employment as teachers and faculty in high schools, community colleges and universities, and serve as research analysts in Arabic language, Islamic law, and Muslim cultural studies, as well as translators and linguists in Arabic language.

The College's operational costs, including staffing, space, and equipment, will be mainly supported by tuition revenue and donations from committed donors. The total estimated revenue from tuition, grants, and donations in the first year is \$1,204,800, which will increase to \$1,784,000 by the fifth year. The College anticipates that endowment funds will grow and help diversify the entity's income and support long-term project plans. Enrollment in the program is estimated to increase from one student in the first year to 30 students by the fifth year. The College has larger enrollment in the non-degree programs (estimated to increase from 175 to 300 students from the first to fifth year), which will help support degree operations.

The College has sufficient library, technology, staff, and financial resources in place to support the proposed operation. The College has successfully recruited and retained a diverse faculty and has strategies in place to support their development to ensure the academic success of

their predominantly ethnic minority student population. The College has submitted plans and a timeline to obtain accreditation from the Higher Learning Commission.

The staff recommends adoption of the following resolutions:

The Illinois Board of Higher Education hereby grants to Darul Qasim College authorization to Operate in the West Suburban Region subject to the institution's implementation and maintenance of the conditions that were presented in its application and that form the basis upon which this authorization is granted.

Darul Qasim College
550 Regency Drive
Glendale Heights, IL 60139
President: Shaykh Mohammed Amin Kholwadia

Institutional Accreditation: Darul Qasim College has submitted plans and a timeline to obtain accreditation from the Higher Learning Commission.

Background and History

Darul Qasim College (Darul Qasim or the College) requests authorization to operate in the West Suburban Region. Darul Qasim is a private non-for-profit entity which began as a community-based learning organization offering enrichment courses and programs to community members to educate them about Islam and its main principles. Darul Qasim serves students seeking knowledge of traditional Islamic and Arabic studies with applications to numerous fields including serving as Imams (spiritual leaders) for Muslim communities, counselors, and chaplains. Darul Qasim started with the aim to educate the community about Islam and its main principles and is seeking to expand its mission to become a recognized higher education institution. Should authorization to operate as a postsecondary institution be granted, Darul Qasim will seek authorization to offer a master's-level degree in Islamic Law and Theology. Enrollment in the master's program is estimated to increase from one student in the first year to 30 students by the fifth year. Darul Qasim will continue to separately offer its existing enrichment programs for high school students and older to learn basic Islamic knowledge, including theological and philosophical knowledge. The enrichment program, from which qualified students may be recruited for the future master's program, has more than 100 participants and is expected to increase to 300 within five years.

Darul Qasim has laid out goals and plans for the enrollment, retention, and completion of underrepresented and underserved populations. As an entity serving predominantly minority students in the on-going enrichment programs, Darul Qasim has experience serving minority students and plans to expand its pool of diverse students by providing direct financial support to students and supporting their academic growth. The College allocates a minimum of \$100,000 annually for tuition assistance and has supported the participation of more than 144 students in their religious enrichment classes from 2019 to 2021.

Darul Qasim has identified needs for Islamic scholars with advanced degrees to serve the needs of the Islamic community in the Chicagoland area, which is home to many Islamic schools and mosques and educate the larger public on Islamic traditions and values. Graduates of the proposed program will be qualified to find employment as faculty in community colleges and universities, and serve as research analysts in Arabic, Islamic law, and Muslim cultural studies, as well as translators and linguists in Arabic language. There are many Islamic schools in Illinois at the Preschool to 12th grade level that are college preparatory programs and accredited, such as Islamic Foundation School, College Preparatory School of America, Universal School in Bridgeview, and Al-Huda school, where graduates of the proposed program would be able to teach Arabic language, Islamic studies, and other related topics such as Islamic financing and women's studies. At the postsecondary level, American Islamic College (the only comparable Illinois institution), DePaul University, and Benedictine University offer Islamic courses and programs and are potential places for graduates of the proposed program to find employment as scholars and advisors of Islamic law and theology.

Institutional Data

1030.30(a)(3)(F): Success in student progression and graduation across all existing approved programs, and success rates in programs preparing students for certification and licensure, shall be consistent with expectations in higher education and the appropriate related field of study. At a minimum, the Board shall consider the following factors, based on results for similar institutions: (i) Graduation rates, certificate and degree completion rates, retention rates, and pass rates for licensure and certification aligned with thresholds set by State or national regulatory bodies; and (ii) Success rate, which shall be, at a minimum, higher than that of the lowest quartile of these measures for similar Illinois institutions defined as open versus competitive enrollment institutions and primarily associate versus primarily baccalaureate granting institutions. Exceptions may be made to the lowest quartile if an institution is above the national average for these measures using the same comparison categories of institutions.

1030.30(a)(3)(G): Additional student success measures shall be considered in the review of applications for authorization. The Board shall establish minimum rates of success based on results for similar institutions or thresholds set by State or federal regulatory bodies. i) At a minimum these data shall include student loan default rates, student indebtedness rates, job placement rates, student learning measures and other success indicators. ii) Institutions that participate in Federal Student Loan programs shall have 3-year Official Cohort Default rates no higher than 25 percent. Institutions with Federal Financial Responsibility Composite Scores shall have a score that is no lower than 1.0. Institutions that fail to meet these thresholds may be restricted from implementing new certificate or degree programs. iii) The success rate shall be, at a minimum, higher than that of the lowest quartile of these measures for similar Illinois institutions defined as open versus competitive enrollment institutions and primarily associate versus primarily baccalaureate granting institutions. Exceptions may be made to the lowest quartile if an institution is above the national average for these measures using the same comparison categories of institutions.

Because this is a new institution, no data are available.

Need

1050.30(a)(6): A) The unit of instruction, research or public service is educationally and economically consistent with the educational priorities and needs of the State of Illinois. B) The unit of instruction, research or public service meets a need that is not currently met by existing institutions and units of instruction, research or public service.

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) projects a three percent (slower than average) growth rate among “Clergy” without specifying religion or denomination. As well, the BLS shows the Chicago metro area from Indiana to Wisconsin as the third-highest employment metropolitan area for employment as “Clergy” in the nation. The Illinois Department of Employment Security’s Longterm COVID-Impacted Employment Projections suggests a slight downward trend of 0.02 percent for all “Religious Workers,” inclusive of Clergy, Directors of Activities and Education, and All Other Religious Workers. However, the decline in employment opportunities for Clergy does not necessarily reflect the social or spiritual need for religious scholars or specific denominational clergy. Darul Qasim is seeking to meet the need for qualified Islamic scholars, Imams, counselors, and chaplains.

In the United States, and specifically in Illinois, the Muslim community is diverse and has critical needs for services for women, minorities, and new converts. Darul Qasim has a growing number of diverse male and female students and faculty and is committed to their development to ensure students are supported and able to fill the need for religious scholars with advanced degrees. At the national level, Darul Qasim attracts many students from outside Illinois who bring with them their talent and experiences. For instance, from 2018 to 2021, out-of-state students in Darul Qasim's religious enrichment programs increased from 20 percent to 31 percent. At the community level, Darul Qasim supports and helps community programs and groups such as Inner-City Muslim Action Network (IMAN) that has extensive community service for all in the south-side of Chicago, and Khalil Center, an institution that offers mental health services in general and faith-based mental health services to Muslims. Similarly, established academic collaborations and partnerships with area universities on bioethics have contributed to the College's ability to fulfill its mission of educating the community about Islam, its functionality, and the role of Islamic traditions. The master's students will benefit by attending high-level discussions on bioethics and by having opportunities to apply their knowledge of Islamic law and Islamic theology and to network and develop relationships that would be useful in their careers.

A Thriving Illinois: Higher Education Paths to Equity, Sustainability, and Growth

The proposed College submitted plans to support Goal 1, Equity, of *A Thriving Illinois to close the equity gaps for students who have historically been left behind*. Consistent with its mission to offer students seeking knowledge of traditional Islamic and Arabic studies, the College primarily serves Muslim students from diverse ethnic minority groups. The College collaborates with community-based organizations to connect with and recruit prospective students and has strategies in place to increase diversity by providing direct financial support to students and instituting an open policy measure to accept all students regardless of ethnicity or socio-economic background. Connecting with the community through community outreach programs has led to the increase of female students from 25 percent in 2018 to 36 percent in 2022 and has broadened the institution's capacity to recruit more ethnic minority students. To further enhance equitable access to the enrichment programs, the College offers classes in the evenings and weekends to accommodate students who work and/or students with child- or family-care responsibilities.

The proposed program will contribute to Goal 2, Sustainability, *to build a stronger financial future for individuals and institutions by finding ways to reduce the financial burden of education on students and their families*. The College established a scholarship fund where donors sponsor individual students in their studies. Darul Qasim will offer direct financial support in the form of tuition waivers and tuition discounts to qualifying students from low-income backgrounds. Darul Qasim further recognizes how other socio-economic challenges, such as transportation, create barriers to achieving a degree. To reduce the transportation barrier and cost burden for students commuting in a metropolitan city like Chicago, the College instituted digital transportation boards that enable students to connect with each other in each area of the city to carpool to class, thereby lowering the ancillary costs of attending. In addition, plans are also under way to increase the financial donor base, which will make costs of attendance more affordable for low-income and underrepresented students.

The proposed College will also contribute to Goal 3, Growth, *to increase talent and innovation to drive economic growth*. The proposal to operate and offer a master's-level degree program in the Chicago area will increase the available talent pool of qualified scholars, imams, and counselors within the Chicago metro area. The Chicago-area Muslim community is comprised of

more than 60 organizations, mosques, and schools that contribute to the local economy directly and indirectly by providing important community-level services and benefits, such as providing the food- and housing-insecure with assistance and tending to social, educational, and spiritual needs.

Mission and Objectives

Criterion 1030.60(a)(1) provides that the objectives of the degree program(s) must be consistent with what the degree program title(s) imply.

Criterion 1030.60(a)(2) provides that the requested degree program shall be congruent with the purpose, goals, objectives and mission of the institution.

Darul Qasim's mission is "to facilitate the learning and imparting of Islamic knowledge through authentic sources derived from the teachings of Prophet Muhammad." The application for operating authority is consistent with the mission, goals, and objectives of the Institution.

Curriculum / Assessment

1030.30(a)(3): The caliber and content of each course or program of instruction, training or study shall be reasonable and adequate for achieving the stated objectives for which the course or program is offered. An undergraduate curriculum shall include general education in alignment with the degree level and objectives.

1030.60(a)(4): The caliber and content of the curriculum shall assure that the stated certificate or degree objectives for which the program is offered will be achieved.

Admission

Darul Qasim's recruitment and admission process ensures a diverse pool of students. To be eligible for admission to the Master of Islamic Law and Theology program, a prospective applicant must possess a bachelor's degree within the fields of Islamic studies from a recognized college or institution or an equivalent degree from a recognized foreign college or institution with a cumulative GPA of 2.7 or above. Applicants transferring from another institution must take a placement exam on campus and demonstrate proficiency in al-Manār of al-Nasafī or the equivalent in legal methodology, al-Marghīnānī's al-Hidāya in law, Tafsīr al-Jalālayn in Qur'ānic exegesis, Taftāzānī's Sharḥ al-ʿAqā'id in theology, and Mishkāt al-Maṣābīḥ in hadith. The institution has a diverse student population in the non-degree enrichment programs and has plans in place to ensure the enrollment, retention, and completion of underrepresented and underserved populations in the degree programs. Since the College primarily serves Muslim students, most of the students are from ethnic minority groups. In addition, the College has seen a steady increase of female students over the last three years and has plans to ensure the proposed degree operation has such representation.

Curriculum

Darul Qasim anticipates requesting authorization from the Illinois Board of Higher Education to offer a Master of Islamic Law and Theology upon approval of operating authority. The Master of Islamic Law and Theology will be an interdisciplinary program designed to enable students to understand Islamic theology (*uṣūl al-dīn*) and legal methodology (*uṣūl al-fiqh*) at an advanced level. Coursework in the program will include the following contents:

- Classical Arabic texts
- Islamic comparative theology and law
- Research methodology
- Advanced Qur'ān and Islamic Law through study of *Tafsīr al-Aḥkām* (Exegesis of Islamic Law)
- Scholastic theology (*Tabṣīrat al-Aḍillah*, *Māturīdī Kalām*)

The College, faculty, and advisors will monitor students' progress in mastering the curriculum and provide academic support services to achieve student success.

Assessment of Student Learning

The College has established formal policies and procedures for measuring students' progress and achievement through formative and summative assessments. Student learning outcomes will be assessed using several methods across all courses, including direct measures such as course assignments, exams, essays, studies, and presentations. Indirect assessment measures include pre- and post-course knowledge-based surveys aligned with course learning outcomes. The academic assessment plan will measure students' progress, effectiveness of the curriculum, and student satisfaction and will be used to evaluate and improve the quality of learning and teaching and curriculum delivery.

Program Assessment

The College has established formal policies and procedures using qualitative and quantitative measures for reviewing courses and programs annually, with comprehensive program review managed by the Dean of Faculty. The review process will include end-of-course and end-of-program assessment of student learning, course-by-course assessment through evaluation of projects and theses, and a review of pre- and post-testing results. The College's Dean of Faculty will be responsible for the coordination of continuous monitoring of curricular effectiveness by seeking feedback from stakeholders, including students. Student learning outcomes include the following:

- Represent the content of the Islamic Oral Tradition within their particular context;
- Demonstrate critical ability to represent Islam through knowledge of fundamental sources;
- Demonstrate capacity to represent living sources of guidance in light of the challenges of modern-day living;
- Serve as an Imam at the national level;
- Conduct lectures and seminars for a broader national audience;
- Serve as an academic advisor to Muslim educational and religious organizations;
- Develop strategies to coordinate activities within the larger US community; and
- Conduct research at an academic/intellectual level on issues that impact the US

Facilities (space, equipment, instructional materials)

1030(a)(4) and 1030.60(a)(5): The institution shall have adequate and suitable space, equipment and instructional materials to support institutional programs.

Darul Qasim College, located in Glendale Heights, Illinois, occupies a 24,000 square foot facility with two administrative offices, seven classrooms, a conference room, and spaces dedicated for other uses, including for religious purposes, student lounges, and a library. In 2019, the College expanded the existing facility to accommodate additional classrooms, study areas, and a larger library.

Darul Qasim provides students with access to online library services allowing the students to perform research on topics covered in the degree program. The College's library is a non-circulating reference library that includes a collection of classical Arabic-language reference works in various genres of the Islamic sciences to support and supplement the core curriculum of the graduate program. In addition, students will have access to databases with collections of books, electronic media, journals, as well as support services.

Faculty and Staff

1030.30(a)(5) and 1030.60(a)(6): The education, experience and other qualifications of directors, administrators, supervisors and instructors shall ensure that the students will receive education consistent with the objectives of the program.

Darul Qasim has established policies to ensure that faculty members possess the training, credentials, and other required qualifications to provide instruction to students. The College has successfully recruited and retained a diverse faculty and has strategies in place to support their development to ensure the academic success of their predominantly ethnic minority student population. The College has four full-time faculty with advanced degrees at the master's level and above, appropriate to teach in the future-planned program. Three of the faculty have advanced degrees in Islamic Law and are qualified as Islamic legal jurists. Darul Qasim has developed policies to evaluate faculty and provide feedback on student learning outcomes.

Fiscal / Personnel Resources

1030.30(a)(11): The institution should be financially stable and capable of assuring the revenues needed for meeting stated objectives and fulfilling commitments to students; and

1030.60(a)(8): Fiscal and personnel resources shall be sufficient to permit the institution to meet obligations to continuing programs while assuming additional resource responsibilities for the new certificate or degree program.

Darul Qasim College has submitted fiscal plans indicating revenue will exceed operating expenditures over the next five years. The College's operational costs, including for staffing, space, and equipment will be mainly supported by tuition revenue and donations from committed donors. The total estimated revenue from tuition, grants, and donations in the first year is \$1,204,800, which will increase to \$1,784,000 by the fifth year. The College anticipates that endowment funds will grow and help diversify the entity's income and support long term project plans. Enrollment in the program is estimated to increase from one student in the first year to 30 students by the fifth year. Darul Qasim will recruit students for the planned program from students among its non-degree enrichment programs.

Accreditation / Licensure

Darul Qasim College has submitted plans to seek institutional accreditation from the Higher Learning Commission. No programmatic or specialized accreditation is required.

Program Information

1030.30(e): Publications and Information. Institutions shall be scrupulously ethical in all communication with the public and with prospective students. School publications, advertisements and statements shall be wholly accurate and in no way misleading; and

1030.60(a)(7): The information the institution provides for students and the public shall accurately describe the programs offered, program objectives, length of program, schedule of tuition, fees, and all other charges and expenses necessary for completion of the course of study, cancellation and refund policies, and such other material facts concerning the institution and the program or course of instruction as are likely to affect the decision of the student to enroll. This information, including any enrollment agreements or similar agreements, shall be available to prospective students prior to enrollment.

Detailed information on academic policies, tuition, fees, refund policies, admissions procedures, and other relevant information necessary for prospective students to make informed decisions on enrollment were provided in the application and will be published on Darul Qasim's website pending Board authorization.

Staff Conclusion. The staff concludes that Darul Qasim College meets the criteria in Sections 1030.30 and 1030.60 of the rules to implement The Private College Act (110 ILCS 1005) and The Academic Degree Act (110 ILCS 1010) and the relating Illinois Administrative Code (Title 23 Section 1030) pertaining to the assessment and licensure of a postsecondary institution.