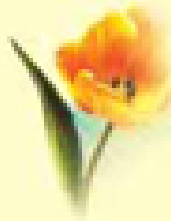






Ministry of Science, Research & Technology

**University of
Religions and Denominations**



The International Relations Office

2010



Introduction

The University of Religions and Denominations is a teaching and research centre focusing on the study of religions and Islamic sects. The president of the university is Hujjatul-Islam wal-Muslim in Navvab, one of its founding members. The university has four vice presidents: Vice President for Academic Affairs, Vice President for Research, Vice President for Cultural & Student Affairs and Vice President for Administrative & Financial Affairs.





History

In 1995 a group of scholars from the Qom Islamic Seminary interested in and concerned with religious and cultural matters, decided to pioneer a movement towards the study of various religions and other Islamic sects and denominations .This resulted in the establishment of an institute which eventually became the University of Religions and Denominations .The institute began its activities with a group of students from the Qom Seminary in a small environment, with meagre resources and facilities .At first, there was a special four-year academic course in three fields :Abrahamic Religions, Non -Abrahamic Religions and Islamic Sects .During their studies, the students also learnt English, Sanskrit and Hebrew languages .After about ten years of hard work and endeavour, training of elite students, and meeting the legal requirements governing the universities, this institute became legally a university.



The university's objectives

The university is a private, non-political centre of learning and research. It has the following ideals and goals:

- To train students and researchers in the fields of religions, Islamic denominations and the Shiite studies.
- To provide the Qom Islamic Seminary with support and consultation regarding the above-mentioned fields.
- To train scholars from the seminary for dialogue with scholars of other religions and sects.
- To acquire profound and accurate knowledge of Islam and Shiism.
- To answer all questions and inquiries concerning Islam and Shiism.
- To strive for the spread of ethics and spirituality amongst all, taking account of what all religions have in common and share with each other.
- To strengthen and increase the scientific output of home (Islamic/Iranian) scholars.
- To carry out essential, applicable and comparative research in the abovementioned fields.
- To print and publish magazines, periodicals and books on different religions and sects.
- To establish two-way relationship with similar institutes and universities worldwide as well as other researchers and academics.



Approaches to Studying Religions

Investigation and research into sects and religions using unbiased methods

Analyses and study of religions from a neutral and impartial perspective

Positive and fruitful interactions with the followers of other religions and sects

Respect for the teachings and followers of other religions



To encourage dialogue between religions and Islamic sects in order to edge them closer to each other.To introduce Islam from a Shiite perspective to the world.To strive to narrow the gap between different Islamic sects and Muslims around the world through scholarly efforts. To pave the way for undertaking comparative study of religions and sects



Departments

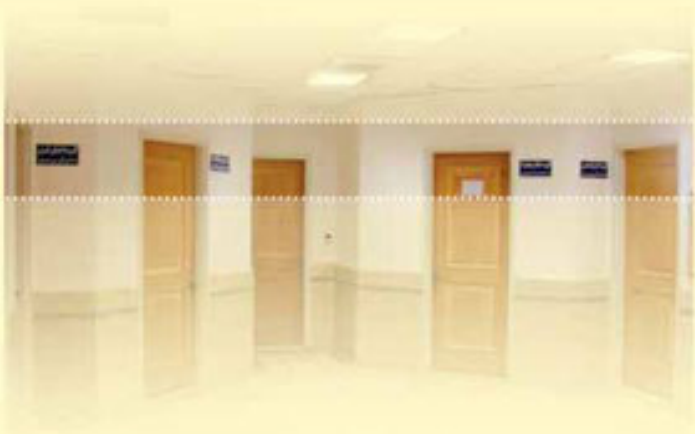
The university currently has three departments; the Department of Religions, the Department of Islamic Sects and the Department of Shiite Studies. There are nine courses of study with about five hundred male and female students currently pursuing their master's degrees. Courses of Study: Each department has three courses of study. The courses available at the Department of Religions are: Abrahamic Religions (Christianity, Islam and Judaism); Non-Abrahamic Religions (Hinduism, Buddhism) and religions of ancient Persia. The courses available at the Department of Islamic Sects are: Sufism and Islamic spirituality, Theological Sects and Jurisprudential Sects and The courses available at the Department of The Shiite studies are: Shiite studies from a theological perspective, Shiite History and Studies of Shiite Sects





Religious Studies Workgroup

This group is engaged in researching the Philosophy, Psychology and Sociology of Religion .It also holds scientific and research seminars on various associated subjects.



Publications

The University's Publishing House under the supervision of the president is responsible for printing and publishing titles containing the outputs of scholars and researchers .There are two separate entities.

University of Religions Publications: Publishes books written or -translated by researchers at the university and its various departments as well as works by other researchers in the field of religions and sects .

Adyan (Religions) Publications : Publishes books mainly written or translated by scholars from other universities.





The Haft Aseman (Seven Heavens) Quarterly

One of the greatest fruits of The Centre for Religious Studies and now The University of Religions and Denominations is the publication of this scholarly/research quarterly. It is a serious scientific effort aimed at publishing the works by scholars in an unbiased and non-judgemental fashion. In this scholarly periodical religious themes from a variety of new outlooks and perspectives are studied and presented. By this way of scholarly and logical truth-seeking one is led to such important and valuable results as learning about the discoveries, doctrines and experiences of the followers of other religions as well as appreciating, restudying and renewing one's own religious beliefs. Adopting a peaceful, harmonious and scholarly approach, devoid of any prejudice, bias and certainty, the Haft-Aseman Quarterly strives to help the tree of religious studies bearing fruit. By printing and publishing the results of different research efforts, it paves the way for productive interaction and dialogue between different religions and sects. Forty issues of this periodical, eagerly awaited for by its faithful readers, have so far been issued. Its serious effort for maintaining and improving the scholarly level of articles has made it an essential source for researchers on religions and sects. Each issue contains dialogues between scholars and thinkers from Iran and around the world on the subject of religions and sects. In the section on the glossary of religious terms an explanation of entries pertaining to other religions is provided.





The Office of International Relations and Cooperation

To meet the need to communicate with other universities and centres of learning around the world, this office is tasked with identifying individual researchers both Iranian and foreign who are engaged in religious research and studies in order to share findings and pave the way for dialogue between the adherents of different religions .





In order to promote and encourage active, fruitful and two-way relations with other faith groups, this office presents the results of its research to the universities throughout the world and holds an annual conference at the Centre for Religious Studies for both home and foreign researchers and scholars.

The university has been visited by many scholars, academics and journalists over the years. To mention just a few: Scholars from The Mennonite College (America), key members of the Vatican (Italy), Journalists from Le Monde Newspaper (France) and the president of Gregorian College are amongst those who have visited the university.

Another responsibility of this office is to send members of the faculties' board and outstanding students on national and international research and scholarly trips.

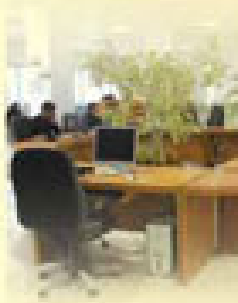


Library

The library houses books on Islamic sects, Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, primitive religions etc... There are also Islamic, Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian Encyclopaedias. This library is one of only a handful in the country specializing in the field of religions and sects and acting as a reference resource for a great number of clerics and university researchers. The library has around 40,000 titles in Farsi and Arabic languages and about 2500 Latin/English ones. Moreover, there are many magazines and periodicals in the said languages which can be accessed directly by all students.



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The Office of Religions and Human Rights Studies

This office was established in order to deepen and broaden the fundamental and academic efforts in the field of religions and Islamic sects, to examine the meeting points of universally accepted moral values of human rights and religions, to discover the positions of different religions and to promote the religious approach to human rights. It began its work in May 2008. Researchers in the field of religions and human rights as well as a group of experts in similar fields hold regular seminars. This office is also responsible for translating and writing books and articles.



