

On 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2022, I was invited to an alumni day held by the prestigious Young Muslim Leadership Programme (YMLP) run by the University of Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies (OXCIS). For those that read my blog last year, I was part of the previous cohort that attended in September 2021. As you can imagine, it was a real pleasure to return, given my last experience was such a fruitful one. Not only was this another opportunity to fly the acoustics flag, but it was also a great chance to network, meet like-minded people and, of course, re-energise and be inspired by the vast number of Muslims leaders breaking barriers – ceilings in fact – in leading positive change and achieving big, big things in the world! Once again UKAN+ (<https://acoustics.ac.uk/>) kindly offered to support my travel and accommodation, for which I am always grateful.

When I arrived at the centre on Saturday morning, I was welcomed by two leading academics – Professor Shahid Jameel (Sultan Qaboos bin Said Fellow) and Dr Asma Mustafa (Salahuddin Abdul Jawad Fellow). I consider them to be great Muslim mentors in a Western academic world; a world that has very few role models for people like me. There was a wonderful networking session in the morning where I was able to meet previous and current cohorts. We spoke about *our values, how we want to give back to our community* and ultimately *what we can do to make a significant impact in the world*. It allowed me to think deeply and realise that it's important to stay united within a community; it's important to have a desire – a hunger – to bring people up with you. Most importantly, it's better to be multifaceted, rather than be known by one trade.

Throughout the day, we had the privilege of hearing from several prominent speakers, including Lord Wajid Khan – British Pakistani Labour Party politician and member of the House of Lords; His Eminence Muhammad Sa'ad Abubakar – Sultan of Sokoto in Nigeria; and Zuber Issa CBE, Co-CEO and Co-Founder of the EG Group, and Co-Director of Asda. Their talks were engaging and uplifting. It encouraged me to continue my path to develop my leadership skills, to follow their example and become a great leader within my field and my community. I understood that it's important to be sincere in your purpose and reflect on the purpose of life, rather than the concerns of life. The main message I took away was to keep building and keep giving back. I returned to my hotel that evening to really reflect on how I can excel and be fulfilled in my field of work. It's safe to say that I came back with a formula that day: competence + integrity = success. I wonder how many would agree with me on this.



*Lord Wajid Khan – British Pakistani Labour Party politician and member of the House of Lords, U.K.*



*His Eminence Muhammad Sa'ad Abubakar – Sultan of Sokoto in Nigeria*



*Zuber Issa, CBE – Co-CEO and Co-Founder of the EG Group; Co-Director of Asda*



*Lecture given by the Sultan of Nigeria*



*Networking over lunch*





*Banquet prepared at lunch*





*Director of Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies – Dr Farhan Nizami and Lord Khan during a Q&A session*



*Some of the YMLP 2021 cohort*

