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Date: Tuesday, June 15, 2021

# ***Al Arqam Academy for Girls***

## ***Doha, Qatar***

**Information for Overseas Staff**

**2020-2021**

## FOREWORD

The information in this booklet is intended to give new teachers some awareness of life in Qatar and work at Al Arqam Academy. Information is meant to be a useful for new staff members but may be subject to change. We hope that it helps to answer most of your questions and that it prepares you for a unique and enjoyable teaching experience.

### Al Arqam Academy

**Vision:** To prepare a generation of students who are; faithful to their origins, committed to values, dedicated to academic excellence, and connected to humanity.

**Mission:** Al Arqam Academy focuses on providing a quality education based on Islamic principles and values, critical thinking, responsible citizenship, and leadership to prepare students to face modern challenges and contribute to local and global society The Academy ensures a healthy and safe school environment that supports the development of students in all areas.

### Our Values:

- Honesty
- Respect
- Responsibility
- Sincerity
- Sisterly love

Al Arqam Academy was established in 1996 as a private Girls' Arabic School but was distinctive as it included modern teaching methods and a variety of creative development programs. In 2004, keeping pace with education reforms in Qatar, the school changed to an international English curriculum, combined with a progressive Arabic and Islamic Studies syllabus. The school is a fully accredited Cambridge International Examination (CIE) Center.

Al Arqam Academy promotes an innovative and balanced education programme that strongly inculcates and promotes students retaining the tenets of their cultural and religious identity. We aim to create a supportive and caring environment where each girl is known and educated as an individual.

Al Arqam Academy has adapted and enhanced the framework of the National Curriculum from England. This ensures that international standards are met by incorporating the best practices in teaching and learning, but that schooling is useful and enjoyable. In Year 11 students sit Cambridge IGCSE examinations. The Arabic and Islamic Studies programme is paramount and meets and exceeds the requirements set by The Qatari Ministry of Education. The Quran is taught with the goal of developing students' capacity for memorisation, proper pronunciation and enthusiasm for learning.

## LIFE IN QATAR

### General:

The country of Qatar is centrally placed amongst the states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) which groups it with Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, The United Arab Emirates and Oman. It is an independent Arab state, and the official language is Arabic, but English is widely spoken.

Qatar is a limestone peninsula projecting northward into the Arabian Gulf, approximately 160km long by 80km wide and consisting mostly of low-lying, arid, stony desert. Doha is the capital city and administrative centre of Qatar. It is the only substantial town, and most western expatriates live within it.

The country has the largest single gas field in the world and the world's third largest gas reserves. Qatar has strong political links with the UK, and it currently ranks among the highest GDPs per capita in the world. In 2010 it won the rights to host the 2022 World Cup. It is a major financial player in the UK and to date it owns the Shard, Chelsea Barracks, Harrods, and the Olympic Village. Additionally, Doha-based Al-Jazeera television is considered the most important Arab news TV channel in the world on par with the BBC.

### Climate:

Qatar has a moderate desert climate with hot humid summers and mild winters.

The average temperature varies between 12°C - 21°C in January, and 35°C - 49°C from June to September. New staff arriving at the start of the academic year will therefore find the first 4 – 8 weeks very hot and humid, although air-conditioning makes all homes, cars, and buildings comfortable.

The climate during autumn and spring is very pleasant, while winter can be surprisingly cool. Average rainfall is 2 – 3 inches per year, although the actual amount varies considerably from one year to the next.

Time Zone: UTC/GMT +3 hours

Emergency: The emergency phone number is 999.

### Expatriate Life:

Doha is comprised of an extremely diverse community. There are expatriates from the U.K., U.S.A., South Africa, and Europe. In general locals and expatriates tend to be particularly friendly and helpful. At Al Arqam Academy we also pride ourselves on the diverse nature of our staff, which is comprised from different countries and backgrounds.

Social life can focus on friendship groups and there are various clubs and societies e.g., rugby, darts, sub-aqua, amateur dramatics, sailing, golf, various family clubs, hotel swimming pools and health clubs, etc.

Weekend visits to the beach, the sand dunes and fishing trips are also popular. Shopping is varied and caters for the wide mix of nationalities and disposable incomes. Many high street European style supermarkets and department stores can be found, which means there is very little that cannot be

purchased locally. There are several very large modern shopping centres with a wide variety of retailing, some of which include cinema complexes.

Many people use their holiday time to visit other parts of the Gulf Region e.g., Kuwait, Oman etc. all of which are within 1 hours flying time. Others prefer to go further afield and visit India, the Far East, Sri Lanka, Australia, etc.

As a staff member at Al Arqam Academy, please bear in mind that Doha is a relatively small city, and that the community is quite tightly knit. Teachers carry a high profile and parents expect a standard of behaviour from teachers that is respectful of the local culture.

### **Some do's and don'ts:**

- Public consumption and resale of alcohol is strictly forbidden, and drunk driving is a serious offence, which will result in a jail sentence. Only international hotel restaurants serve alcohol with food. Alcohol may not be brought into the country and will be confiscated at the airport by Customs. Please note that Al Arqam Academy does not provide a release for an alcohol license.
- The possession of or trade in drugs is strictly illegal and the penalties are severe, resulting in imprisonment.
- Pork is not sold or consumed in Qatar and any form of gambling is also forbidden.
- In Ramadan, non-Muslims are expected to refrain from eating, drinking or smoking in public between sunrise and sunset.
- Swimwear is acceptable at the beach/pool, but elsewhere the wearing of shorts, short dresses, vest tops etc., is frowned upon. Ladies must dress conservatively and make sure their shoulders, upper arms and knees are covered.
- Taking of photographs can be a sensitive issue; ask permission and avoid secure areas (airport, military camps, official buildings etc.)
- Any intimacy between men and women, in public is strictly prohibited. Extra-marital affairs and relationships are also prohibited by law. Enforcement of this law in the country, whilst not widespread, should be expected.
- Customs may inspect your luggage. If you are carrying videos/DVDs they may retain them for inspection by the censor. They will issue you with a receipt and they can be collected within a few days.

### **Local Bureaucracy:**

The amount of paperwork to be completed is onerous by European standards, making many of the simplest procedures very slow. This can make your first term frustrating, but once you have all the necessary "bits of paper", it ceases to be a major intrusion on daily life. We highly suggest that you do appropriate research into the country and the rules governing areas of concern to you.

### **Residence Permit:**

**All foreigners require a residence permit to live and work in Qatar. In most cases overseas staff will be issued a work visa before coming to Qatar.** If for any reason staff members enter the country on a visit visa the visa will then have to be transferred. All overseas staff members are on the sponsorship of the school as per the laws of Qatar. One of the first steps after your arrival is for Al

Arqam to transfer your entry visa to a Residence Permit. Staff will be given clear instruction on this process. You will have to undergo fingerprinting and a medical examination, which includes an HIV blood test and a chest X-Ray. A Residence Permit is an essential requirement before you can obtain a local driving licence, own your own car or obtain an exit visa.

**Important note:** To obtain your Residence Permit, the School submits your passport to the Qatar Immigration Department. It can take two months or more before they issue the permit, and the passport is returned to you. **During this period, you are unable to leave Qatar.** We would expect all permits to be issued and the passport returned within the first Term but, because the whole process is out of our control, we are not in a position to guarantee this. **However, in the unusual event of a personal emergency the school makes every effort to assist you in obtaining your passport to leave and an exit permit can usually be issued within a few hours.**

### **Staff travelling with family members:**

Al Arqam Academy is only responsible for the visas, residence permits, and health cards and housing of the employee. **The laws in Qatar regarding women sponsoring spouses and children are complicated and often left to personal interpretation.** The school cannot guarantee that employees will be able to sponsor family members. It is also very important for staff members to understand that in order for children to attend school, be seen in health centers, etc., they must have a residence permit. Private health clinics are available but can be expensive. Additionally, housing provided is primarily meant for single occupancy.

### **Exit Permit:**

To leave the country at any time, an exit permit is required. These are readily available, but the School requires written notification submitted one week in advance to process the paperwork.

### **Driving License:**

A local driving license is required to drive. This requires an eye test and identification of a few traffic signs. If you have a driving license from your country of origin or an international driving license, it is best to bring them with you as it may be possible to convert them to a Qatari driving license. The conversion of foreign driving licenses varies from the country of origin. For more information you may look at the Ministry of Interior website which will provide basic details. ([www.moi.gov.qa](http://www.moi.gov.qa)).

### **Local Services:**

#### **Banking:**

Local banks are excellent. There is little or no exchange controls, so money can be moved in and out of the country without any difficulties. The Qatar Riyal (QR) is fixed against the US dollar at QR3.65 = US\$1.00. Other exchange rates are available from many different internet sources. It is also advisable to check with your local bank regarding the process for transferring money from Qatar back home. Bank notes are available in denominations of QR 500, 200, 100, 50, 10, 5 and 1.

As soon as employees have obtained their residence permit, they must open an account in any bank (preferably Dukhan Bank) to which the school will deposit monthly salaries. If your residence permit is not completed within 1 month, the school will open an account for you in the Commercial Bank of Qatar (CBQ). The school cannot transfer salaries to overseas accounts as all official salaries must be deposited in local banks. Employees can arrange with their bank to have their salaries transferred after deposit.

### **Currency Exchange:**

The least favourable exchange rates are at the airport, whilst competitive rates are usually found at currency exchange offices and banks, which can both be found quite close to Al Arqam.

### **Healthcare:**

Medical facilities are modern and available to residents for a nominal charge. You are advised to register with your local Health Centre for a 100 QR registration fee which the school will be responsible for. Once this is done you may visit your local health centre and see a doctor (GP) and if medicine is prescribed, it is charged at a nominal rate. The school is responsible for health care.

### **Electricity:**

The supply is reliable and UK style 3 pin plugs are used with a voltage of 240 AC at 50 cycles. Adapters may be purchased locally if required.

### **Telephone:**

The country code for Qatar is +974. City or area codes are not used.

SIM cards for mobiles can be purchased by providing a fee and your passport and are available in Ooredoo and Vodafone outlets. Prepaid phone cards for mobiles and for international calls are readily available.

### **Post:**

International airmail takes around one week, while surface mail can take some time. There are no post boxes and post is not delivered to the door, but has to be collected from private boxes at the main Post Office. Staff members are welcome to use the school's P.O Box 23148 for private correspondence. Any parcels received by post will be handed over to staff in school.

### **Transport:**

To obtain a driving licence see the above note. There is limited public transport but taxi services are plentiful, and reasonably priced.

### **Cost of Living:**

Depending on individual styles and tastes, the cost of living is similar to other countries in the region. There is an excellent range of well-known shops and supermarkets as well as the local 'souqs' and markets. Eating out is very popular and good value, with a variety of restaurants to suit all culinary tastes and tariffs.

### **Social Life:**

Qatar is a safe, relaxed and comfortable place to live in. There is a large expatriate community in Qatar and social life can be as hectic or as relaxed as one chooses. Qatar provides wonderful opportunities for most sporting activities and there are numerous clubs and societies offering other cultural events.

### **A Letter of No Objection:**

This must be authorised from the school in order to obtain an international phone line, bank accounts, take driving tests and obtain a driving license.

## **Information Particular to Al Arqam Academy**

### **The Staff:**

Teaching staff are all female and are predominately Muslim. All staff members are made to feel very welcome and they are expected to be fully supportive of the strong Islamic ethos and culture of the school. Many staff members are recruited locally from Qatar as well as from surrounding Arab countries with an increasing number of staff coming from Canada, the UK, New Zealand, Australia and South Africa.

### **The Dress Code:**

Female staff members are expected to wear long skirts to the ankle and shirts/ blouses that have half-sleeves or long sleeves. No cap sleeves or sleeveless tops are allowed. Additionally, all tops should cover the back and midriff of the employee completely and allow for ease of movement such as reaching and bending. Trousers and leggings are not permitted in school. Clothes should not be tight, see-through or low cut. Muslim staff members are expected to wear abaya or jilbab and scarf while entering or leaving school.

Staff members must adhere to this dress code when dealing with any of the maintenance and security personnel even during non-working times, eg. dress according to the dress code when maintenance and security personnel are doing work in your flat.

### **The Package:**

### **Contract:**

Staff sign an open contract that will be renewed every year automatically unless it is terminated with prior notice by the school or the employee. Employees that have worked for one continuous academic year according to the school calendar are entitled to an annual paid leave of two months (of which the first month is paid based on the employee's basic salary plus allowances, while the second month consists of employee's basic salary only). The end of service gratuity will be paid in advance at the end of each academic year based on the basic salary. This totals twelve months' salary plus gratuity. The end of year leave and end of service gratuity will be paid with the salary of the last working month of the academic year.

### **Working practices:**

The working day is from 6:45 am to 2:00 pm, except on Mondays from 6:45 am to 3:00 pm. The week runs from Sunday to Thursday. The annual academic calendar, including vacation times, is prepared with the approval of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education. These vacations may vary according to the Islamic holidays and other holidays set by the government. Therefore, please check the school website for the calendar of the relevant academic year. Generally, staff will be expected to arrive for the new academic year in mid/late August and be permitted to leave for the summer break at the end of June.

### **Accommodation:**

Overseas staff are provided with a fully furnished, one bedroom apartment. The apartments are modern and have a basic satellite television service supplied. The service can be upgraded at an additional cost to the user. Apartments come complete with basic furnishing (TV, bed, sofa, wardrobes etc.), curtains, bedding, basic cooking equipment, cutlery, crockery, refrigerator, cooker, washing machine, air conditioners, telephone and wi-fi. A small quantity of basic food and drinks is also provided to cover the first day.

The school pays for major repairs, such as broken water heaters and air conditioners. It is the responsibility of staff members to keep the apartment and furnishings in good repair. Employees may not remove or alter furniture, or any items provided without prior permission. **Pets are not allowed.**

**Smoking (cigarettes, shisha/hookah, etc.) is not allowed** on school property or in school housing, this is to avoid the residue of the secondhand smoke permeating the apartment. If the staff member smokes in the flat, then they have to pay for the professional cleaning of all upholstered furniture and the curtains.

Required maintenance of the flat and all of the items provided should be done as soon as the problem is noted. Any repairs that are required for off-site flats should be reported to the maintenance team via email with a CC to the Principal of the Academy. The accountant will arrange for the appropriate action. Any repairs that are required for on-site flats should be reported to the Head of the Maintenance and Stores Department (Rehab) who will take appropriate action. For items that are damaged by the misuse of any occupants of the flat the cost of the repair will be the responsibility of the staff member. Do not allow unauthorized personnel into your accommodation for any reason. Do not allow unauthorized maintenance of any items in your flat, eg. security personnel making minor repairs without the Maintenance personnel present is not allowed.

Male visitors are absolutely forbidden without exception to visit staff in any accommodation owned or rented by the school. This includes all public and private areas of the property such as hallways, reception areas, and parking lots. Staff who have male family members (father, brother, son and spouse who live elsewhere) who wish to visit must submit a written request along with proof of the relationship well in advance of any visit and before any travel arrangements are made. The school reserves the right to deny access to visitors of any school owned or rented properties.

Female visitors may visit female staff members on a daily basis and should plan to leave before 11 pm. Female staff members who have female visitors overnight and longer must submit a written request along with the details and purpose of the visit.



**It is absolutely forbidden for staff to invite or tutor students in their accommodations.** Staff are not allowed to provide tutoring without permission from the administration, and it is expressly forbidden for any permitted tutoring sessions to be held in the accommodations.

Staff members who do not adhere to the visitor policy will be subject to the following disciplinary actions:

**First time:** Written warning in their permanent file.

**Second time:** Deduction of two days' wages.

**Third time:** Immediate dismissal from their post without reference, experience letter or NOC.

Staff with family members residing in or visiting any property rented or owned by Al Arqam Academy must adhere to all of the rules for accommodations provided by the school. The employee of Al Arqam Academy is responsible for the behavior of their visitors.

### **Checking In and Out:**

When moving into school property, staff will be given an inventory list for their accommodation, which is checked and signed by both parties. When vacating the school property, this inventory will be re-checked and deductions made for any losses or negligent damage.

When leaving, there is a simple clearance procedure widely in use within Qatar, whereby staff can demonstrate that they are up to date with telephone bills, utility bills and have closed their bank accounts, etc. Where staff complete these procedures, and have satisfactorily checked out of their accommodation, leaving it in a clean habitable condition, the school will forward their end of service bonus. Failing this, the end of service bonus will only be forwarded as soon as the final bills have been received and any damages must have been repaired/replaced, cleaning of carpets, upholstery, curtains etc. has been carried out.

### **Utilities:**

The school pays water and electricity charges up to 200 QR which is generally sufficient for single occupancy. Anything exceeding 200 QR must be paid by staff.

### **Air Fares:**

The school provides the outward and return flight at beginning and end of each annual academic year, which is contracted. Please note that employees who do not complete their contractual obligations will be responsible for arranging and paying for their own return flight. The school books tickets for staff members after asking them to complete the relevant form with destination and preferable dates details; dates have to be within the school approved summer holiday. School is only responsible for booking tickets for staff to their country of residence. In case a staff member wants to book her own ticket, a prior written request has to be submitted to and approved by school management. School would only pay for tickets up to the equivalent value of the ticket school would normally book for the staff member based on season prices. After getting approval, staff member can

book the ticket, be reimbursed for the approved amount of money and would then be responsible for paying the difference.

A onetime allowance of up to a total of 1400 QR is paid towards freight costs at the beginning of the contract for overseas staff. The school will reimburse the staff member the amount paid up to the 1400 QR after submitting freight receipt.

#### **Medical Card:**

The school will assist overseas teachers in obtaining a Qatari government health card and the fee for registering for the health card is paid by the school.

#### **Deductions:**

There are no tax or national insurance deductions in Qatar.

### **BEFORE LEAVING YOUR COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**

#### **Required Documents:**

You must have a valid passport from your country. Passports should have more than six months before expiration.

**All staff members must bring with them attested original educational certificates, transcripts and teaching qualifications. These documents must be attested by both the government from the country of origin and the Qatari Embassy in the country of origin. Once you arrive, your documents will need to be attested by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Qatar. If your country of origin does not have an embassy for the state of Qatar, please inform the school immediately so that we can try to find the appropriate means of attestation. Staff members are responsible for all costs related to the attestation of documents including any shipping or mailing costs associated.**

#### **Tickets (flight out):**

Tickets are all booked and paid for in Doha by the school. In most cases e-tickets are issued and should be printed by the person travelling along with any visas that have been issued. The Airlines will require this printed documentation at check in. Please also have your identification ready when preparing to travel.

***Please make sure the school has full details of where you can be contacted over the summer, in case of any changes of flights etc.***

#### **What to Bring:**

There is very little that cannot be bought in Doha, so what you bring is largely a personal decision. Bear in mind that it will be extremely hot if arriving in September, so bring plenty of lightweight clothing. You will receive advance confirmation of the year group/subject you will be teaching before departure. This will assist you in selection of teaching materials you may wish to bring with you.

#### **Important:**

Salaries are paid monthly in arrears so you will need to bring enough money to help fund yourself over the first month.

**Arrival:**

You may need the following information while going through Passport Control at Doha Airport:

Purpose of visit:	Work
Area of Residence:	Maamoura
Telephone Number in Qatar:	44505557 / 55551817
Sponsor:	Al Arqam Academy

A school representative will be at the airport to meet you and take you to your accommodation. We will ask for your original passport so that your Residence Permit application can begin immediately.

The following day you will be taken shopping for food and other essentials.

**And finally...**

We are proud of the accomplishments of our staff and students and look forward to welcoming on board staff that are passionate about teaching and learning.