

Interview with a Graduate Student

Who Won the Research Excellence Award 2024

Ali Al-Hajri

PhD student in Fiqh and Usul Al Fiqh

First, introduce yourself, major, and the topic of your PhD dissertation.

I am Ali bin Shafi bin Safar Al-Hajri, and I major in Fiqh and Usul Al Fiqh at the College of Sharia and Islamic Studies. My dissertation title was *'Fatwa in the State of Qatar - An Analytical and Evaluative Study.'*

What does it mean to you to win the Best Doctoral Dissertation Award at the University level?

I thank Allah Almighty for His guidance and for granting me success throughout all stages of my study. Winning the Best Doctoral Dissertation Award motivated me to strive even harder toward achieving meaningful accomplishments, both on a personal level and within my local community.

How did you come up with the idea for your dissertation, and what motivated you to choose it?

The idea of the research emerged through my work in the field of Fatwa. I observed certain challenges during my work, and after researching existing studies on the topic, I found a significant lack in addressing such issues.

What were the main challenges you faced during the preparation of the dissertation, and how did you overcome them?

I faced some difficulties and obstacles throughout the writing of the thesis, including:

Firstly, a lack of original sources related to the topic of the study. Secondly, a lack of cooperation from some stakeholders in providing the researcher with the required information.

This prompted me to follow specific procedures to address these obstacles as follows:

Firstly, carrying out more than twenty personal interviews and electronic correspondences, which varied between meetings with notables of Al-Thani tribe and religious figures working in the field of institutional Fatwa, in addition to phone calls and friendly meetings that brought me together with some of the sons of the most prominent fatwa scholars who were selected for this study.

Secondly, visiting public and private libraries and some research centers in the country. I even visited several foreign libraries and research centers to gain access to as much historical information as possible, along with foundational information on Fatwa and Ifta.

What impact will your research have on the scientific and societal circles?

I believe this research has the potential to make a meaningful impact, particularly because it addresses a significant issue at the intersection of scientific and religious discourse in the State of Qatar. By bridging theory and practical application, the study offers valuable insights that can be directly utilized by stakeholders, making it both relevant and actionable in real-world contexts.

A scientific publication is required as part of the criteria for winning the Award. Can you tell us about the research papers you have published from your dissertation?

Yes, I have published four peer-reviewed research papers in journals accredited by the College of Sharia (Category A), and I endeavored, with Allah's support, to choose the right journal before publication. The research topics varied, but the dominant feature was related to the country and its scientific aspect. As for the titles of the published research papers, they were *Sheikh Jassim bin Muhammad Al-Thani's Fatwa Tributaries and their Practical Models*, *Calculating the Zakat of Palm Trees Using the Arithmetic Average Method in the State of Qatar*, *Civilizational Dialogue in the Thought of Sheikh Muhammad bin Abdulaziz Al-Mana*, and *Weighting between Conflicting Interests in the Sight of Imam ibn Taymiyyah*.

How did the support provided by the University, whether through the Graduate Studies Office or the academic supervisor, contribute to this achievement?

The support provided by Qatar University, whether through the Office of Graduate Studies or the supervisor of the thesis, contributed to achieving the criteria related to the thesis and winning this award. The continuous communication between

students and the Office of Graduate Studies helped in making this achievement, supported by the grace of Allah. Furthermore, I will never forget the great effort provided by the supervisor through his valuable guidance that enriched the thesis.

What is your advice to graduate students aspiring to win these Awards in the future?

My advice to them is, first and foremost, to seek Allah's help throughout the study. They should also strive to choose research topics that relate to their country and contribute to its development through scientific research, which is one of the key pillars in building the future of the coming generations.

After this award, what is your next step in the academic or professional field?

I aspire to occupy a prestigious academic position, contribute to the dissemination of Islamic culture at the local and international levels, pay attention to national identity issues and their impact on the individual and the society, and be an active member of the society in order to teach values and meaningful behaviors to the future generations.

How do you see the impact of the Awards on motivating graduate students to improve the quality of research and innovation?

Launching such awards creates a stimulating environment for graduate students at the University, urging them to work hard and persevere in order to achieve accomplishments.

To what extent do you think the Awards are linked to the University's vision and research priorities?

These awards are closely linked to the University's vision in the research field so that they can contribute to raising the level of awareness among students and also help increase the quality of scientific research in published research.

How Will the Awards Contribute to Promoting Scientific Research?

Graduate Studies programs encourage students to participate in scientific research through various mechanisms, including academic assignments and encouraging students to engage in events held at both college and university levels, such as conferences and research forums, as well as participation in regional and international conferences. These activities contribute to the development of the students' research skills and enrich their experience in their field. Among these mechanisms are the Graduate Studies Awards, which cover doctoral dissertations, master's theses, and graduation projects. When selecting winners, consideration is given to the extent of students' participation in scientific research, whether individually or in groups, across various topics and disciplines. These researches may be derived from the academic theses or other topics, such as research on one of Qatar University's research pillars. These awards aim to guide students toward publishing in internationally ranked scientific journals, which are considered a reference for scientists and researchers. The awards also encourage students to benefit from the expertise of the University's academic staff, who are responsible for mentoring and guiding students toward using the latest research techniques and enhancing the quality of their research, whether in applied sciences or humanities and social sciences.





Media Coverage of the Awards Announcement

QU Announces the New Awards for Graduate Students

Qatar University (QU) has announced the launch of a new set of awards for graduate students, aimed at promoting academic and research excellence. These awards are part of the University's strategy to provide a stimulating learning environment that fosters innovation and creativity among graduate students across various disciplines. They also seek to highlight outstanding research contributions and encourage students to make valuable efforts that support the country's aspirations in the fields of knowledge and innovation.

The graduate studies awards include college-level awards, which are: the Distinguished Master's Thesis Award, the Distinguished PhD Dissertation Award, and the Distinguished Research Award. The Distinguished Research Award falls under two categories: the Graduate Studies Research Award in the Humanities and Social Sciences, and the Graduate Studies Research Award in the Applied and Natural Sciences. Finally, there is the Distinguished Graduation Project Award.

As for the graduate studies awards at the university level, they include: the Distinguished Master's Thesis Award, the Distinguished PhD Dissertation Award, and the Distinguished Graduation Project Award.

The Distinguished Graduation Project Award is a new addition, targeting graduation projects from master's programs that adopt this type of research output. The evaluation of research projects will be based on several criteria, including novelty in the field, theoretical framework, research impact, and stakeholder engagement. Students will receive scores based on the quality of their work: 3 points for top evaluations, 2 points for average evaluations, and 1 point for lower evaluations. One winner from each college will be honored during the Annual Research Forum.

During the press conference, Prof. Ibrahim Al-Kaabi, Vice President for Academic Affairs at QU, stated, "We are pleased to announce the launch of the graduate student awards, which represent a key pillar in supporting academic excellence and enhancing the quality of graduate programs at QU. These awards reflect our ongoing commitment to advancing the standards of education and research and to encouraging

graduate students to achieve outstanding academic accomplishments that contribute to knowledge development and community service. They also aim to recognize pioneering scientific efforts and inspire students to embrace excellence in their research, reflecting the quality of higher education and research at the University."

Prof. Aiman Erbad, Vice President for Research and Graduate Studies at QU, noted that in line with QU's mission to foster impactful research addressing societal challenges and aligned with the Qatar National Vision 2030, the awards were developed to honor exceptional theses, dissertations, and research projects by graduate students in various disciplines. These awards are designed to motivate students to adopt standards of excellence and strengthen their research capabilities in addressing issues that benefit the community. The award process consists of two stages: the college level, followed by the university level.

Prof. Erbad added, "The University offers an integrated academic environment that supports creativity and innovation and contributes to the preparation of qualified research professionals. These awards also provide students with broader opportunities for scientific publication, career engagement, and building strong academic networks. We are proud of our students and remain committed to supporting and encouraging them toward further academic excellence."

Dr. Ahmad Al-Own, Dean of Graduate Studies, affirmed that as the nation's premier university, QU is continuously working to enhance its academic framework to provide an environment that enables students to benefit from available resources and achieve academic excellence. He explained that several awards have been updated or newly introduced to focus on student outcomes in master's and doctoral programs, including honors for top theses, dissertations, and research projects that contribute to societal development and the advancement of scientific research. New awards, such as Best Research Project, have been added. "We are proud to recognize these outstanding academic achievements and reaffirm our continued support for our students on their academic journey," Dr. Al-Own said.