

Qatar Faculty of Islamic Studies

Civic architecture for learning and public life



Why this matters

This case matters because it shows how civic architecture can shape public perception, institutional identity and access to learning. The project created more than an academic building: it established a shared civic place where education, worship, landscape and public life could come together.

The urban pressure

The campus needed a building that could support a growing academic institution while also serving the wider neighbourhood. Without a strong civic focal point, Education City risked remaining a collection of facilities rather than a public-facing place that could attract students, researchers and local communities.

The partnership response

The project brought together Qatar Foundation's institutional ambition, international design and engineering expertise, and engagement with local academic and community needs. Partnership was important because the building had to perform at several levels: as a university, a mosque, a public destination, a sustainable building and a cultural statement.

What the project did

The scheme used contemporary architecture to create an inclusive academic environment that brought together learning, worship and public life. Its concept drew on the relationship between knowledge and light, expressed through an architectural spiral that shaped the building's form and identity. The project combined academic space, prayer facilities and landscape into a single civic campus composition.

Interventions and outcomes

- Created a co-educational Islamic university building and campus mosque within Education City.
- Provided academic, research and prayer spaces that support both institutional and public use.
- Expanded the civic reach of the campus, attracting students, visitors, local workers and worshippers.
- Used sustainable design measures, including greywater recycling and LEED Silver performance, to reduce environmental impact.

What made it work

The combination of university and mosque worked well because it widened the audience beyond students and staff. Public access, landscape and prayer facilities made the building relevant to surrounding communities. A partnership model with explicit goals also helped align architecture, engineering, sustainability and community use.

Challenges and lessons

The building's popularity suggests that demand was larger than anticipated. Friday prayers can exceed 6,000 people, and the building has become both a tourist attraction and a community resource. Future projects of this kind should plan for growth, public use and changing patterns of participation from the outset.

Relevance to other cities

Relevant to education, culture and faith-based projects seeking to combine institutional excellence with public access, civic identity and sustainable design. The case is particularly useful for campuses, cultural districts and civic buildings that need to serve both specialist users and wider communities.

Follow-up opportunity

This case could support further exchange on inclusive civic architecture, educational campuses, cultural identity, hybrid public institutions and the role of design in making learning more accessible.

For more information visit: www.arup.com | www.myaa.eu



Partnerships to deliver

prosperous urban futures

Part of the UK's contribution to the thirteenth session of the World Urban Forum, this case study highlights how cities are responding to challenges through practical, place-based collaboration. It reflects a shared commitment to learning, collaboration and building partnerships for the future of cities.