



**Aalia Kurji**  
Communications Manager  
Aga Khan Academy Mombasa

Aalia has over a decade of global work experience including working at a media house in Toronto. She believes the Academy's mission and vision are essential to nurturing courageous, confident and ethical global leaders.



**Paul Davis**  
Dean of Admissions and Financial Aid  
Aga Khan Academy Mombasa

As the Dean of Admissions and Financial Aid, Paul has passionately led the Talent Identification Programme since its inception. The programme identifies "creators of destiny" – students in disadvantaged socioeconomic and educational areas of Kenya, who are academically able and show leadership potential.

## School Spotlight

# Aga Khan Academy Mombasa



### About Aga Khan Academy Mombasa

The Aga Khan Academy Mombasa is an International Baccalaureate (IB) World School. It is the first in the network of Aga Khan Academies established by His Highness the Aga Khan in 2003. Admission to the Academy is means-blind and is based on merit. We consider all eligible students regardless of their socioeconomic status. The core mission of the Aga Khan Academies is to produce ethical home-grown leaders for the developing world towards the goal of sustainable development. What makes the Academies unique is how we identify and nurture exceptional young people from a wide range of national, religious, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds to create learning communities that are exceptionally diverse, open-minded, culturally-rooted, and driven to make an impact on their communities and the world.

### What is the Talent Identification Program and how does that impact your school's admissions process?

Through our Talent Identification Programme (TID), we actively search

for and assess students with academic and leadership potential across diverse backgrounds. A key aim of this programme is to expand the reach of the Academy beyond the usual catchment groups for schools of similar caliber to include students who come from disadvantaged groups, and otherwise would not have access to high-quality secondary education. The programme provides students, over the course of six years, with tuition, housing, meals, a weekly stipend, and covers the costs of uniform, medical coverage, exams, and university application fees, as well as school trips and extra-curricular activities.

### Does being a part of a large school group affect how you approach your admissions process?

I do not believe so. We are mostly independent but as the network grows there will be a lot more sharing of practices on how we examine students and find the best campus and situation for them. One thing I would like to mention is the Aga Khan Curricular Strands, which are interwoven with the IB curriculum at the Academy and form the basis for how the curriculum is taught and received by students. The five strands include pluralism, ethics, governance and civil society, cultures, and economics for development. We communicate these strands throughout

the admissions process so families have a full understanding of the basis of our approach to learning.

### What are your main advertising and marketing channels when promoting your school?

Aga Mombasa has a Communications Department that manages the Academy's website and social media platform. We also host and take part in numerous admissions-related events in Kenya and around East and Central Africa.

### Does your admissions office have issues with parents not having access to the internet/computer in order to apply?

Most of our parents have access to the internet and a computer in order to apply and communicate with us. However, we generally experience this issue with our parents whose children are a part of the Talent Identification Programme. When our Admissions Department sends emails to our TID parents, they also call the parents to let them know that an email was sent, and a lot of times the parents have to go to a cybercafe to view it. There are also some TID parents who don't have email at all, so getting information to them can be difficult at times. However, our Admissions Department understands this challenge and they make a lot of effort to physically go to these areas. They sometimes have to travel very far to visit different communities and schools in rural areas.

### Can you tell us a bit more about your professional development program for your teachers?

We provide ongoing, collaborative training for both our teachers and local teachers in public schools through our outreach programme. This programme, which is done in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and the Aga Khan Foundation, includes weekly trainings held at the Academy in our Professional Development and Outreach Centre. The objective of the outreach programme is to respond to the needs of the local teachers to improve the standard of teaching and learning through extensive market research and interaction with the government and departments of education. Working with local teachers allows the Academy to use our knowledge and resources to improve the overall education across Kenya, which we've received great feedback on. Our teachers at the Academy also go through weekly training, which is sometimes done together with all teachers or by the programme they teach. Through these trainings, our teachers are taught various aspects relating to IB or topics on how to accommodate different learner types. This is something we are very proud of as not many schools spend much time ensuring their teachers are always improving and working to be the best educators possible.

### Your website mentions you base admissions strictly off merit, can you summarise your main criteria for admissions?

Yes, we base our admissions strictly off merit; however, we have a few criteria the student must possess. The

student must be academically capable and self-motivated, exhibit leadership qualities through their involvement in extracurricular or community activities, have well-developed social skills and morally sound values, and above average performance in a range of assessments, which include non-verbal, problem-solving exercises, creative and personal writing exercises, English and Mathematics assessments, creativity exercises, as well as individual interviews.

### How does AKA Mombasa go about utilising brand ambassadors to promote your school in your community and beyond?

We have various brand ambassadors who promote the Academy, such as current students, alumni, and parents. Every year our Admissions Department visits numerous cities, schools, and community centres around Kenya or across East Africa to promote the school. However, we have noticed the importance of word of mouth as a critical source of information and trust during the decision-making process for parents. The success of our students and alumni, as well as our acclaimed Diploma Programme results, have proven to be a catalyst for other students joining. Our current students and alumni also present and share their experiences at various events the Academy has hosted or been a part of. Our parent ambassadors across Kenya and around East Africa are very important as well, as they invite interested friends, business colleagues, or relatives to the marketing events the Academy is a part of. These visits and other personal interactions with members of their community instill trust and confidence in the Academy.