The Doctoral Programme on the Muslim World, created in 1985, is a part of the doctoral school of the Institut d’Etudes Politiques in Paris. It has given many young francophone academics and researchers training in both epistemology and in fieldwork. The most prominent among them, Malika Zeghal, Mounia Bennani-Chrafti, Dina El Khawaga, Luis Martinez, Yves Gonzalez-Quijano, Severine Labat, Xavier Bougarel, Philippe Droz-Vincent, Laetitia Bucaille and others have gained status and authored major works in this field of knowledge. The programme also aims to train professionals who will staff private corporations or work in public service, in sectors relevant to the modern Muslim world.

Launched by Professor Rémy Leveau, the programme is now headed by Professor Gilles Kepel, and has been widely restructured to meet the new challenges of the field. It recruits a dozen students per year, offering them a syllabus which includes courses and seminars on politics, economy, religious and social issues, together with Arabic language lessons (students willing to study other languages of the Muslim World register for that purpose in other Parisian universities, to which the programme is linked) and a tutorial in English. Professors Ghassan Salamé, Olivier Roy, Malika Zeghal, Christian Décobert, Ruth Grosrichard, amongst others, teach and give tutorials together with Professor Kepel. The duration of studies is one year for the Diplôme d’Etudes Approfondies (DEA), and three to four years for the PhD dissertation.

The DEA year includes a collective two-week fieldtrip, and an individual four to six-week fieldwork journey to a Muslim country. In February 2000, students and instructors went to Southern Morocco: they mixed with students of the doctoral programme in Political Science from Casablanca University and shared their experience and worldviews. In May and June, students will go individually to such countries as Lebanon, Yemen, Sudan, Libya, Algeria, Morocco, and Mauritania. Upon their return, they will write a circa 100-page paper, to be publicly defended in the fall. The best students willing to specialize in academia will then be invited to join the PhD programme.

Admission is conditional to the completion of a master’s degree in the humanities, the knowledge of one of the languages of the Muslim world, and a TOEFL level of English. French is the main language of instruction, though students are encouraged to develop their writing and speaking abilities in other languages as well. Generally half of the student body is foreign – whether from European countries or other countries of the Muslim world. Interviews for admission are conducted in late June and mid-September. The academic year commences in mid-October.