I have been grateful to spend my time as a visiting scholar at the Centre of Islamic Studies, University of Cambridge for a period of one year between January and December 2017. During the period, I had the opportunity to meet other scholars from different academic backgrounds while doing my academic research at the Centre. I was fortunate to discuss my research, which was on Southeast Asia’s (in particular Malaysia) relations with the Arab Gulf countries and the Middle East, with scholars and researchers who share similar interests.

The Centre’s activities were academically appealing. With the bi-weekly seminar, I had the opportunity to engage with the other academics in various academic backgrounds. The interaction with, to name a few, Dr Paul Anderson, Dr. Ali Sonay, Dr. Hazim Kandel, Mr Ahmed Paul Keeler, Dr Sarra and those I met during the Gulf Research Meeting, such as Prof. Tim Niblock and Prof. Degang Sun, were exceptionally useful and academically stimulating.

Spending time in the University itself allowed me to participate in seminars and events organised by different faculties and departments. The highlight was the annual Gulf Research Meeting, a prestigious academic workshop on the Middle East, which was held in August 2017 at Cambridge University. I presented a paper at one of the workshops, entitled “Multidimensional Perspectives of Malaysia’s Relationships with the Arab-Persian Gulf”. This was my second time attending the workshop. Participation in this thought-provoking workshop was useful for my research and gave me ideas for my future research.

The great facilities and good academic support from the Centre and the University helped my current research project and extended my understanding of the academic environment in Cambridge. Apart from participation in academic seminars, conferences and workshops, I also had opportunities to sharpen my understanding in doing research and academic writing by enrolling in the training and courses organised by the University. As a result of this support and great academic atmosphere, I have been able to produce journal articles and conference papers, which include:

3. Malaysia’s Relations with Saudi Arabia and Iran: Juggling the Interests, Contemporary Review of the Middle East (Will be published in 2018).

Being part of the Centre of Islamic Studies at the University of Cambridge was an academically and personally rewarding experience. I am personally indebted to Dr Paul Anderson and the Centre’s Assistant Ludmila, for their support and encouragement during my presence at the centre.