

# **The Institute of Ismaili Studies**

## **Student Complaints Policy**

### **1 Introduction and scope**

- 1.1 The Institute of Ismaili Studies (the IIS) is committed to providing the highest quality educational experience for all students, from their first interaction with the Institute, when making enquiries about studying on one of our programmes and throughout their journey with us a student. For the purposes of clarity, the generic term “student” will be used throughout this document, as the policy applies at any stage of the student’s journey.
- 1.2 This aspiration of providing consistently high-quality services is reflected in all our academic, pastoral and support services. We welcome queries and feedback from students about any aspect of our services and we will use this feedback to drive improvement and enhance our students’ educational experience.
- 1.3 However, we also acknowledge that students will sometimes wish to make a

- 1.7 Complaints from third parties e.g. parents, as well as anonymous complaints, cannot be accepted.

### 3 Underlying principles

- 3.1 This policy has been created in accordance with the UK Quality Code, and guidance from the Competition and Market Authority (CMA) on handling complaints, to ensure compliance with consumer protection law and that good practice is observed.
- 3.2 This policy provides a clear, transparent and effective route to complaint resolution and is readily available via the student handbook and prospectus, on the IIS website and on Moodle and will be reviewed and updated annually.
- 3.3 All complaints will be treated fairly and impartially and the process is designed to focus on resolving complaints rather than apportioning blame. All parties involved will be kept informed of the progress of the complaint at regular and appropriate intervals during the process.
- 3.4 The issues relating to any complaint will be kept confidential and information will only be shared with any students or employees on a need to know basis.
- 3.5 Every attempt will be made to resolve issues informally and as quickly as possible. Should a complaint be dealt with through the formal process, the complainant has the right to be accompanied to an investigation or panel meeting by a fellow student, friend or relative. Please note that anyone who accompanies a complainant to such a meeting should do so as an observer, unless requested to contribute by the panel.
- 3.6 This process is not a legal one. It serves as a formal, internal process against which the IIS can be assessed as having applied its regulations and fulfilled its duty of care to deliver services to students satisfactorily; that it investigates complaints robustly and fairly, and that it makes decisions and takes actions that are reasonable and proportionate. Under this policy, therefore, students are not entitled to legal representation at complaints hearings and appeals.
- 3.7 All complaints are taken seriously, will be investigated appropriately and can be made without fear of victimisation. However, repeated and unwarranted complaints or the vexatious or malicious use of the Student Complaints Policy may result in disciplinary action against the student.
- 3.8 An annual review of the Student Complaints Policy, processes and outcomes will be undertaken by the Head of Quality Assurance & Evaluation (QA&E), in consultation with the Academic Management Committee (AMC), to monitor effectiveness and ensure that the Institute is able to address the root causes of problems, to learn from complaints made, ensure the same complaints do not reoccur and to improve our students' educational experience. All changes are approved by the Academic Council.
- 3.9 The IIS recognises the importance of responding to complaints as quickly as possible

they do slip due to staff absence or operational difficulties, new timescales will be communicated to the student. All complaints will be closed within the deadline of 90 days set by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education.

## **4 Stage 1: Informal resolution**

- 4.1 In the first instance students should raise their complaint with the respective Programme Leader, Academic Advisor or Student Services Manager. If, however, the complaint is against one of these individuals, students should address their complaint to the Head of DGS. The complaint will then be forwarded to the most appropriate person in the department, with the aim of the complaint being resolved within the department if at all possible.
- 4.2 Every attempt will be made to resolve and /or respond to your complaint within 10 working days. You will be advised if this timescale needs to be extended because of the planned absence of key individuals.

## **5 Stage 2: Making a formal complaint**

- 5.1 With all complaints, informal resolution will be sought. However, if the student is not satisfied with the outcome at stage 1; if the complaint relates to bullying and / or harassment, discrimination, equality or whistleblowing or if the complaint is against a Head of Department, a formal complaint should be raised. Complaints should be made in writing to the Head of QA&E at [studentcomplaints@iis.ac.uk](mailto:studentcomplaints@iis.ac.uk).
- 5.2 A complaint should be made as soon as possible after the incident / issue which gives

possible e.g. because the complaint is raised during the holiday period, they will be informed and an indicative timescale for resolution will be given to them.



grievances under the Higher Education Act 2004. Further information can be found on their website (<https://www.oiahe.org.uk>). At the end of the IIS' Appeals Procedure, the student has the right to submit a request for the IIS' decision to be reviewed by the OIA.

- 10.2 The OIA Complaint Form must be received by the OIA within twelve months of the date of the Completion of Procedures Letter.

## **11 Monitoring of the Complaints Process**

- 11.1 This Complaints Policy, the procedure, and the outcomes of any complaints submitted will be monitored and an annual report on the preceding 12 months' activity will be produced by the Head of QA&E, in consultation with the AMC, for the SOAS and IIS Joint Programme Committee, the Academic Council and the OIA to review.

## 12 Document Control

Version	Role / Activity	Person(s) responsible	Date
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