



The Institute of Ismaili Studies

ACADEMIC COUNCIL

TERMS OF REFERENCE AND MEMBERSHIP

1. Constitutive principles and duties

1.1 The Academic Council (AC) is constituted by the Board of Governors (BoG) as the senior academic governance body of the Institute of Ismaili Studies. The AC mandate is to advise and be accountable to the BoG on all academic matters and academic-related policies. It exercises the powers vested in it by these Terms of Reference, or as delegated by the BoG. In discharging its duties, the AC reports to the BoG through the Academic Steering Committee (ASC), which is a governor-led sub-committee of the BoG that advises the full BoG on academic strategies for research, publication, translation, as well as educational and teaching programmes of the Institute.

1.2 The AC shall provide assurance to the BoG that the Institute is implementing effective academic governance frameworks capable of establishing and maintaining excellence in teaching & learning, assessment, research, and academic publishing, while remaining true to the Institute's mission.

1.3 The general duties of the AC shall be:

To approve

- the internal validation and review processes for courses and programmes
- institutional academic policies related to validated provisions
- policies and procedures for the assessment of the academic performance of students
- the admission policies and selection criteria for the admission of students
- student admissions, as well as student progression and graduation
- the criteria for academic-related internships and postdoctoral fellowships at the IIS
- the procedures and process for the appointment and removal of internal and external examiners
- the awarding of doctoral and other substantive scholarships and fellowships
- the dismissal of students for academic or disciplinary reasons

To recommend to the Board of Governors

- high-level strategies concerning scholarship, teaching, and curricula at the Institute, with due consideration to the Institute's Strategic Plan
- the high-level research, teaching & learning, curriculum development, publication and translation strategies, ensuring the prioritisation of areas of interest to the Institute, in particular promoting important but understudied themes and topics, with due consideration to the Institute's Strategic Plan



The Institute of Ismaili Studies

- academic partnerships and collaborative provisions of education and research, as well as processes to monitor and review the performance of said partnerships
- the intellectual directions to be prioritised through the IIS doctoral scholarship programme with due consideration to the Institute's Strategic Plan
- the criteria and procedures for academic promotions and the conferment of academic titles

To advise

- the Director and the BoG in regard to the academic activities of the Institute
- the Director and the BoG on the resources needed to support the Institute's academic activities
- on such other matters referred to it by the BoG or the Director

To ensure

- compliance with academic policies and procedures
- cyclical quality reviews of programmes and the monitoring and evaluation of academic Key Performance Indicators for continuous quality enhancement of taught programmes and research
- oversight and management of all academic risks
- that matters related to equity and diversity are fully considered, addressed, and embedded in the Institute's academic policies and practice
- that the UK Quality Code for Higher Education and relevant external reference points are duly employed as a key external point of reference
- alignment to good practice in teaching and learning, research, faculty success, and student success
- that these terms of reference are reviewed on an annual basis along with the Academic Council's effectiveness, and that this is reported to the BoG

To receive

- annual reports from its subcommittees: the Research and Publication Committee; Student Experience Committee; Teaching & Learning Committee
- an annual report on academic misconduct, appeals, student discipline and academic-related complaints
- Annual Programme Reports (APRs) for all validated provisions
- an annual, consolidated and anonymous, faculty profile and performance report
- an annual publications report

2. Appointment and operation

The Academic Council is formally appointed by the Board of Governors. Membership includes:

- 2.1 **Ex-officio members** are voting members appointed by virtue of their current position, and their AC membership will end in the event that they move to an incompatible position or leave employment. Ex-officio members will include:



The Institute of Ismaili Studies

- The Director (Chair)
- Heads of Academic Departments (including a representative from DARP in lieu of the head of DARP, in case the latter role overlaps with the Director)
- Two Programme Leaders of validated programmes (on a 2-year rotation cycle across all validated provisions)
- Three research unit Heads (on a 2-year rotation cycle across all research units)
- The Head of Quality Assurance
- The Academic Support Programmes Manager
- The Head of the Aga Khan Library
- The Chair of the Research Sub-Committee
- The Chair of the Teaching and Learning Committee
- The Chair of the Student Experience Committee

2.2 **Nominated members** are voting members and are selected by the AC, based on a set criteria, from a self-nominated pool of candidates. The AC selection will be countersigned by the AC Chair and the Board of Governors. Nominated members normally serve on the AC for a period of three consecutive academic years and can be re-nominated only after no less than 3 years' hiatus.

Membership of the AC should be inclusive and reflective of diverse academic activities at the IIS (teaching and learning, research and publications, curriculum development, student services) as well as diversity of ranks. The selection of nominated members should therefore strike the right balance between skills, experience, and diversity, ensuring the presence of a broad representative spectrum of voices. It is a duty of the AC to make sure that such inclusiveness is pursued pro-actively, stimulating the professional development and participation of all relevant staff, and creating opportunities for their engagement with governance structures. Such engagement should be valued as part of the staff's professional duties and positively reflect on their intended career progression. As a general principle, nominated members should constitute at least 25% of the AC membership, with due regard to balance in terms of rank, gender, ethnicity and departmental distribution.

Nominated members are meant to act in representation of their respective departments – and not in a personal capacity – also facilitating the information flow between the AC and their departments when required.

2.3 **Students** will be represented by no less than one student voting member per validated academic programme. In case of programmes lasting more than one year, only students regularly enrolled in the last year of study are eligible for this role. Student members will be selected, following set criteria, from a self-nominated pool of candidates, with due regard to balance in terms of gender, ethnicity and programme distribution. The selection panel will include AC members and student representation that will involve returning/finishing students.

2.4 **Sub-committees:** The AC may delegate matters of governance related to research and publications, teaching and learning and student experience to subcommittees whose



The Institute of Ismaili Studies

membership would reflect the diversity of academic activities as well as of ranks. The chairs of all subcommittees will be voting members of the AC.

- 2.5 **External input and expertise:** At least one external voting member selected by the AC and countersigned by the BoG. The external member must be an academic with senior experience of the UK HE sector, and he/she is meant to serve on the AC for three consecutive academic years.

Frequency and quorum:

- 2.6 **Frequency:** the AC shall meet no less than three times in a given academic year, following a meeting schedule to be agreed and published in advance of each academic year. The agenda and minutes of the AC meetings, as well as of its sub-committees, are disclosable to the BoG. It will also meet at least once annually with the BoG.
- 2.7 **The quorum** for the meetings of the AC will be 60% of voting members. The AC will not meet in absence of the Chair, or suitably delegated member.
- 2.8 The AC membership, ex-officio and nominated, should reflect the diversity of race, ethnicity, gender of the academic staff at the IIS and operate in accordance with the Institute's policy on equal opportunities.
- 2.9 The AC may co-opt members for one year, as and when required.
- 2.10 These Terms of Reference can be reviewed and modified where required, subject to the approval of the Board of Governors.