The Institute of Ismaili Studies

Accessibility: If you need this document in a different format, please contact Quality Assurance on qa@iis.ac.uk. If a student has difficulty as any stage of the procedure because of a disability, they should discuss the situation with Student Services as soon as possible.

The Institute of Ismaili Studies
External Examiner Policy

1. Introduction and scope

1.1.   External examining is crucial for the Institute to assure the maintenance of its academic standards within the UK HE context, and it is therefore an important part of the IIS' quality assurance framework. The present policy is applicable to all validated taught programmes of study, as well as short courses carrying academic credit.

1.2.   The Academic Council retains responsibility for the appointment, with approval from SOAS, briefing and payment of all external examiners and all reports are submitted to IIS, as well as for the maintenance and enforcement of the present policy.

1.3.   The application of the policy is delegated to the departments running the aforementioned types of programmes and courses, through their internal academic management structures.

2. Criteria for the appointment of External Examiners

2.1   External Examiners must be appointed for all validated taught programmes delivered by the IIS.

2.2   External Examiners should not have any close involvement with the IIS which might compromise objectivity. Over the last five years, an examiner should not have been:

- a member of staff, a governor, a student, or a near relative of a member of staff associated with the field or award;
- be teaching (even occasionally) on the programme under scrutiny;
- be involved in collaborative activity with the staff or students of the programme under scrutiny;
- an external examiner on a cognate field or award within the IIS;

1

- involved as external examiner for the modules or associated awards when, in the past, they were approved by a different validating body.

2.3   An examiner should not be, at any point in time:

- personally associated with the sponsorship of students;
- currently a member of staff teaching on a programme leading to an award at a collaborative or validating partner institution;
- required to assess colleagues who are recruited as students in the area associated with the Academic Council;
- in a position to influence significantly the future employment of students;
- likely to be involved with placements or training of IIS students in the examiner's organisation.

2.4   An external examiner's academic/professional qualifications, experience and expertise should be appropriate to the awards/field to be examined. Both the level and the subject of the examiner's qualifications should generally match what is to be examined. External Examiners must be competent in assessing students' knowledge and skills at higher education level. Suitable expertise and breadth of experience may be indicated by:

- the current [or last, if retired] post and place of work;
- the range and scope of experience across Higher Education/ professions, with particular attention to experience in teaching and assessment;
- current and recent active involvement in research/scholarly/ professional activities in the field of study concerned;
- experience in designing and operating assessment and/or quality assurance procedures;
- membership of professional bodies, such as the Higher Education Academy.

2.5   An external examiner must be fluent in English and, normally, be eligible to work in the UK. External Examiners who are not eligible to work in the UK must obtain a Tier 5 visa or a Permitted Paid Engagement letter to enter the UK.

2.6   The fee payable to an external examiner is determined by the Academic Council.

2.7   External Examiners are not expected to hold more than two External Examinerships at the same time, including their appointment at the IIS.

2.8   If termination of the appointment of an external examiner is considered desirable, grounds for such a decision must be clear and incontrovertible and the consent of the Academic Council and SOAS, as the validating body, will be sought. Appropriate grounds will include failed submission of reports, sub-standard reports quality, or a change in circumstances crating a conflict of interest.

3. Rights and Responsibilities of External Examiners

3.1   The primary responsibilities of External Examiners are:

- to evaluate whether the academic standards set for the programme/course are appropriate and comparable with the standards upheld in the UK HE

sector, and with the principles and directions issued by the sector regulator (the Office for Students) and the designated quality body (QAA);

- to evaluate the rigorousness of the assessment process, and that is has been fairly set and conducted in respect of institutional regulations and guidance;
- to comment on the standards of student performance in the programme under scrutiny, with reference to previous years where possible;
- to comment on the comparability of the standards of students' achievements with the UK HE sector and/or cognate fields of study;
- to highlight any areas for improvement and/or good practice, reporting back to the IIS at least once annually (or as otherwise be prescribed) on the programme(s) standards, the effectiveness of the assessments and any lessons to be drawn from them.

3.2   In order to discharge the aforementioned responsibilities, external examiners will:

- attend relevant Examination Board meetings and have access to all assessed work;
- see samples of students' work for those modules for which they have designated responsibility, in order to ensure that each student is fairly placed in relation to other students;
- see evidence of internal moderation processes relevant to the sample of assessed work;
- have the right to moderate the marks awarded by internal markers in accordance with IIS' policies regarding assessment;
- participate as required in any reviews of decisions about individual students' awards taken during the examiner's period.

3.3   External examiners may request to meet students to gain more insight in regard to the programme under scrutiny. Such meetings must be arranged by the administration of the relevant department and not by the external examiners directly. Any reference made to such meeting in the external examiner report or feedback must be anonymised. It must be stressed that students are not permitted to make direct contact with external examiners regarding their individual performance.

3.4   External examiners should have sufficient time to scrutinise examination scripts and other assessed work adequately

4. Responsibilities of the Institute of Ismaili Studies

4.1   Prior nomination, the IIS should provide External Examiners with sufficient information to allow them to make an informed decision as to whether to accept the appointment or not.

4.2   The Human Resources department should issue an appointment letter, including summary duties, information on payment of fees and expenses, visa requirements and details of relevant regulations. This appointment letter will be considered as a contract letter for the External Examiner, who must confirm acceptance.

4.3   The IIS will adopt any reasonable adjustments that external examiners required in order to carry out their duties on ground of disability or other extenuating circumstances.

4.4   New external examiners must be briefed on their task as soon as possible after appointment, preferably by visiting the institution to meet the relevant department's staff. The briefing will cover: the dates of examiners' meetings; the examiner's role in relation to the examining team as a whole; module specifications and teaching methods; the methods of assessment and marking scheme; modular regulations.

4.5   The relevant Department should provide the external examiner the following information:

- The name and contact emails of key departmental staff (e.g. Academic Administrator, Programme leader etc);
- The Exam Board date(s) to which the External Examiner is invited;
- The Terms of Reference, and current membership of the Exam Board;
- The relevant Student Handbook;
- The relevant programme and module specifications and full outlines;
- The relevant general and component-specific marking criteria;
- The regulations to be used in determining student Progression, Awarding and Classification;
- The previous External Examiner's final report and the departmental response.

External Examiner Policy
Version 2

5   Document Control

Version	Role / Activity	Person(s) responsible	Date
Version 1	Author	Programme Leaders	2018
Version 2	Author	QA&E and AMC	August 2022
	Approval	Academic Council	September 2022
	Due for Review	Teaching & Learning Committee	

External Examiner Policy
Version 2