



The Institute of Ismaili Studies

# The Institute of Ismaili Studies

## Academic Misconduct Policy

### 1. Introduction

1.1 The IIS values a culture of honesty and expects all members of the IIS' community, students and staff, to understand and uphold academic integrity.

1.2 Consistent with the QAA's 'whole community' approach stating that all members of a provider's community are responsible for ensuring that academic integrity is upheld and embedded, markers should make a positive effort to identify instances of academic misconduct and where required make referrals to this procedure. This is a responsibility issuing from their academic employment and an essential part of maintaining the credibility of the programmes run by the IIS and of delivering a high-quality learning experience.

1.3 The Academic Misconduct Policy applies to all assessments and examinations undertaken at the IIS by any student enrolled on programmes validated by SOAS.

### 2. Academic Misconduct

#### 2.1 Academic Misconduct definitions

Academic Misconduct is defined as a student attempting – whether successfully or not – to gain an unfair advantage for themselves (or another student) in the form of a higher mark than they would otherwise have achieved without this unfair advantage. Conduct which constitutes academic misconduct includes but is not restricted to the following:

- (a) introduction of non-permitted materials into an assessment or examination, including remote examinations
- (b) removal of an examination script or examination stationery from the examination room unless explicitly authorised
- (c) any attempt to confer or gain access to the examination script (before the examination) or other assessment of another candidate
- (d) any attempt to tamper with an examination script after the completion of the examination
- (e) impersonation or attempted impersonation of a candidate



## The Institute of Ismaili Studies

- (f) plagiarism in any assessed work as defined below (including self-plagiarism – see 2.6)
- (g) falsification or misrepresentation of data, results, references, evidence, or other information
- (h) contract cheating (presenting other people's work as one's own by using work produced by third parties, i.e., ghost writing, essay writing services or other sources)
- (i) editing by a third party of assessed/examined work to a degree whereby the work may not be considered to be the student's own
- (j) any other conduct likely to give an unfair advantage to the candidate.

### **2.2 Referencing**

Students must always follow appropriate referencing guidelines when producing work for assessment. Direct quotations from the published or unpublished work of others must always be clearly identified as such by being placed inside quotation marks, and a full reference to their source must be provided in proper form. A series of short quotations from several different sources, if not clearly identified as such, constitutes plagiarism just as much as does a single unacknowledged long quotation from a single source. Equally, if students summarise another person's ideas and judgements, they must refer to that person in their text as the source of the ideas and judgements, and include the work referred to in their bibliography. Failure to observe these rules may result in an allegation of plagiarism. Students should consult their lecturer, advisor, or Academic Skills Coordinator if they are in any doubt about what is permissible.

### **2.3 Plagiarism definition**

All work submitted as part of the requirement for any assessment of the IIS must be the student's own work and expressed in their own words and incorporate their own ideas and judgements. Plagiarism, that is, the presentation of another person's thoughts or words as though they were the student's own, must be avoided and all work must be referenced using approved referencing guidelines. Students must also be aware of self-plagiarism (see 2.6).

Plagiarism includes but is not limited to the following:

- (a) The verbatim (word for word) copying of another's work without appropriate referencing
- (b) The close paraphrasing of another's work by changing a few words or altering the order of presentation, without appropriate referencing
- (c) Unacknowledged quotation or paraphrases from another's work or from the student's own work
- (d) Self-plagiarism - Unacknowledged re-use of a student's own work, for instance by using whole or part of an essay written for one module (either at the IIS or another institution) for another module. This would result in a student gaining credit twice for the same piece of work (See 2.6).



## The Institute of Ismaili Studies

(e) Collusion – this occurs when two or more students collaborate in the preparation and production of work which is submitted by one or more of the students as their own work (unless this is permitted, i.e., a group assignment)

(f) Contract cheating – the use of essay writing services etc. (See 2.9)

### **2.4 Major and minor plagiarism**

The categories of plagiarism include, but are not limited to, the following:

#### (a) Minor Plagiarism

- A small amount of paraphrasing, quotation or use of diagrams, charts etc., without citation or adequate attribution. If the plagiarised sections contain critical ideas which are key to the assignment, then this would constitute a major case.

#### (b) Major Plagiarism

- Extensive paraphrasing or quoting without proper citation of the source
- Lifting directly from a text or other academic source without reference (where material is taken directly from a text of other source the cited material should normally be demarcated with quotation marks and the source should be cited).
- Contract cheating: The use of essays from essay banks, either downloaded from the internet or obtained from other sources such as essay writing services
- Presenting another's designs or concepts as your own
- Continued instances of what was initially regarded as poor academic practice or minor plagiarism despite warnings having been given to the student concerned
- Collusion between two or more students.

### **2.5 Poor academic practice**

The IIS distinguishes Academic Misconduct from poor academic practice, which can often be the result of inexperience or lack of knowledge. Poor academic practice is an incorrect, inadequate, or confused citation that is not intended to be a contravention or an attempt to gain unfair advantage and is likely to be caused by a student's lack of experience of academic writing at the beginning of their studies. Markers shall use their judgement to decide if poor academic practice or academic misconduct has occurred, and where it is the former, should follow the process below:

(a) In instances where the marker decides that the student work displays poor academic practice rather than academic misconduct, the marker will handle the matter in accordance with the normal assessment and feedback processes. Depending on the circumstances and the application of their



## The Institute of Ismaili Studies

academic judgement, the marker may decide that because of the poor academic practice there should be a reduction of the mark awarded or that the affected parts of the assessment are disregarded, and the remaining work marked as normal. The marker must inform the student of the poor academic practice and why it is unacceptable. The IIS should record a note of poor academic practice in the appropriate part of the student record system.

(b) Where there is a repeated instance of poor academic practice by the student, they will be required to meet with the relevant Programme Leader and advised that further instances of poor academic practice may lead to a referral to the procedure in Section 3 of this policy.

(c) A referral should also be made to Section 3 in instances where the marker decides that the amount of affected text is too large to be handled by disregarding it.

### **2.6 Self-plagiarism**

Work submitted for one module may not be used for another module without acknowledgement and prior approval by the module convenor. Where students draw on their own previous written work, whether submitted for their current degree, or for a previous degree or qualification, this must be clearly stated and referenced accordingly. However, reproducing large sections of an assignment in a later assignment may be deemed self-plagiarism even where this has been referenced correctly. Reproducing large sections of an assignment in this way would mean that the student would be gaining credit twice for the same work. To avoid this, students are advised not to copy work from one assignment to another and to avoid attempting assignments which may have too much overlap. If students are unsure of the requirements, they should speak to their tutor before attempting the assignment.

### **2.7 Repeat offences**

Where students have committed repeat offences, later offences will normally be treated more severely than the first offence. A second offence can only be described as such when any previous offence has been notified to the student and any associated investigation has been undertaken and the outcome notified to the student. Where this is not the case, such an offence should be considered to be a 'joint first offence' i.e., where a student submits three assignments at the same time and has no prior offences.

### **2.8 Mitigating circumstances**

Mitigating circumstances are sometimes submitted as a defence in cases of academic misconduct. The IIS has provisions to support students experiencing difficult circumstances through the Mitigating



## The Institute of Ismaili Studies

Circumstances Policy which provides eligible students with additional time to complete assessments without penalty. Mitigating circumstances will not be considered as extenuation for academic misconduct. The only exception is in the exceptional event that a student was in a state of mind that they were unable to distinguish between right and wrong at the time of the offence, supported by documentary medical evidence. In such a case, the penalties indicated in Sections 5 and 6 may be justifiably moderated.

### **2.9 Contract cheating (also known as ghost-writing)**

Contract cheating is where a student has obtained an essay or other work from another source, such as an essay mill, and has presented that work as their own. In some cases, there may be compelling evidence to support that it is likely contract cheating has occurred, for example where Turnitin identifies near identical essays submitted at other institutions. However, it may be that the academic marking the work has serious concerns as to whether the student had actually written the work submitted. Where there is a suspicion, the process in 2.10 should be used to determine whether it is appropriate to submit to the formal academic misconduct investigation process.

A number of factors might contribute to a suspicion of contract cheating such as:

- (d) The level and style of English is significantly better and/or different to previous work or contributions in class
- (e) The style of the work changes throughout the assignment
- (f) Differences in font/formatting in parts of the assignment
- (g) Misuse/change of personal pronouns
- (h) Out of date/unusual references/bibliography

### **2.10 Process for investigating contract cheating**

This process should be used where the marker has suspicions of contract cheating but does not yet feel there is sufficient evidence to go immediately forward to the formal investigation stage in section 3 of the procedure. Where the marker is satisfied that there is already reasonable evidence to suspect contract cheating, this process may be skipped, and the matter directly referred to 3.0 of this procedure for formal investigation. The investigation as set out here is not an allegation of misconduct but rather is an attempt to obtain a full understanding of the situation.

- (a) The marker should compare the assignment to one or two of the student's other assignments
- (b) The marker should discuss their findings with Programme Leader to see whether their concerns are shared



The Institute of Ismaili Studies

(c) If the concerns are shared a meeting should be arranged involving:

- The academic raising the concerns
- The student (who may be accompanied by a student representative, fellow IIS student or a member of the IIS student support team if they wish)
- An officer from Student Services, or an appointed deputy, to take notes of the meeting

(d) The student should be asked to bring their notes used in the preparation of the assignment, any draft versions of the assignment and any readings they have used so that they can demonstrate how they worked on the assignment

(e) The meeting will be held informally and will not be adversarial. It is an information gathering exercise

(f) In the meeting the student can be asked questions about:

- What made them choose the topic
- The content of the work (questions should be of an appropriate level to the module concerned)
- What sources were used
- Whether they had discussed their work or shared it with other people beforehand
- Whether their approach to this assignment had been different to their usual approach
- Any other relevant questions

(g) If at the end of the meeting the marker is satisfied that the submission is the student's own work no further action should be taken. The student should be written to by the nominated person in the IIS to confirm that the matter will not be taken further.

(h) Where, following the meeting, the marker still suspects that contact cheating may have occurred the notes of the meeting and the findings should be passed to the QAE Department to administer the formal investigation as set out in Section 3 of this procedure.

## **2.11 Equality and Diversity**

In operating this procedure, the IIS is committed to fulfilling its responsibilities under the 2010 Equality Act. In order to ensure that students with disabilities are treated no less favourably than other students within this process, the IIS shall take positive steps including reasonable adjustments. Such adjustments can include permitting representatives to speak on behalf of the student or extending timescales for submitting appeals. The decision to approve such adjustments shall be proportionate, and subject to approval by the Head of QAE.

## **2.12 Confidentiality**



The Institute of Ismaili Studies

The IIS will comply with its obligations under current UK Data Protection Law and treat all correspondence and documentation relating to any proceedings as confidential and will only discuss the information with third parties where this is a necessary part of the investigation process.



### 2.13 Retrospective investigation of allegations

Allegations of academic misconduct will be investigated as soon as it is practical to do so. Investigations can be conducted after a mark has been formally published or an award made if credible evidence comes to light which suggests misconduct may have taken place at the time of the assessment. IIS may recommend to SOAS that it rescind a mark or revoke an award in accordance with the SOAS General and Admissions Regulations for Students if, upon completion of this procedure, misconduct is proven.

## 3. Procedure for Investigating Academic Misconduct

### 3.1 Status of allegation

In all proceedings in relation to academic misconduct, a student will be presumed innocent of the charge until the contrary is proved on the balance of probabilities or the candidate admits culpability.

### 3.2 Investigation of academic misconduct

Where a candidate is suspected of academic misconduct, the following procedure should be followed.

#### Programme Team Level

**(a) Reporting Academic Misconduct:** The academic member of staff raising the case should complete the Concerns of Plagiarism/Academic Irregularities Form available from [this link](#) or the Academic Administrator.

**(b) Paperwork and evidence:** The reporting Academic member of staff must complete all required fields on the Concerns of Plagiarism/Academic Irregularities Form and attach a copy of the Turnitin report (if applicable) and any other documentary evidence they have collected in support of the case. If the student has used another student's assignment (at the IIS or another institution), this should also be requested through Turnitin. Once the essay has been received the tutor should review the source essay to see if there is a case to answer.

**(c) Collusion:** Where one student has been accused of copying from another, both students should be investigated, and two Concerns of Plagiarism/Academic Irregularities Forms will need to be completed. Turnitin matches assignments against each other in the order they were submitted to Turnitin so it cannot ascertain which one of the students copied the other.

**(d) Deadlines:** Cases of academic misconduct should be reported to the QAE Department by the programme team within 28 calendar days of the assignment submission date.

There are 5 stages to the formal part of the investigation which will be processed by the QAE Department in conjunction with relevant colleagues:





### **QAE Department Level**

- (a) Stage 1 –The QAE Department will confirm that the required paperwork and evidence have been correctly submitted and will then forward the case to the student for comment within ten working days. Once this period has passed, the case moves to Stage 2.
- (b) Stage 2 – The documentation along with the student’s response will be sent to the Head of the QAE Department to review within ten working days. If there is a conflict of interest, another senior member of academic staff who does not have any previous involvement in the case will act in place of the Head of the QAE Department. The Head of QAE, or their appointed alternate, may consult with any key staff involved if necessary. Once the outcome is confirmed, the case moves to Stage 3.
- (c) Stage 3 – The student is informed of the outcome and given 10 calendar days to accept or deny the outcome. A non-response will be treated as an acceptance of the outcome. If the student disagrees with the outcome, they can request a hearing with the Academic Malpractice Committee (AMP) and the case moves to Stage 4.
- (d) Stage 4 – An Academic Misconduct Panel (AMP) will be convened to hear the case. The student will be informed beforehand that the AMP involves a re-investigation of the case, and the original outcome may be upheld or a less/more severe penalty may be applied.
- (e) Stage 5 – The student may ask for a review of the decision under the appeals process in Section 7 below. This does not involve a re-investigation of the case and the review will only be permitted on limited grounds as defined in the appeals process below.

### **3.3 Deadlines for completing cases**

The IIS aims to complete the academic misconduct process in a timely manner. The IIS will endeavour to respond to allegations of misconduct and to process cases within the stated timescales. However, on occasions it reserves the right to vary the process it follows in the interests of fairness or extend these deadlines in particularly busy periods or when there are circumstances beyond the Institute’s control that inhibit us from investigating the allegation within the stated timescales.

## **4. Academic Misconduct Panel (AMP)**

**4.1** Under Stage 4 of the Academic Misconduct investigation procedure, students have the right for their case to be heard by an AMP.

**4.2** The Academic Misconduct Panel will consist of a minimum of three members of academic staff, with no prior involvement in the case, from the pool of staff nominated annually by academic Heads of



## The Institute of Ismaili Studies

Department to sit on misconduct and appeal panels. One of the members will be asked to act as Chair of the AMP.

The Senior Quality Assurance Officer or their nominee will act as secretary and ensure a record is kept of the proceedings. The secretary is not involved in the decision-making process.

**4.3** The date of the hearing is to be confirmed with the student. Written notice of the hearing, together with the documentary evidence to be considered, and the names of any witnesses to be called, will be sent to the student by the Secretary at least 7 calendar days prior to the AMP.

**4.4** The student may present documentary material or call witnesses in their defence or in mitigation. However, documentary material for consideration by the panel must be sent to the secretary of the panel, to arrive at least 5 calendar days prior to the hearing.

**4.5** The student is expected to present their own case and answer the panel's questions. The student has the right to be accompanied to the AMP by a companion who can be a Student Representative, a fellow student or a member of the IIS Student Services team who is there to provide moral support but is not permitted to address the panel. Legal representation is not required and will not be permitted. The name and details of the companion must be sent to the Senior Quality Assurance Officer at least 5 calendar days before the meeting of the AMP.

**4.6** The student will have the right to be present throughout the hearing except when the panel retires for its deliberations when only the panel members and the secretary will be present.

**4.7** The allegations will be presented by the Chair of the panel and the student will be asked to reply to the allegations. Witnesses may then be called. The panel may ask questions of all those called before it and the student may raise questions through the Chair of the panel. Cross-examination by the parties is not permitted.

**4.8** The panel shall retire to consider its findings. If necessary, an adjournment may be called.

**4.9** A decision will be reached by majority verdict of the panel. Individual votes of the panel members shall remain confidential.

**4.10** The panel may meet remotely or by email in certain circumstances. In these circumstances, the student will be informed in advance and given the right to submit written representations to the panel.

**4.11** The student shall be informed of the outcome in writing by the secretary within **15 working days** of the panel and will be provided with a copy of the notes from the panel.

## 5 Penalty Tariffs for Taught Degrees

### 5.1 Penalties for taught degrees



The Institute of Ismaili Studies

Although some penalties refer to cases of plagiarism, all penalties can also be used for other cases of academic misconduct including examination offences where this is considered appropriate by the Chair of the Sub-board of Examiners or the Academic Misconduct Panel.

In awarding penalties in accordance with the tariff below, attention should be given to the student's overall profile in order to avoid unintentional consequences arising from the penalty.

A third repeated offence will automatically be referred to the AMP, with the penalty available as stated at 5.5 if the case is proven.

Code	Taught Degree Penalties
2	<p>Re-submit the relevant piece of work with corrections &amp; explanation/resit the exam by a specific deadline for a <b>capped</b> assignment mark, at the minimum pass mark. <b>The module mark is not capped.</b></p> <p>The student must include a covering summary of the changes made to the work and the reasons for these changes in order to demonstrate an improved understanding of good academic practice.</p>
3	<p>Re-submit the relevant piece of work with corrections &amp; explanation/resit examination by a specific deadline for a <b>capped</b> assignment mark. <b>The module mark is capped</b> at the minimum pass mark.</p> <p>The student must include a covering summary of the changes made to the work and the reasons for these changes in order to demonstrate an improved understanding of good academic practice.</p>
4	<p>A mark of 0 assigned for the assignment and the student is required to resit a <b>new piece of work</b> for a <b>capped</b> assignment mark, at the minimum pass mark. <b>The module mark will be capped</b> at the minimum pass mark.</p> <p>The student must include a covering summary of their understanding of academic misconduct and what they have learnt to demonstrate an improved understanding of good practice.</p>
5	<p>A mark of 0 is assigned for the module. The student is required to repeat the module in the next academic year (this may affect progression). The module mark will be capped at the minimum pass mark. The student must include a covering summary of their understanding of academic misconduct and what they have learnt to demonstrate an improved understanding of good practice.</p>
6	<p>Withdrawn from the IIS and barred from re-entry.</p>



## 5.2 Allocation of penalties for taught degrees

	1 <sup>st</sup> Offence	2 <sup>nd</sup> Offence
Minor	2-4	3-5
Major	4-5	5-6

**5.3** The above table is to provide guidance as to what penalty is appropriate for misconduct. Normally we would not depart from this. However, in exceptional circumstances, a more lenient or severe penalty may be imposed, if the Chair or Panel consider it appropriate to do so.

**5.4** Any claim of ignorance or carelessness will not be accepted as a basis for mitigation of a Penalty.

**5.5** In the event of a third repeated offence that is proven, the student will be withdrawn from the IIS and barred from re-entry. A mark of zero will be awarded to the affected assessment.

## 6. Appeals

**6.1** After receiving the written outcome of the Academic Misconduct process a student may submit an appeal against this decision based on the process below no later than **10 working days** of receiving the written outcome from the AMP.

**6.2** An appeal is not a re-hearing of the case that has been previously presented. An appeal is a review of the decision reached, and may be lodged on the following grounds only:

- There is new material evidence which the student was unable to provide, for valid and over-riding reasons, for the original AMP
- There is documented evidence of bias on the part of members of the AMP
- The penalty applied has exceeded that available to the AMP
- The Academic Misconduct procedures were not complied with to the extent that the outcome is likely to have been different had the procedures been complied with.

**6.3** The appeal must state the ground(s) of appeal. The appeal should be addressed to the Director of the Institute of Ismaili Studies and sent to the Head of QAE.

**6.4** An Appeal Panel will be convened, comprised of:

- The Director of the Institute of Ismaili Studies, or nominee
- An academic member of staff
- A Head of Department at the IIS

**6.5** Appeal Panel members will have no prior involvement in the case.



## The Institute of Ismaili Studies

**6.6** Where it is possible, the IIS will ensure that the panel reflects the diversity of the IIS.

**6.7** A secretary will keep a written record of the proceedings and decisions made. The contact details of the secretary will be communicated to the student, but the secretary is not involved in the decision-making process.

**6.8** The Appeals Panel shall have available to it the following decision-making powers:

- To reject the appeal and confirm the penalty applied
- To uphold the appeal and overturn the decision to apply any penalty
- To reduce the penalty applied and apply a lesser penalty

**6.9** The Appeals Panel may not apply a greater penalty than the one contested.

### **6.10 Appeals Process**

**6.11** The date of the appeal hearing will be confirmed with the student. Written notice of the hearing, together with the documentary evidence to be considered, and the names of any witnesses to be called, must be sent to the student by the secretary no later than 5 calendar days prior to the Appeals Panel.

**6.12** The student may present documentary material or call witnesses. However, documentary material for consideration by the panel must be sent to the secretary of the panel, to arrive no later than 3 calendar days prior to the appeal hearing.

**6.13** The student is expected to present their own case and answer the panel's questions. The student has the right to be accompanied to the Appeals Panel by a companion who can be a Student Representative, a fellow student or a member of the Student Services team who is there to provide moral support but is not permitted to address the panel. Legal representation is not required and will not be permitted. The name and details of the companion must be sent to the secretary, no later than 3 calendar days before the meeting of the Appeals Panel.

**6.14** The Chair of the AMP that made the relevant determination shall be invited to submit a response to the appeal. This should be received no later than 3 calendar days prior to the appeal hearing.

**6.15** The student will have the right to be present throughout the Appeals Panel except when the panel retires for its deliberations when only the panel members and the secretary will be present.

**6.16** In the event that the student fails to appear at the Appeals Panel without reasonable cause or explanation, the panel will convene in the student's absence and arrive at a decision.

**6.17** The panel shall retire to consider its findings. If necessary, an adjournment may be called.

**6.18** A decision will be reached by majority verdict of the panel. Individual votes of the panel members shall remain confidential.



## The Institute of Ismaili Studies

**6.19** The panel may meet remotely or by email in certain circumstances. In these circumstances, the student will be informed in advance and given the right to submit written representations to the panel.

**6.20** The student shall be informed of the outcome, which will be final, in writing by the secretary within 10 working days of the panel and will be provided with a copy of the notes from the panel.

## 7. SOAS and OIA Review

**7.1** A student who has reached the end of the Appeals procedure and is dissatisfied with the outcome may elect to submit a request for the IIS' decision to be reviewed by the validating body, SOAS. At the end of the process where an accusation of Academic Misconduct is upheld, or partially upheld, a Completion of Procedures Letter will be issued to the student notifying them that they may submit a request to SOAS for an appeal as well as contact details to access the relevant process at SOAS.

**7.2** Following an appeal to SOAS, where a student is still dissatisfied, they may elect to access the appeals process with the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA). To do so they will require a COP Letter from SOAS. The OIA is a body independent of both the IIS and SOAS. More information about the OIA is available here: <https://www.oiahe.org.uk/students>. Further information will be provided to students, including when a COP Letter will be provided, as part of the appeals process to SOAS.