The Institute of Ismaili Studies

External Speakers Policy

The Institute of Ismaili Studies (The Institute) is committed to protecting the right to express oneself freely, both academically and in daily life. There is a strong emphasis on maintaining an atmosphere of tolerance where open debate can occur, and this is encapsulated in our Academic Freedom Policy and Freedom of Speech Policy.

The Institute values the contributions of external speakers as an important aspect of a dynamic academic community. As long as events comply with the law and appropriate procedures are followed, we seek to facilitate them. We also encourage students and staff to attend and take part in other events held at the Aga Khan Centre (AKC) in London to which they are invited or that are open to the public.

Staff and students who wish to organise events that involve external speakers are responsible for notifying The Institute of the invited speakers. They are also responsible for ensuring requests are made with sufficient notice to allow us to assess any potential risk relating to the event and make arrangements to mitigate this.

According to the Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech, no one should be denied participation in an event based on their beliefs, views, or the policies of their organisation, as far as it is reasonably possible. An exception would only apply if the speaker belongs to a group that is a Proscribed Organisation, as defined by the UK Home Office. Further information about these groups can be found [here](#).

When evaluating whether to hold an in-person or online event, however, The Institute will also consider potential risks as part of its Prevent Duty. These can include, but are not limited to, the well-being of students, staff, and speakers, the reputation of The Institute, a speaker's previous activities, and any media attention they have received. To ensure The Institute is not providing a platform for illegal activity, it is important to consider UK laws on discrimination, incitement, and intimidation when reviewing a speaker's history.

The Institute expects all those invited to attend events at the AKC, or being held by The Institute online, to conform to its policies insofar as they relate to freedom of speech, equality, bullying, and harassment. Relevant policies are available on the [IIS website](#).

We reserve the right to deny access to a speaker or to stop a talk if they refuse to comply with these requirements or are observed to breach them in any way.

This policy does not apply to guests invited to speak as part of standard course delivery or other operational activity. Decisions about what constitutes such operational activity are made by individual members of the senior leadership of the Institute. This policy also does not apply to events organised

at the AKC by other organisations, provided these are not open to the public and that students of The Institute are not able to access them.

In-person Events process and link to the Prevent form

When inviting external speakers and using the Cloudbooking process to Book a Room, the Organiser of an activity will be required to confirm that they have completed the Prevent form. This form can be accessed here and is designed to support anyone booking a room to establish as quickly as possible whether they need to proceed to a risk assessment.

By submitting this form, event organisers will meet their obligation, set out above, to notify The Institute of the invited speakers. Should an event organiser be unsure whether their event forms part of 'standard course delivery or other operational activity' they should contact either the relevant Head of Department or email QA@iis.ac.uk.

Where multiple external speakers are invited to an event, such as a conference, the Organiser of the activity can make use of a spreadsheet to reduce the need for duplicating answers to standard questions available from the QA Department. Students who invite external speakers for events will need to contact a member of staff to access the Cloudbooking portal. That staff member will be responsible for carrying out any associated risk assessment with the student.

Online Events process and link to External Speakers form

For staff or students organising an event online, it will still be necessary to complete the External Speakers form available at this link, as there is no requirement to make use of the Cloudbooking service. Where multiple external speakers are invited to an event, the Organiser of the activity can make use of a spreadsheet to reduce the need for duplicating answers to standard questions available from the QA Department.

Timing

Please note that the Prevent form should be completed as soon as possible and at least two weeks before a planned event. This is to allow time for the Director to maintain appropriate oversight of events that do not form part of standard course delivery or other operational activity. Where an event is to be organised within two weeks of the proposed date, please email QA@iis.ac.uk to support a timely risk assessment to be conducted. However, please note that it may be necessary to withdraw authorisation for events organised at short notice where senior leadership identify that an appropriate risk assessment cannot be conducted in the time available.

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Risk Assessment

In order to be able to complete the External Speakers form, the following steps will be taken by persons responsible before inviting external speakers to speak at programmes:

- Review online CVs, blogs, video recordings of the relevant speaker, paying careful attention to the themes of their publications, presentations/lectures, and venues where they have spoken in the past to ascertain if there are any indications of their views or affiliations that might be problematic from a PREVENT perspective.

- Consult at least two internal/external scholars/personnel who may know the invited speaker sufficiently well to seek views and assurances about their suitability.

- Submit a request to the Director with a note on the background of the invited speaker and the checks undertaken to seek their consent before extending the invitation.

Data Collection

Any data collected through the risk assessment or room bookings process is collected under The Institute's Privacy Policy.

Related Policies

Academic Freedom Statement

Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech

Safeguarding Policy (including Prevent duty)

Responsibility for the Policy	Head of Quality Assurance
Initial Approval	March 2023
Last Reviewed	May 2025
Next Reviewed	May 2027
Approved by	Academic Council