The Institute of Ismaili Studies

Teaching and Learning Strategy

The Teaching and Learning Strategy of The Institute of Ismaili Studies complements the Institute's Strategic Goals 2025-2035 and provides a holistic strategic framework for the Institute's postgraduate and continuing education programmes. Grounded in the Institute's mission, values and principles – and drawing on a longstanding Ismaili tradition of pursuit of knowledge, intellectual exploration, ethical reasoning, and excellence – this strategy sets out to foster a vibrant intellectual community that nurtures inclusive academic experiences, rigorous scholarship, ethical leadership, and transformative learning in service of the Institute's diverse learners and key stakeholders. This strategy operates in concert with related institutional strategies and policies listed on the Institute's website.

1. Our Mission

The Institute's Teaching and Learning Strategy champions excellence in education, ethical leadership, and intellectual inquiry, equipping learners with the knowledge, skills, and ethical grounding to serve their communities and contribute meaningfully to the broader global intellectual and educational landscape.

Through rigorous scholarship, innovative pedagogy, contextualised learning, reflective practice and application, we foster interdisciplinary engagement alongside a humanistic and civilisational understanding of Islam. This approach both emphasises and nurtures a pluralistic outlook, ethical responsibility, and notions of stewardship that guide human interaction with the environment. It is undergirded especially by Islamic ethics of love, peace, accountability, compassion, the value of knowledge, and the celebration of the innate diversity of the human and natural worlds.

Our approach to education at all levels (preparatory, postgraduate or continuing education) is informed by our commitment to addressing the evolving needs of diverse Ismaili Muslim communities (Jamats) worldwide, wider Muslim communities, and the communities and knowledge societies in which they are interlinked.

2. Our Guiding Values and Principles

Excellence and Integrity

We uphold the highest standards of scholarship, integrity, intellectual inquiry, and ethical responsibility, ensuring education is rigorous, transformative, research-informed, enquiry-based, ethically grounded, and accessible to, and addressing the needs of, diverse audiences.

Inclusivity and Equity

We foster a compassionate and supportive teaching and learning environment, valuing diverse perspectives and lived experiences, and ensure equal opportunities for learners and teachers with diverse needs, accessibility requirements and learning styles to thrive academically and professionally.

Openness, Inquiry, and Interdisciplinary Exploration

We embrace openness and a spirit of inquiry, encouraging freedom of expression, critical engagement, and interdisciplinary exploration, enriching learning, skills building, reflective practice, and knowledge application.

Respect and Intellectual Pluralism

We both encourage and critically protect the intellectual space necessary for the articulation of diverse perspectives, ensuring education remains inclusive, ethical, open to dialogue, and free from discriminatory, exclusionary or de-legitimising rhetoric.

Empowerment, Innovation, and Adaptability

We cultivate a teaching and learning culture that reflects, adapts and innovates alongside the ever-changing world around us. This culture inspires curiosity, reflection, and growth that evolves with digital transformations and contemporary challenges, promoting awareness of societal and technological changes to ensure teaching and learning remain relevant, dynamic and forward-thinking.

Responsibility, Community-Centric Approach, and Ethical Leadership

We foster a culture that situates respect and care as central to education, ensuring learning opportunities nurture responsible stewardship, ethical leadership, and a sense of global responsibility.

Stewardship and Sustainability

We champion environmentally driven learning strategies and resource-conscious practices, ensuring that teaching and learning at the Institute both express and nurture ecological stewardship, ethical responsibility, and contextual sensitivity, while aligning educational goals with the evolving ecological concerns and challenges of the Ismaili Muslim community in their global contexts.

3. Graduate Attributes

In addition to programme-specific requirements, learners at the Institute are expected to graduate with the following attributes and competencies:

Attribute	Description
Academic excellence	Graduates apply disciplinary depth and intellectual rigour, multidisciplinary competence and interdisciplinary understanding. They demonstrate creativity, research excellence and critical thinking grounded in methodical analysis. Graduates engage in analytical inquiry and reflective practice, drawing on diverse perspectives and historical lenses. They nurture intellectual curiosity and continuous personal and professional growth.
Impact-oriented learning and practice	Graduates transfer learning into practice to address global challenges and the contextual needs of Ismaili and wider Muslim communities, as well as broader societies, generating positive, meaningful and sustainable outcomes.
Ethical disposition	Graduates integrate academic rigour and integrity with ethical reasoning and ethical conduct in practice, together with empathy and compassion. They demonstrate contextual sensitivity, guided by a commitment to social responsibility and service.
Compelling and culturally sensitive communication	Graduates convey complex ideas with clarity and cultivate meaningful engagement across diverse platforms and audiences, fostering dialogue and knowledge exchange in academic and community settings. They demonstrate digital literacy, cultural awareness and empathy, adapting their communication styles to promote understanding, respect, inclusion, being attentive to the lived experiences of the communities with whom they engage.
Pluralistic outlook	Graduates embody humility and embrace equity and diversity, fostering pluralistic, inclusive and culturally responsive learning environments. They honour and value inclusion and diversity in all areas of endeavour and experience.
Collaborative and purpose-driven leadership	Graduates demonstrate strong interpersonal and organisational skills, contributing creatively and constructively across academic, institutional, and community settings as relevant. They develop capacities for purpose-driven active citizenship and service, to engage with challenges pertinent to local and global contexts, and for values-based community-engaged leadership.
Innovative and future-responsive contribution	Graduates embrace change with curiosity and innovation and draw on complex theoretical and historical insights to address emerging challenges. They navigate changing contexts with agility and foresight, contributing proactively to sustainable, future-focused solutions in their fields and communities.
Commitment to lifelong learning	Graduates embrace learning as a continuous journey, actively pursuing their development with curiosity and a growth-mindset. They demonstrate capacity for self-directed learning with and from others, remaining eager to explore new ideas, reflective practice, and knowledge-building.

4. Strategic Aims and Objectives

Our 2026-2035 Teaching and Learning Strategy has the following seven strategic priorities:

1. Excellence in Teaching, Learning, and Student Success

At the Institute, we are committed to delivering academic excellence and excellent levels of student satisfaction through transformative learning experiences that uphold the highest standards of teaching, learning, and assessment quality. Our postgraduate programmes and continuing education initiatives maintain academic and professional rigour, adopting pedagogical approaches and course design that provide meaningful, inclusive and intellectually stimulating experiences. We empower learners to think critically and ethically to pursue their career trajectories with purpose and confidence.

This aim will be realised through:

- Designing curricula that meet sector expectations, equipping learners with disciplinary knowledge and transferable skills that foster grounded knowledge and real-world application.

- Embedding dialogic and responsive learning approaches that promote critical and solution-oriented inquiry, open exchanges of perspectives, collaboration, intellectual growth, and ethical leadership.

- Ensuring assessment is meaningful, aligned, and developmental, and is designed to evaluate analytical reasoning and applied knowledge through a balanced use of formative and summative methods that support deep learning, recognise achievement, and foster growth through feedback and reflection.

- Creating inclusive physical and virtual learning environments to ensure all students experience safety, equitable access, and feel valued, supported, and empowered.

- Reducing barriers to learning for aspirant students in our priority countries by raising skills and knowledge levels through preparatory programmes to enable their engagement in academia using English as a medium of teaching and learning.

- Championing personalised learning and mentorship experiences, while celebrating student talent and diversity, to promote a vibrant learning community and a sense of belonging.

- Capitalising on the global diversity of the Institute's student body, immersing learners in the rich history, faith, cultures and intellectual traditions of Ismaili and other Muslim communities, as well as wider communities, to foster profound engagement with their heritage, lived experiences and contemporary issues.

- Continuously enhancing and reviewing graduate programmes to meet relevant academic standards, supported by robust academic structures and governance, including the Academic Council and its various standing committees.

- Supporting student wellbeing through sector-leading approaches to physical and mental health, reinforced by robust safeguarding procedures and proactive pastoral care, fostering a secure and supportive environment for students to thrive personally and academically.

- Regularly reviewing and updating programmes to reflect educational and community needs, emerging global trends, and institutional priorities, ensuring education remains relevant, responsive, learner-centric and impactful.

2. Transformative and Practice-Led Education for Impact

We are committed to education as a means for social impact, believing that transformational learning can change the world. To this end, we aim to design programmes that inspire, challenge, and address contemporary needs both for the Ismaili and broader Muslim communities globally, while fostering interdisciplinary and practice-led education through research-teaching synergies. Our approach ensures that students develop critical thinking, ethical reasoning, and leadership capabilities, equipping them with the skills and knowledge to address relevant contemporary challenges and contribute meaningfully to their communities.

This aim will be realised through:

- Developing a transformational curriculum that supports employability and fosters critical thinking, ethical reflexivity, adaptability, and holistic leadership, preparing graduates with the competencies necessary in professional contexts and in serving their communities and addressing their needs with empathy and competence.

- Embedding interdisciplinary learning by integrating diverse faith-based perspectives, critical historical thinking, theoretical grounding, cultural understanding, and a multi-disciplinary approach to contemporary issues, ensuring students engage with Islam as both a faith and a civilisation through time and space.

- Integrating cutting-edge research into the curriculum, ensuring students' learning is embedded in and reflective of contemporary scholarly debates in Ismaili and Islamic studies as well as the broader humanities.

- Providing experiential, practice-based, and community-embedded learning opportunities, including teaching placements, action-based research, enrichment activities, and innovative learning environments, tailored to student needs and career pathways.

- Fostering mutual enrichment between faculty and learners to create opportunities for students to participate in interdisciplinary inquiry, research activities, and academic conferences.

- Integrating disciplinary depth and diverse work-related learning opportunities into programmes to ensure graduates are equipped for a variety of career pathways.

- Promoting climate-conscious and environmentally friendly educational practices and curricula.

3. Integrated Education Programmes

We are committed to strengthening coherence across educational pathways for both faculty and students to catalyse accessibility, continuity, and impact. By broadening faculty involvement, deepening institutional partnerships, creating greater synergies between religious education programmes at all levels and by integrating practice-led and research-informed approaches, we empower educators and learners to foster meaningful learning outcomes.

This aim will be realised through:

- Aligning teacher education, curriculum development, and continuing education initiatives to create a coherent and impactful learning pathway from early childhood to adult education.

- Deepening disciplinary knowledge and advancing professional development and equipping trainee teachers and educators to translate complex academic scholarship and insights into meaningful teaching that serves diverse learners across global Ismaili communities and beyond.

- Cultivating a dynamic and inclusive community of learners that transcends individual programmes, encouraging shared inquiry, peer learning, collaboration and mutual support to enrich educational experiences and nurture lifelong connections.

- Establishing mentorship programmes that connect students with practitioners and researchers, fostering intellectual growth, applied learning, reflective practice, and professional capabilities.

- Embedding pedagogical content knowledge, pedagogies, and ethical and contextual grounding into teacher training, ensuring educators can translate academic knowledge into meaningful teaching that serves diverse learners and their learning needs.

4. Students as Partners in Learning and Teaching

At the Institute, we recognise the immense value and insight that our student community brings to academic and institutional development. Collaboration and co-creation of programmes and policies with students are central to our approach, ensuring that learners are active participants in shaping their educational experiences. By fostering shared ownership of learning, we cultivate inclusive, dynamic, engaging and intellectually enriching environments that empower students to contribute meaningfully to curriculum design, assessment development, and academic governance.

This aim will be realised through:

- Engaging students as partners in curriculum design, assessment development, and pedagogical innovation, ensuring responsive, inclusive, and impactful education.

- Structuring continuous consultations over the academic year between learners, faculty and, where relevant, alumni to create an evolving learning environment where learners' insights, needs and priorities are cultivated, assessed, and meaningfully integrated into subsequent curriculum and course design as well as evolving administrative practices and pastoral care.

- Co-designing innovative and inclusive programmes that strengthen cohort identities, promote active student participation and engagement.

- Collaborating with students to develop robust and inclusive policies and frameworks, fostering a learning environment that reflects diverse perspectives and voices.

- Embedding student voices in institutional governance and decision-making, ensuring they play a meaningful role in shaping the Institute's strategies and teaching and learning initiatives.

5. Strengthening Faculty Development and Pedagogical Leadership

The Institute is committed to advancing academic excellence, faculty expertise, pedagogical leadership, and digital innovation to ensure transformative, interdisciplinary, and practice-led education. By integrating deep subject-matter expertise in Ismaili and Islamic studies with contemporary pedagogical approaches and advancing research into teaching methodologies relevant to our learners' contexts, we enable faculty to deliver dynamic, research-informed teaching and foster critical inquiry, ethical responsibility, and pluralism.

This aim will be realised through:

- Strengthening the Teaching and Learning Centre and developing faculty professional development training programmes that enhance pedagogical expertise, interdisciplinary collaboration, research-teaching synergies, digital pedagogy, innovative teaching methodologies, and leverage appropriate AI technologies.

- Promoting excellence in learning and teaching through evidence-based approaches and peer learning, shaping assessment practices, learning design, and faculty development to support contextualised and reflective learning.

- Establishing interdisciplinary teaching teams that foster collaboration and integrate disciplinary knowledge with pedagogical approaches, enhancing student training and learning experience within the Secondary Teacher Education Programme (STEP).

- Empowering faculty to optimise physical, in-person and virtual learning spaces, maximising student learning experience and enabling diverse course delivery formats, including hybrid, online, asynchronous, synchronous learning, and so on.

- Enabling and supporting all faculty to maintain a dynamic balance of teaching and research, recognising that education is research-informed, and ensuring faculty enquiry enriches both disciplinary knowledge and the scholarship of teaching and learning, fostering a vibrant academic community where research and teaching are mutually sustaining. Recognising and celebrating faculty contributions to student success and satisfaction by establishing teaching excellence awards.

- Deepening partnerships with higher education institutions and related charities and cementing participation in membership schemes and sector-wide initiatives to continuously apply evidence-

based advancements in Higher Education pedagogy to our teaching and learning initiatives, especially as relevant to the humanities.

6. Advancing Digital Capabilities

Recognising the evolving ways and styles in which people learn, the Institute strategically integrates pedagogically sound and accessible digital technologies to enhance teaching, research, and public engagement. By embedding digital learning capabilities into our educational practices and continuously adapting to evolving technologies, we expand global reach, foster dynamic academic collaborations, and enrich learning experiences. This includes using digital technologies and AI-driven tools responsibly and expanding online and blended learning offerings to engage the global Jamat and wider academic communities. By leveraging digital platforms, co-creating resources, and collaborating with international institutions, we ensure inclusive, accessible, engaging, and impactful learning experiences for students, alumni, and global learners.

This aim will be realised through:

- Implementing learning technologies and developing digital literacies that optimise educational delivery, student engagement, and accessibility.

- Ensuring technology-driven learning is guided by clear pedagogical needs, enhancing engagement, accessibility, and interdisciplinary inquiry.

- Embedding digital literacy into faculty and student development, ensuring that educators and learners can navigate and apply diverse technologies and modalities effectively and responsibly.

- Continuously assessing strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and risks fostered by the deployment of AI-driven tools to enhance teaching, learning, assessment, feedback, and personalised learning through detailed evaluation and robust appraisal of pedagogical opportunities and risks.

- Expanding access, learning, teaching and research opportunities to digitised Ismaili and Islamic heritage materials, for the Institute's faculty, students, alumni, strategic partners, and global audiences.

- Leveraging digital platforms to enhance accessibility, multilingual engagement, and global outreach, ensuring education remains inclusive and widely accessible.

7. Strategic Partnerships for Education and Leadership

The Institute is committed to broadening its educational opportunities and impact for students, alumni, and diverse learners worldwide through continuing education initiatives, strategic partnerships, and leadership development. As a key knowledge resource for the global Ismaili Jamat, we aim to equip graduates and community leaders with the knowledge, skills, and ethical grounding needed to address global challenges and contextual realities with sensitivity and effectiveness. We foster faith-

based leadership, ethical decision-making, and interdisciplinary engagement, ensuring education remains impactful, accessible, and relevant.

This aim will be realised through:

- Developing continuing learning opportunities for students, alumni, and diverse global Jamati educators and leaders, and when space allows, interested Jamati members, ensuring continuous professional and intellectual growth.

- Expanding public and community engagement through strategic partnerships, extending educational opportunities and impact.

- Creating educational resources and programmes tailored to the learning needs of the Global Ismaili Jamats, ensuring relevance and accessibility.

- Strengthening leadership and human resource capacity, cultivating the development of well-informed, faith-based and ethical perspectives.

- Enhancing collaboration with Jamati and AKDN institutions – such as Aga Khan Schools (AKS), Aga Khan Academies (AKA), Aga Khan University (AKU), and University of Central Asia (UCA) – to support leadership development and strategic educational initiatives, including co-developing resources with ITREBs to address community-specific learning needs and priorities.

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