The Institute of Ismaili Studies

STUDENT PROTECTION PLAN

The Institute of Ismaili Studies

Student protection plan for the period 2018/19

1. Introduction

1.1 In the interest of our students and in accordance with the new regulatory framework governing all higher education providers, all institutions are required to maintain and publish a student protection plan to identify potential risks to the provision of their higher education services. The plan sets out measures we have in place to protect our students in the event of a risk to their continuation of study.

1.2 This plan is being submitted to the Office for Students (OfS) for consideration in May 2018 and will be available to all current and potential students. The measures included in the plan apply to all students studying for a qualification taught by and at the IIS. The plan forms an important part of students' terms and conditions of study. Those students who are registered with us, but taught by another institution, are protected by the student protection plan of the respective University concerned.

THE RISKS

2. An assessment of the range of risks to the continuation of study for your students;

2.1 This plan identifies the following range of risks to continuation of study that may arise and assesses the likelihood that any of those risks will crystallise:

   i)   the IIS is no longer able to operate or has decided to cease operating;
   ii)   the IIS is no longer able to deliver its programmes either on a permanent or temporary basis as a consequence of the removal or suspension of its Tier 4 Sponsor Licence;
   iii) closure of our building where we are unable to provide suitable alternative premises;
   iv)   temporary closure of our premises as a consequence of a health and safety, fire risk or major incident;
   v)   the IIS is no longer able to offer its programmes because a validating body has withdrawn validation;
   vi)   the IIS is no longer able to deliver material components of one or more programmes.

2.2 The IIS is no longer able to operate or has decided to cease operating (risk 2.1.i) 2.2.1 The risk that the IIS as a whole is unable to operate is extremely low because it does not operate on a commercial basis. The IIS is directly funded by grants from His Highness the Aga Khan, the Aga Foundation and other supporters including donors from the Ismaili community. Its mandate and mission is principally concerned with the advancement of education, research and scholarship into the 'religious, spiritual, intellectual and cultural heritage of the Shia Imami Ismaili Tariqa of Islam and to conduct and support research into any other faiths, beliefs or practices'. Such needs are required on an indefinite basis which is reflected in the generosity and longevity of its source of financial support. It also has robust management and governance structures in place to ensure it complies with all regulatory and statutory requirements. The risk of institutional closure or being unable to operate is extremely low.

2.3 The IIS is no longer able to deliver its programmes to international students either on a permanent or temporary basis as a consequence of the removal or suspension of its Tier 4 Sponsor Licence (risk 2.1.ii)

2.3.1 The IIS has a Tier 4 Sponsor Status with the UKVI and an excellent track record in complying with the terms of its licence agreement. Our rigorous monitoring processes are designed to ensure we continue to comply with the requirements of our Sponsor Licence. Relevant designated members of staff have specialist knowledge of the relevant regulations and ensure they keep abreast of any regulatory changes as these arise. Given our effective track record, including our successful outcomes from QAA review and annual monitoring as well as our comprehensive procedures for attendance and progress monitoring, it is unlikely that the UKVI would find it necessary to suspend or revoke our sponsorship licence. Consequently, we assess the risk of such an occurrence as low.

2.4 Closure of one of our buildings involving a significant change of location or where we are unable to provide suitable alternative premises; (risk 2.1.iii)

2.4.1 In establishing the IIS forty-one years ago, the decision was taken to locate it in London and this remains an important part of its overall strategy. The IIS moved to a new, purpose built accommodation in July 2018. This strategic project has been carefully planned since 2010. The IIS is no longer dependent on a commercial lease and the new building secures its long-term accommodation needs as well as providing an exemplary environment for teaching, learning, research and academic collaboration. Hence, the risk of closure and being unable to provide suitable alternative teaching accommodation or subsequent relocation is extremely low.

2.5 Temporary closure of our premises as a consequence of a health and safety, fire risk or major incident; (risk 2.1.iv)

2.5.1 We comply with all relevant health and safety legislation, minimizing the associated risks of such an occurrence which are entirely within our control. However, we recognise that we cannot guarantee immunity from factors beyond our control including any major incidents that could result in temporary closure and/or the safe evacuation of students. To date, such events have not occurred and the associated risk level is likely to remain stable. We assess this risk as low.

2.6 The IIS is no longer able to offer its programmes because a validating body has withdrawn validation; (risk 2.1.v)

2.6.1 The IIS has excellent academic standards and student outcomes, with well-established and thorough quality assurance procedures that have been recognised by validating partners and through QAA review and annual monitoring exercises.

2.6.2 Notwithstanding the above, the IIS recognises validation is also dependent on the institutional policy of individual validating bodies. Our validating partners are reputable universities and are unlikely to make frequent changes to their institutional policies. We would therefore expect to be informed of changes in good time to make alternative arrangements. In addition, termination notice periods in the Memorandum of Agreements have been negotiated to allow enough time for the IIS to find alternative partners. The terms of the MOA will enable us to maintain students' continuity of study by enabling all students to complete their studies before such withdrawal or termination takes effect. The IIS will also work with its validating partner in developing a suitable exit plan to ensure

careful management of the winding down of the programme and to maintain protection of continuing students. Consequently, we assess the risk as low

2.7 The IIS is no longer able to deliver material components of one or more programmes; (risk 2.1.vi)

2.7.1 The IIS is fortunate in having an extensive range of expert academic staff. Individual staff expertise and availability of resources is taken into account during programme design and development. Students have access to a wide range of scholars many of whom are active researchers in their respective specialist fields. There are few instances where teaching a particular specialism is dependent on a single individual and where this occurs it constitutes a very small proportion of an overall programme or module.

2.7.2 We already utilise the services of visiting lecturers and we maintain a register of such individuals. We will continue to seek expertise from outside the IIS for those subjects where we do not have such expertise. Our academics also work in fields which overlap
extensively. Hence, where appropriate they can take care of a range of subjects where the necessity arises. Where this is not feasible, we will appoint visiting lecturers to cover in the interim.

2.7.3 Where a permanent member of staff is temporarily unavailable or leaves, we will appoint visiting lecturers in the interim from an established pool of expert academics. We therefore assess the risk of being unable to deliver material components of one or more of our programmes as low.

MITIGATION MEASURES

3. The measures we will put in place to mitigate those risks that we consider to be reasonably likely to crystallise;

3.1 The IIS is no longer able to operate or has decided to cease operating (risk 2.1.i); In the
unlikely event that the IIS is no longer able to operate or no longer intends to operate, it will take all reasonable steps to maintain continuity of study and protect the students through the following measures:

    i)   ensure all students are able to complete their programme of study through a structured 'teach out' process, working in close liaison with the validating body and in accordance with the relevant terms of the MoA;

    ii)   take steps to close all programmes to new entrants through the discontinuation of all marketing and student recruitment and advise any applicants or prospective applicants accordingly;

    iii)   where it is not possible for students to complete their programme of study with us, take appropriate steps to enable them to transfer to the validating body or another suitable alternative.

    i)   maintain the sponsorship and stipend for all affected students until they complete their studies, including any enhancement that may be required in the unlikely event they need to transfer to another institution.

3.2 *The IIS is no longer able to deliver its programmes either on a permanent or temporary basis as a consequence of the removal or suspension of its Tier 4 Sponsor Licence; (risk 2.1.ii)*

3.3.1 In the unlikely event of our Tier 4 Sponsor Licence being suspended, the IIS will take all reasonable steps to minimise any consequent disruption to affected students through the following measures:

ii) work with UKVI and our validating partner to enable all enrolled students to complete their programme of study either at the IIS or where this is not possible at another UKVI sponsor, normally the validating University;

iii) subject to the agreement of the UKVI, allow students in receipt of a CAS to formally enrol and commence their programme of study;

iv) suspend any further recruitment during the period of suspension or revocation and inform applicants accordingly;

v) offer the opportunity to students who have not yet arrived in the UK to defer study pending resolution of the suspension or revocation;

vi) develop an implementation plan and liaise with all relevant stakeholders including the OfS, UKVI and validating bodies to ensure students are protected;

vii) keep students regularly informed of their options and provide pastoral and academic support to enable them to complete their studies;

viii) assist students to transfer to another institution, (in the first instance this would normally be the relevant validating University), to continue their programme or undertake an alternative where such continuity of study cannot be maintained and advise applicants and offer holders of their options;

ix) maintain the scholarship and stipend in full throughout the period of study where a student transfers to another institution or programme.

3.3 *Closure of one of our buildings where we are unable to provide suitable alternative premises; (risk 2.1.iii)*

3.3.1 In the event of the closure of our building the IIS will take all reasonable steps to maintain continuity of study through the following measures:

i) develop a structured implementation plan as part of the overall project management;

ii) develop an effective communication plan to keep students regularly informed about progress in relocating to the new premises;

iii) make any necessary alterations to the timetable and assessment schedule.

3.4 *Temporary closure of our premises as a consequence of a health and safety, fire risk or major incident; (risk 2.1.iv)*

3.4.1 The IIS will make every effort to maintain programme delivery in the event of any major disruption, to its normal day to day activities through the following measures:

x) relocate delivery until the disruption or incident has ceased;

xi) change the timetable or delivery method until the situation is satisfactorily resolved;

iv) provide additional pastoral and tutorial support to assist students and minimise the impact of such disruptions;

xii) conduct an equality impact assessment to ensure any proposed changes are accessible to all affected students.

3.5 The IIS is no longer able to offer its programmes because a validating body has withdrawn validation; (risk 2.1.v)

iii) work with the validating University to ensure all enrolled students are able to continue to complete their studies as set out in the relevant MOA;

iv) where it is not feasible to implement 'teach out' arrangements, provide students with the opportunity to complete their programme or an equivalent alternative at the validating University or another provider;

v) keep students fully informed of such changes at all stages of the process and provide assistance on a one-to one and cohort basis;

vi) suspend marketing and recruitment until a new validating partner has been secured and notify applicants accordingly.

vii) seek to procure a successor validator to secure the longevity of our programmes.

3.6 The IIS is no longer able to deliver material components of one or more programmes; (risk 2.1.vi)

3.6.1 In the event of being unable to offer material components of one or more programmes, we will make any necessary programme or module amendments in accordance with our procedure for programme modification and the relevant requirements of our validating body. Students will be consulted regarding any proposed change including exploring various options for any appropriate alternatives. Ordinarily, any material changes to a programme or significant module amendment would only be introduced at least 12 weeks in advance and with student agreement. Applicants and offer holders will also be notified of any material changes in sufficient time to enable them to withdraw their acceptance or explore alternative options. In such instances, the IIS would make every effort to support such applicants and offer holders in finding a suitable alternative.

4.1 Compensation policy

4.1.1 All students are fully funded by the IIS through a scholarship scheme which includes free tuition and residential accommodation. Furthermore, students receive a stipend including any incidental travel costs throughout their programme. Students do not access loans from the Student Loans Company and scholarships are non-means tested. There are no circumstances in which a student would be responsible for paying their own fees or contributing to their maintenance costs. As all students are fully funded for both their tuition and maintenance costs, there are very limited circumstances in which it would be necessary to provide any form of financial compensation.

The Institute of Ismaili Studies

4.1.2 The IIS will continue to honour its scholarship commitment to preserve continuation of study where a student needed to transfer programme or location of study. The IIS would also provide an enhanced scholarship and stipend to meet any additional reasonable living expenses or higher tuition costs. Such circumstances would only be likely to arise in a limited range of circumstances such as the closure or change in location of a third party provider.

5. Information about how you will communicate with students about your student protection plan

5.1 We will publicise our student protection plan to current and prospective students on our website and ensure the plan is accessible at relevant points in the recruitment and admissions process. It will also be available on Moodle, in student handbooks and appropriately referenced in the prospectus and IIS terms and conditions.

5.2 We will ensure that staff are aware of the implications of our student protection plan when they propose programme changes, by incorporating the plan in our procedure for programme changes and re-approval processes.

5.3 We will also inform students and members of staff regarding any subsequent changes to the plan through publication on our website, e-mail bulletins and existing training and awareness raising.

6. How you will work with your current students in the development of your student protection plan?

6.1 The IIS maintains a robust system whereby students participate in decision-making processes and contribute to the quality assurance, development and enhancement of their educational experience. Students participated in the initial creation of the plan through a dedicated workshop and will continue to participate in its review and subsequent development through the wide range of committees they participate in.

6.2. The plan will be reviewed biennially by the Quality Assurance and Evaluation Unit, and students' active participation and feedback will be an essential part of the process through our established student engagement processes. Representatives from the student body from each cohort will provide specific input, liaising with their peers to ensure feedback is received from across the student community. Additionally, student representatives will be in attendance at the relevant meeting of the Oversight Group when any subsequent revisions to the plan are approved.

6.3 Relevant committees will consider student feedback when reviewing and/or evaluating the effectiveness and impact of the plan in practice.

7. Actions in the event of implementation of the plan

7.1 If any of the risks identified occur, we will implement the measures set out in this plan. Students will receive guidance and support on an individual and collective basis taking account of any specific needs and characteristics of our student community. Students will be supported on an individual basis through their assigned Academic Adviser whom they meet on a regular basis, their Programme Leader and through the Student Services team. Students will also have access to independent advice and/or specialist support as appropriate to their needs and the specific circumstances necessitating the implementation of the plan.

7.2 We will inform applicants if we introduce any material changes to their programme by referring to any pre-contract information provided at the offer stage. Details of any material changes will be made available to applicants as soon as possible prior to or at the time of making an offer.

7.3 We will notify existing students of any material changes to their programme as soon as possible and wherever feasible at least 12 weeks in advance of its implementation. Any plans to close or suspend a programme or implement material changes will be implemented in accordance with our policy and procedures for course closure and suspension.

7.4 We will involve students in its associated implementation as part of a collaborative and corroborative approach including; student engagement forums, committee meetings and integrating the plan in mid-term reviews.

7.5 In the event of the **student protection plan being activated**, affected students will be encouraged to participate in student consultations and discussion around the associated implementation plan. We will subsequently evaluate the plan's effectiveness in practice through our existing consultation and feedback mechanisms.

8. Complaints

8.1 Students may raise a complaint regarding the way the plan is being, or not being implemented. The Students Complaints Policy is published on the website and Moodle and referenced in the Student Handbook.

8.2 In the first instance, an informal resolution should be sought. However, students will have full access to all stages of the complaints procedure including invoking a formal complaint through the central complaints register. A summary of the findings from any complaint will be considered at institutional level to inform the further development and implementation of the plan.