



The Institute of Ismaili Studies

# **MITIGATING CIRCUMSTANCES POLICY**



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## Purpose and scope of this policy

1.1 This policy applies to all taught postgraduate provision directly administered by the Department of Graduate Studies (DGS), namely:

(a) The Graduate Programme in Islamic Studies and Humanities (GPISH).

Agreements with external providers who administer part or all of a postgraduate programme belonging to but not directly administered by DGS may specify alternative arrangements for mitigating circumstances; in such cases, the policy of the external provider shall supersede this policy.

1.2 The purpose of assessment is to enable DGS to determine and recognise each student's achievement as opposed to potential against the validated Intended Learning Outcomes of each assessment activity. This policy is therefore provided to ensure that students who find themselves in circumstances which have had or may have a negative impact on their performance in summative assessment activities understand the steps they should take to inform DGS of such circumstances, and that staff required to consider such information possess clear guidelines in order to make a decision about the impact of those circumstances on performance in an assessment.

1.3 For the purpose of this document, the term 'summative assessment activities' includes any credit-bearing assessment activity contributing to a student's overall modular and, by extension, programmatic grade. Examples of activities are: individual spoken presentations, essays, take-home and unseen examinations, oral exams, book reports and dissertations. The definition extends to compulsory assessment activities which may result in either a pass or fail judgment, such as elements of the Portfolio Assignment for the GPISH Qur'an module, or a status of complete or incomplete, such as the Research Proposal Presentation for the GPISH Research Design and Methods module.

1.4 This policy applies to specific circumstances that affect assessment only. It does not apply to long-term medical or other conditions. DGS makes reasonable adjustments for students with disabilities and/or long-term health conditions; these may apply to assessments and other aspects of a student's learning experience. Moreover, for concerns with the operating of the programme, the Student Complaints Procedure applies.



- 1.5 Reasonable adjustments and ongoing support for specific teaching and learning requirements (including assessment) may be arranged through the Student Services Unit ([studentservices@iis.ac.uk](mailto:studentservices@iis.ac.uk)). The student and DGS will jointly devise a Learning Support Agreement as appropriate. Students who have a Learning Support Agreement cannot claim for mitigating circumstances based on that alone. They may however claim for mitigating circumstances which meet the criteria outlined in this policy.
- 1.6 Disabilities and/or long-term health conditions (including pregnancy) are not by themselves considered grounds for mitigating circumstances. Students with disabilities and/or long-term conditions are eligible to submit mitigating circumstances claims if they experience a significant unexpected effect of their condition, or mitigating circumstances unconnected with that.
- 1.7 Independent evidence is required to ensure claims of mitigating circumstances are dealt with consistently, transparently and fairly. Where mitigating circumstances are judged to have affected a student's ability to perform adequately, the student should normally be granted an assessment opportunity without penalty, thus giving them the opportunity to show their true achievement in the affected activity.
- 1.8 Students who are affected by mitigating circumstances in the period June to August may be required to interrupt their studies even if a claim of mitigating circumstances is accepted.

## 2 Principles

- 2.1 Mitigating circumstances are unforeseen and unpreventable, exceptional and short-term occurrences which significantly and negatively affect a student's ability to prepare for and/or submit or perform assessment activities.
- 2.2 Mitigating circumstances must occur at the time of the assessment activity in question or in the period immediately beforehand in order to be reasonably expected to have a significant negative effect on assessment preparation and/or performance.
- 2.3 A claim for mitigating circumstances should be submitted if verifiable detrimental circumstances result in:



- (a) The late submission of an assessment activity or
  - (b) Not submitting work for or not performing an assessment activity or
  - (c) Poor performance in an assessment activity.
- 2.4 For a claim to be accepted, a student must produce independent documentary evidence to show that the circumstances:
- (a) Have detrimentally affected the student's preparation for or performance in assessment, or will do so, and
  - (b) Were unforeseen, beyond their control and unpreventable, and
  - (c) Relate directly to the timing of the assessment activity affected.

### **3 Student responsibilities**

- 3.1 A student who finds themselves needing to submit a claim for mitigating circumstances must submit a Mitigating Circumstances Form (available on Moodle) and appropriate documentary evidence to the Academic Administrator ([AcadAdmin@iis.ac.uk](mailto:AcadAdmin@iis.ac.uk)) as soon as possible and in all cases within one calendar week of the specified deadline for the activity to which it relates.
- 3.2 Evidence must be in English. Evidence in other languages must be accompanied by a certified English translation.
- 3.3 A student's discussing their circumstances with a member of staff does not constitute a submission of a claim of mitigating circumstances.
- 3.4 Where they are unable to submit the Mitigating Circumstances Form and evidence by themselves, a student may nominate someone to submit materials on their behalf.
- 3.5 A Mitigating Circumstances Form must be submitted with original independent documentary evidence which must confirm the mitigating circumstances and their concurrence with the assessment activity in question, and state how they have affected (or will affect) the student.
- 3.6 Students bear all costs for providing documentary evidence.



## **4 DGS responsibilities**

- 4.1 The Academic Administrator will review all claims for mitigating circumstances to ensure they are complete, requesting further information from the student where necessary.
- 4.2 Only complete claims will be forwarded to the Programme Leader for consideration, with referral to the Academic Management Committee as necessary. Where insufficient evidence accompanies a submitted claim, the Programme Leader will inform the Academic Administrator, who will notify the student and offer them an opportunity to submit further evidence within one calendar week.
- 4.3 The Academic Administrator will monitor the claim and communicate the decision or request for further information within five (5) working days from receipt of the completed claim.
- 4.4 In complicated cases or where there is a need for more information or evidence, this timeframe will be extended. The Academic Administrator will notify the student of this.
- 4.5 In all cases, a student will be notified of the decision about their claim within twenty (20) working days of receipt of a completed claim.

## **5 Deadline extensions and late submission**

- 5.1 Deadlines are fixed. Where a student is concerned that they cannot manage their time effectively, they should consult their Academic Adviser who can help them address this.
- 5.2 If circumstances prevent a student from meeting an assessment deadline, they may request an extension by submitting a claim for mitigating circumstances.
- 5.3 Extensions will only be granted following verification of proven mitigating circumstances.



5.4 Submissions after the deadline (whichever is the later of the original or extended deadlines) will have five (5) marks deducted from the total assessed mark for each whole or part day that they are late. This applies to five days (including weekends and Bank Holidays) from the original deadline. If the assessment is submitted later than that, the Department will not accept it and assign a mark of zero (0).

Day and time of submission	For example <i>(deadline = Sunday, 19.00)</i>	Penalty
Day of submission, before or up to specified time of submission	Before or up to Sunday, 19.00	No penalty
Up to 24 hours after deadline	Sunday, 19.01 onwards	5 marks deducted
24-48 hours after deadline	Monday, 19.01 onwards	10 marks deducted
48-72 hours after deadline	Tuesday, 19.01 onwards	15 marks deducted
72-96 hours after deadline	Wednesday, 19.01 onwards	20 marks deducted
96-120 hours after deadline	Thursday, 19.01 onwards	25 marks deducted
120+ hours after deadline	Friday, 19.01 onwards	Paper awarded a mark of zero (0): resubmission necessary

5.5 Extension requests are monitored. Students may be placed on Academic Probation, at the discretion of the Academic Management Committee, for frequently requesting extensions.



- 6 Requirement to pass every module and resubmission for assessment
- 6.1 Students are required to pass every module in order to complete their programme.
- 6.2 If a student fails a module (which includes failing a module through not appearing or submitting any work for an assessment activity), they must re-attempt the activity they failed within twelve (12) weeks of marks being released – this is known as resubmission for assessment. In some circumstances, an earlier deadline can be agreed (e.g. where a second-year GPISH student has received a university offer that is conditional upon their completion of the first two years of the programme).
- 6.3 If a student fails an assessment activity but does not fail the module of which it forms a component, the student may attempt the activity again (resubmit for assessment). Requests to resubmit must be made to the Academic Administrator within twenty (20) working days of the notification that the Statement of Marks is ready for collection.
- 6.4 Resubmissions are capped at Grade D (scaled).

## 7 Scaling of Grade D

- 7.1 Where an activity's grade will be capped at Grade D, the raw mark will be scaled.

Raw mark (range)	Scaled mark (D)	Raw mark (range)	Scaled mark (D)
0–39	n/a = Fail	60–63	45
40–43	40	64–67	46
44–47	41	68–71	47
48–51	42	72–75	48
52–55	43	76–100	49
56–59	44	<i>The Statement of Marks will state 'scaled'.</i>	



## 8 Academic appeals for assessment decisions

- 8.1 Academic appeals are not allowed on the grounds that in a student's view they should have been awarded a higher mark.
- 8.2 Appeals must be based on one of three grounds:
- (a) There was an administrative error or procedural irregularity during the conduct of the assessment.
  - (b) Circumstances existed which, for the most exceptional reasons, could not be communicated to DGS.
  - (c) If the activity has not been second-marked, students may email the Academic Administrator ([AcadAdmin@iis.ac.uk](mailto:AcadAdmin@iis.ac.uk)) to request the activity be second-marked. Such requests must be made, with justification, within one calendar week of the release of marks. After second-marking, the joint decision of the first and second markers is final. Where the first and second markers fail to agree, an independent third marker will be appointed.

## 9 Guidance on admissibility of mitigating circumstances

- 9.1 Circumstances beyond a student's reasonable control:
- Serious accident, illness or infectious disease
  - Bereavement of a near relative
  - Going into labour on the day of or shortly before an assessment
  - Burglary and theft
  - *Force majeure*.
- 9.2 Circumstances which may be considered beyond a student's reasonable control:
- Medical operation if approved by the Department before the point of assessment or an emergency
  - Hospital tests if approved by the Department before the point of assessment or an emergency
  - Being taken ill during an examination



- Significant accident or injury, or acute ailment or condition
- Private or public transport failure leading to a delay of more than one hour where evidence verifies such a delay.

### 9.3 Circumstances not normally considered mitigating circumstances:

- Minor accidents or injuries
- Cold, cough, upper respiratory tract infection, throat infection, unspecified viral infection
- Examination or last-minute submission nerves
- Feeling generally anxious, depressed or stressed (unless medically certified and notified in advance, i.e. at least two [2] weeks)
- Intermittent or last-minute computing/printing equipment problems
- Ignorance of the regulations or assessment arrangements
- Inadequate planning and time management (including alarm not going off)
- Handing-in problems
- Having more than one examination on the same day
- Accidents to friends or relatives (unless within 3 days before deadline or examination or where student is sole carer)
- Family illness (except in an emergency or where student is sole carer)
- Pregnancy
- Childcare problems that could have been anticipated
- Domestic problems (unless supported by independent evidence)
- Private or public transport failure leading to delays of less than one hour
- General financial problems
- Legal problems (unless required to attend Court on the day of the assessment)
- Holidays or booked travel arrangements
- Moving house
- Notes burned or stolen (unless supported by a fire or police report)
- Inclement weather (unless exceptional/severe conditions)
- Any event that could reasonably have been expected or anticipated.



## 10 Guidance on documentary evidence

- 10.1 Evidence must be an official document (e.g. a letter on official headed paper) and normally include the dates when the circumstances applied.
- 10.2 Copies of evidence will not normally be accepted. If a student needs an original document for another purpose, they must bring the original into the Institute so that staff can make a copy. Staff must indicate on the copy they take that they saw and copied the original.
- 10.3 Self-certification CANNOT be accepted. Circumstances relating to illness or injury must be independently verified by the person, practice or institution that diagnosed or assessed the illness/injury at the time it occurred. This must take the form of either a medical certificate or doctor's letter obtained at the time of illness, or evidence that indicates the student was unwell at the time. It must state the time and duration of the illness and include a clear medical opinion: i.e. a doctor's note indicating that the student told the doctor that they were unwell will NOT be accepted.
- 10.4 If applicable, psychiatrists and counsellors with a recognised professional qualification may provide a confidential statement. The Department must be satisfied that evidence has been received from a member of a recognised professional body.
- 10.5 If applicable, where the death is of someone related or known to the student, the Department normally requires a Death Certificate or an officially certified copy of a Death Certificate or written confirmation from a GP.
- 10.6 If applicable, where a student has been affected by the death of someone other than a partner, parent, child or close family member, the Department requires the student to explain the relationship to the deceased and the impact upon their performance in assessment. Bereavement will normally be considered to cover the assessment activities within the academic term when the death occurred. If a student has been affected beyond this time period, they will normally need to provide additional evidence to indicate how the death has affected them personally (e.g. a doctor's certificate).
- 10.7 Claims and evidence for financial and accommodation problems are considered on a



case-by-case basis and must comply with the principles of this policy.

- 10.8 In the case of pre-existing or documented conditions, claims of mitigating circumstances will only normally be considered if evidence from a medical practitioner indicates that the condition became acute during the period relating to the assessment activity.
- 10.9 Reasonable adjustments for assessment activities may be made for students with particular disabilities or difficulties affecting their ability to undertake the proposed examination or other form of assessment. Students who have been granted special arrangements for assessment activities would normally not have a claim of mitigating circumstances accepted for the same assessment activity unless the arrangements were shown to be inadequate or the mitigating circumstances affected the student over and above any pre-existing arrangements.
- 10.10 Reports of printing problems and/or personal computer issues do NOT demonstrate valid mitigating circumstances. Only independently verified system-wide IT equipment and system failures would normally justify late submission, and for a maximum of up to 24 hours only.

## **11 Frequently asked questions – Exams**

Below you will find answers to some questions relating to special exam arrangements. If you have a question that is not answered below, please contact Student Services.

*What should I do if I feel I cannot sit my upcoming exams?*

If you want to request a deferral of exams on the grounds of your health, please contact us to discuss your options. Exam deferral requests are handled through the Mitigating Circumstances Policy.



*What should I do if I have injured my hand and cannot write?*

Depending on the nature of your exams and your injury, we should be able to make adjustments which will enable you to sit your exams. This might involve providing a scribe, the use of a computer, or additional writing time. Please contact Student Services to apply for adjustments and ensure you give details on the specific format of your exams, e.g. if they involve writing in a foreign language or drawing. If you are unsure, please contact us for guidance.

## 12 Document control

Document to be reviewed annually and updated (as necessary) for the new academic year.

Version	Role / Activity	Person(s) responsible	Date
Version 1	Document Owner and Author	GPISH Prog. Leader and STEP Prog. Coordinator	February 2018
	Reviewer	Student Services Manager	February 2018
	Approval	AMC	February 2018
	Evaluation and review	AMC	July 2018
	Amendments as necessary	GPISH and STEP Programme Leaders	July 2018
Version 2	Approval	AMC	August 2018
	Evaluation and review	GPISH and STEP Programme Leaders	July 2021
	Amendments as necessary	GPISH and STEP Programme Leaders	September 2021