



T I S A

Student Handbook

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WELCOME

Our Vision

“Our vision is a world constantly bettered by religious scholarship and ethical leadership”.

Our Mission

“Our mission is to cultivate generations of world class doers and thinkers who lead from an Islamic paradigm while engaging contemporary challenges and opportunities”.

Our Commitment

As **Believing Academics** we are committed to mutual teaching and learning, to academic excellence, to open inquiry within the parameters of our faith, and to critical engagement of texts, contexts, and practices in all of our educational programs with the aim of graduating leadership that has the following core competencies¹

1. **Qur’anic Literacy**
2. **Prophetic Theory and Praxis**
3. **Cross-Cultural Competence**
4. **Facilitation Skills**
5. **Professional Practice**

Assalaam Alaykum,

Welcome to The Islamic Seminary of America (TISA)! Our primary commitment is to provide Islamic education that is deeply rooted in the teachings and wisdom of the Qur’an and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) that has theological and practical relevance in the modern North American context. It is our hope that this Student Handbook facilitates your path to success.

Dr. Iqbal Unus
Interim President and Board Chair, TISA
iqbal.unus@islamicseminary.us

Academic Council

Dr. Yasir Qadhi, Academic Dean
Dr. Jonathan Brown
Dr. Tamara Gray
Ch. Tahara Akmal
Dr. James Jones

Note: The Academic Dean, designated faculty and staff are available to counsel each student regarding the completion of all course and degree requirements – email academics@islamicseminary.us.

¹ As developed and required by Muslim Endorsement Council Inc.

General Seminary Information:

- TISA's main facility is at 811 South Central Expressway, Richardson, TX, 75080.
- The main phone number is (214) 484-1309.
- The Seminary's primary website is located at <https://www.islamicseminary.us/>. The website provides an online student portal. Other online resources are available through the website.
- TISA is also on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, providing up-to-date information on events, course info, news coverage, photos, and much more.
 - Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/IslamicSeminaryofAmerica/>
 - Twitter: <https://twitter.com/ISeminaryofA>
 - Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/islamicseminary/>

1. PURPOSE

- The purpose of the Handbook is to provide information that is essential for all students of The Islamic Seminary of America (TISA).
- The Handbook communicates and explains important information and policies to help students to: understand what TISA offers; successfully complete academic work; and prepare for religious, spiritual, organizational and academic leadership in the North American context.
- Policies and procedures in this Handbook are designed to support students in achieving success at TISA.
- All students are expected to know and follow the policies and procedures in the Handbook.
- If you have questions or concerns, please contact the Administrative Staff at info@islamicseminary.us.
- **NOTE:** The policies and information contained in the Handbook are not exhaustive. Other information and details are available in the catalog, online and other communications.
- TISA reserves the right to change and update policies when necessary. All policy changes will be communicated promptly to the student community via TISA email.
- It is the policy and practice of TISA to provide reasonable accommodation(s) for students with disabilities to the extent that it is readily able to do so.
- Individuals who are enrolled at the Seminary are expected to be able to carry out the essential requirements of the course, curriculum, or program in which they are enrolled with reasonable accommodation.
- The Seminary will not make accommodations that are unduly burdensome or fundamentally alter the nature of any given course, curriculum, or program.
- Students with a disability who desire reasonable accommodation must submit documented evidence of the disability to the Academic Dean (registrar@islamicseminary.us) as soon as possible after admission to the Seminary and with each successive academic year, or portion thereof, during which the accommodation is requested.

2. ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

- Students are expected to demonstrate academic integrity throughout the educational process. The integrity of the academic process requires fair and impartial evaluation of students by faculty, and honest academic conduct on the part of the students.

“The International Center for Academic Integrity defines academic integrity as a commitment to five fundamental values: honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. We believe that these five values, plus the courage to act on them even in the face of adversity, are truly foundational to the academy. Without them, everything that we do in our capacity as teachers, learners, and researchers loses value and becomes suspect. When the fundamental values are embraced, utilized, and put into practice, they become touchstones for scholarly communities of integrity. Rather than thinking of them merely as abstract principles, we advocate using the fundamental values to inform and improve ethical decision-making capacity and behavior”.

- Plagiarism or cheating usually involves an attempt to appear to have more knowledge or skill than one actually possesses, and as such constitutes academic dishonesty.
- TISA, as an institution committed to academic fairness and integrity, will grade all academic work in the fairest way possible.
- Plagiarism occurs in research whenever a student appropriates material that falls outside the sphere of common knowledge and is from any source that is not their own, without indicating their indebtedness to that source.
- The theft may have to do with substance (i.e., ideas or information taken from a source without acknowledgment in the form of proper documentation), or it may have to do with verbal expression (i.e., wording or phraseology taken from a source without acknowledgment in the form of proper documentation and quotation marks around the quoted material).
- In either of these forms, plagiarism constitutes a serious academic and ethical impropriety.
- For this reason, any work submitted that gives clear evidence of plagiarism, whether committed deliberately or naively, will receive a grade of zero.
- Depending on the circumstances, the student may be subject to additional disciplinary action.
- Cheating involves dishonest or deceptive attempts to gain credit for academic work through the use of notes, aids, or the help of other students in ways other than as expressly permitted by the instructor.
- Where it is determined that there is clear evidence of cheating, the assignment or exam in which the cheating occurred will receive a grade of zero.

- Each case will be reported to the Academic Dean.
- Depending on the circumstance(s), the student may be subject to additional disciplinary action.

3. ONLINE STUDENT PORTAL USE

- Every student is issued a user ID and password for the online student portal.
- This password should be updated regularly.
- Logging onto the portal enables students to register for courses, view grades, pay tuition, and update their information.
- Students should not share their password with anyone.
- Seminary staff will never ask students for their password.
- The Seminary considers this password equivalent to a student's signature.
- Students are required to maintain current alternative email and geographical addresses. This information can be updated on the online student portal.
- Students are expected to check their TISA accounts routinely and are responsible for all information communicated in this manner.

4. COURSE REGISTRATION

- Students are required to register for classes through the online student portal.
- Official registration must be completed before a student can attend class.
- Only students who have officially registered to audit may attend a course as an auditor.
- A late registration fee may be charged to students who register after the registration deadline.

5. COURSE DROPS / WITHDRAWALS

- Drops are permitted by students up to a certain point in a course according to a schedule provided by the Administrative Staff. Courses dropped are not recorded on a student's transcript.
- Students may **withdraw** from a course without academic penalty and receive a grade of "W" up to a certain point according to a schedule provided by the Administrative Staff.
- Students may or may not receive tuition and fee refunds for course drops or withdrawals.

6. SEMINARY WITHDRAWAL / LEAVE OF ABSENCE

- Students who choose to withdraw from the Seminary must submit proper written notification to the Registrar.
- A leave of absence is a special category of withdrawal that may be requested by a student who intends to withdraw for a period not to exceed one year from the end of their last term of enrollment.

- Readmission after a period of absence exceeding one year requires reapplication through the admissions process.
- Readmission following a withdrawal or leave of absence longer than one year is subject to the approval of the Admissions Committee.
- Students readmitted following a withdrawal are subject to the program requirements of the academic year under which they re-enter.

7. COURSE ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

- Class attendance and participation are an important part of the academic process and should be considered both a privilege and a responsibility in both face-to-face and online contexts.
- The course instructor has the right to dismiss any disruptive student during any class session.
- Absences should be taken only for important and necessary reasons.
- Each instructor will establish the attendance requirements for their course in the syllabus.
- Because of the unique nature of hybrid (a combination of online and face-to-face) courses and online (nonsynchronous) courses, attendance policies may vary for each course offered in these formats.
- Each unexcused absence in excess of the prescribed limit given by the instructor of the course may cause a reduction in the final grade according to a schedule determined by the course instructor.

8. COURSE WORK COMPLETION

- Course papers must conform as nearly as possible to the style and format guidelines presented in the latest edition of *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, by Kate L. Turabian et al., and to any additional instructions authorized by the faculty.
- Students are expected to complete all exams, including those that are not proctored, with honor and integrity.
- Course instructors may require students to agree to an integrity statement upon taking an exam.
- Violations of the integrity and honor expectations may be reported to the Academic Dean as determined by the instructor.
- Students are required to complete all course work during the semester or session during which courses are taken.
- Additional time to complete course work, if approved, will normally not exceed the amount of time lost because of extenuating circumstances.

- The Seminary considers extenuating circumstances to be matters such as death in the family, serious accident or illness, unusual circumstances surrounding the birth of a child and similar circumstances that could not have been prevented or anticipated by the student and were completely beyond their control.
- Examples of situations that will not be considered extenuating include being busy, employment demands or minor illnesses.
- The amount of time granted by the Academic Dean is final. No additional time will be allowed.
- In no case will an extension be granted beyond one year.
- All course work must be completed within one year of the last regular day of the semester or session in which the course was originally taken.
- Because course extensions are approved only for extenuating circumstances, grade penalties will not normally be assessed.
- Grade penalties may apply to students who do not petition for extensions before the end of the semester or session.
- Students with extended work not completed from one semester may not register for the next semester without permission of the Academic Dean.
- All extension work is to be submitted directly to the course instructor.
- Students may not register for a course that has a prerequisite if the prerequisite course is under extension.

9. STUDENT GRADE RUBRIC AND ACCESS

- Students can view their semester grades online using their assigned ID number and password.
- Grade points are determined on the basis of hours attempted according to the following grade symbols and scale:
- Grade symbols:
 1. A - work of excellent quality
 2. B - work of commendable quality
 3. C - work of acceptable quality
 4. D - work of minimal but passing quality
 5. F - failure to do minimal passing work; with no credit given
 6. AU - Audit
 7. CR/NC – Credit/No Credit
 8. I - Incomplete (course extended)
 9. IP - In Progress

10. SB - Substitute Course, a specific course allowed as a substitute for a required course

11. W - Withdrew

12. WV - Waived Course, replaced by course of equal credit

13. TR - Transfer

- Students should not assume that credits will automatically or unequivocally transfer to or from any educational institution.
- Before executing an enrollment contract or agreement, all students are advised to confirm whether or not TISA will accept any credits earned at another educational institution.
- Should a student decide to transfer credits earned at TISA to another educational institution, it is advised to contact that institution to determine whether or not those credits will transfer.
- The ability to transfer credits earned at TISA to another institution may be limited and may necessitate repeating courses at another institution.

ii. Grade Scale:

Letter Grade	GPA Scale
A	4.00
A-	3.66
B+	3.33
B	3.00
B-	2.66
C+	2.33
C	2.00
C-	1.66
D	1.00
F	0.00

- B- is the minimum grade for course work credited towards a degree.
- If a student fails a required course, the course must be repeated until a passing grade is received.
- When a student retakes a course, either to rectify a failure or to improve a grade, both grades will be included in the student's cumulative grade point average (GPA).
- If a student feels that their final semester grade in a given course is not fair, the student should discuss the grade with the course instructor.
- If the student is not satisfied, he or she may then appeal to the Academic Dean by filing a written statement of particulars via academics@islamicseminary.us.
- The Dean will confer with the faculty involved and seek a satisfactory resolution of the problem.

- If the problem cannot be solved in this manner, the Dean may make a decision on the matter at his or her discretion, or may refer it to the Academic Council for final adjudication.
- All grade changes must be approved by the Academic Dean and must be made within one year after the course for which the grade in question was given.

10. ACADEMIC STANDING

- Students whose semester GPA falls below B-:
 - For the first time will be placed on academic warning by the Academic Council.
 - The second or third time a student's semester GPA falls below B-, whether or not in consecutive semesters, the student will be placed on academic probation. If the semester GPA falls below B- a fourth semester, the student will be dismissed for academic cause.
- Students who receive a B- in a course in any term:
 - Will be contacted in writing concerning their performance.
- Students who receive a B- in the same course a second time will be automatically placed on academic warning.
- Students who receive a B- in the same course a third time will be dismissed for academic cause.
- Students who receive a B- in three or more courses at any time during their Seminary studies will be placed on academic warning.
- Students who receive a B- in five or more courses will be dismissed for academic cause.
- Academic dismissals occur when a student has either failed to meet the GPA requirement, failed the same course more than three times, or failed ten or more courses while at the Seminary.
- Readmission after academic dismissal can be granted only one time.
- Academic probation or dismissal will be recorded on the student's official transcript.
- Appeal of academic probation or dismissal may be made in writing to the Academic Dean.
- Appeal of the Dean's decision may be made in writing to the Academic Council.
- Further appeal, if warranted, may be made in writing to the President of the Seminary.

11. STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT

TISA is committed to creating and maintaining a community in which administrators, faculty, staff, and students can work and study together in an atmosphere where all can flourish in learning and in worship. To this end:

- Students will be expected to engage with one another and with faculty and staff respectfully. Abusive, threatening, or profane language violate TISA's code of conduct and will not be tolerated. This includes face-to-face, voice, online and written interactions.

- Discrimination and harassment will not be tolerated.
- TISA prohibits the unlawful manufacture, distribution, dispensing, possession, or use of controlled substances (drugs) or alcohol on Seminary property or as a part of any Seminary activity, whether on- or off-TISA facilities and whether academic, professional, or social in nature.
- TISA prohibits the possession, transport, and storage of all weapons on Seminary property.
- Weapons are defined to include, but are not limited to, handguns, firearms, explosives, and other items that may be defined as weapons under state, federal, or local laws or ordinances.
- Students who are licensed to carry a concealed handgun may not carry a concealed handgun into any facility owned or leased by TISA.
- License-holding students must leave the handgun in the student's own locked vehicle, secured in the glove compartment, locked in the trunk, or locked inside a gun case.
- Law Enforcement officers privileged to carry a concealed handgun on TISA facilities pursuant to Federal, State and or local law may do so to the extent permitted by law.
- Any conduct that threatens, intimidates, or coerces an employee, student, or a member of the public at any time, will not be tolerated.
- Students convicted of crimes during their enrollment at TISA may face disciplinary action from the Seminary. The Seminary also reserves the right, after its own review, to suspend the matriculation of any student who is under investigation for or has been charged with a felony.
- Violations of all other conduct listed above should be reported to the Academic Dean. In such cases, the Academic Dean or an appropriately designated officer of the school may decide to:
 - State officially that no violation of the conduct policy has taken place.
 - Offer the student a written warning that they have violated the conduct policy.
 - Place the student on probation for a period of time.
 - Suspend the student for a period of time or dismiss the student permanently.
- Any student who is found to have violated the Code of Conduct while on probation for a previous violation will be dismissed either for a period or permanently.

12. COMPLAINT CLEARANCE PROCEDURE

- The Complaint Clearance Procedure for TISA students shall consist of three levels.
- Any aggrieved student may be accompanied at any meeting or hearing by another TISA student or employee, in the case of a complaint. However, the aggrieved student must always be present during any meetings or hearings, which take place within the outlined procedures.
- Students shall have the right to present their problems and complaints in private.
- Any student wishing to make a complaint should begin by following the three steps listed below:

Step 1:

- a. The aggrieved student's problem or complaint shall be presented by the student and their accompanying student or employee, if any, to their supervisor or professor or designated representative.
- b. The problem or complaint shall be discussed by the parties at an informal meeting.
- c. The student shall, within three days subsequent to said meeting, receive an answer to their complaint.

Step 2:

- a. If the student is not satisfied with the answer received, they may, within three days after receiving said answer, prepare a concise written account of their complaint, and the supervisor or professor or designated representative shall prepare their answer in writing, and both documents shall be submitted to the Academic Dean.
- b. The Academic Dean shall hold a meeting with the student and accompanying student/employee, if any, and the supervisor, professor, or designated representative.
- c. The Academic Dean will render a decision within three working days subsequent to said meeting.

Step 3:

- a. If the student is not satisfied with the decision made in Step Two, they may, within three days after receiving said decision, take their complaint to the TISA President for review and final decision.
- b. The President, Academic Dean, and one member of the Executive Committee of the Board, hereinafter designated the "Panel", shall review said complaint.
- c. The Panel may hold a meeting with the student and accompanying student or employee, if any.
- d. The President shall act as chairperson of the meeting and shall regulate the time to be allotted to each party for discussion.
- e. The student shall be given the decision within three days subsequent to the later date of the referral of the complaint to the President or the date of the meeting. This decision shall be final.

13. STUDENT INFORMATION

- Student information contained in an educational record that generally would not be considered harmful or an invasion of privacy if disclosed, is identified as directory information.
- Directory information contained in Seminary records is released upon request at the discretion of TISA.
- TISA hereby designates the following categories of student information as directory information to be released upon request without student consent, unless we are notified in writing otherwise

from the individual student.

1. Name
2. Address
3. Student Status
4. Phone

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| 5. Email Address | 8. Dates of Enrollment |
| 6. Academic Standing | 9. Enrollment Status |
| 7. Degree Program/Area of Study | 10. Prior Schools Attended & Degrees Conferred |

14. STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS

- **Statement of Purpose:** The policies and rules enumerated herein are intended, in part, to clarify TISA's relationship to all student organizations and to establish the rights and responsibilities of students acting in a group capacity, and to establish policies and regulations governing all group activities. All recognized student organizations will be held responsible by TISA for abiding by all federal, state, and local laws and regulations, as well as all TISA regulations.
- **Registration:** Student Council and all student organizations must register or renew each academic year with the Office of the Registrar. Each organization is responsible for ensuring that the records in the Office of the Registrar are kept updated as they change. This includes contact information for officers and advisors, or organization essential information such as a statement of purpose. Until the records are updated, the previous officers may still be held responsible for actions of the organization.
- **Recognition:** To be recognized by TISA, student organizations must meet the following requirements:
 - Four currently registered TISA students are required to start and maintain an organization.
 - Only currently registered TISA students may hold offices or other leadership positions in the organization.
 - Students may only serve as an officer of two organizations. They cannot hold the same position in both.
 - All student organizations officers must hold at least a 3.0 cumulative GPA.
 - A current TISA faculty or professional staff member must serve as an advisor to the organization.
 - A returning student organization must renew every fall semester and with officer changes. A new student organization may apply for recognition at any time. Organizations that do not renew become inactive.

In accordance with TISA policies and procedures, the privileges of recognition and registration of a student organization include:

- Eligibility to use TISA's name following the organization's name (for example: The Qur'an Club at TISA is acceptable; TISA Qur'an Club is not acceptable)

- o Eligibility to reserve TISA facilities
 - o Eligibility to be considered for campus awards and recognition
- **Responsibilities of Recognition:** Recognized organizations will be held accountable for fulfilling their academic responsibilities and for maintaining appropriate standards of behavior. This includes:
 - o Ensuring non-discrimination in membership and programming
 - o Maintaining accurate information with the Office of the Registrar
 - o Keeping detailed records of all fundraising, allocations, other deposits and expenditures for all organization accounts; as well as maintaining the fiscal solvency of the organization
 - o Maintaining accountability for the actions of the membership of the organization
 - o Refraining from advising or misleading third parties into believing that members are agents of TISA
 - o Ensuring that all officers remain in good disciplinary standing and have a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher
- **Events and Activities: Contracts**

Individuals and student organizations may not sign any contracts for services or goods with an individual or a company on behalf of TISA. It is recommended that a copy of all contracts are provided to the Office of the Registrar two weeks prior to the event.
- **Advertising:** TISA branding and logo guidelines

Consistency is key to strengthening brand identity — particularly when it comes to logo usage and creation. All student groups must follow guidelines put forth by TISA.
- **Email Distribution:** Per TISA policy, students should only use their TISA email address for all TISA related matters. The TISA email system cannot be used as a means of spamming any student, organization, or department in the TISA community.
- **Tabling:** TISA is not responsible to provide student organizations any items needed for sales, publicity, and promotions, such as tables, chairs, tents, table covers, etc. Any sales must be approved by the Office of the Registrar.
- **FERPA:** TISA's commitment to its educational mission demands that it maintains various student information concerning characteristics, activities, academic performance, and accomplishments of students. All policies and practices governing the collection, maintenance, review, and release of student education records are based on the principles of confidentiality and the student's right to privacy, consistent with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974.

FERPA is a federal law designed to protect the privacy of education records and to establish the right of students to inspect, review, amend and restrict access to their education records.

**The policies for Student Organizations have been adapted from the Oakland University, Office for Student Involvement. Link: [Student Organization Policies - Office for Student Involvement - Oakland University](#)