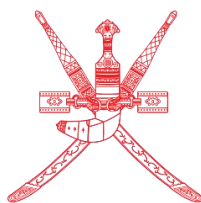


Sultanate of Oman  
Oman Authority for  
Academic Accreditation and  
Quality Assurance of Education



سلطنة عمان  
الهيئة العمانية للاعتماد الأكاديمي  
و ضمان جودة التعليم



## POLICY FOR THE ALIGNMENT OF FOREIGN AND INTERNATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS TO THE OMAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

<b>Policy Number</b>	OAAAQA/OQFM/05		
<b>Category</b>	OQFM (OQFM)		
<b>Initiating Directorate or Department</b>	Directorate General of National Qualifications Framework (DGNQF)		
<b>Contact Person</b>	Directorate General of National Qualifications Framework (DGNQF) Email: <a href="mailto:OQF@oaaa.gov.om">OQF@oaaa.gov.om</a>		
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## **POLICY FOR THE ALIGNMENT OF FOREIGN AND INTERNATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS TO THE OMAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK**

### **1. Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to provide a common approach for the Alignment of Foreign and International qualifications to the Oman Qualifications Framework (OQF) to ensure the evaluation of qualifications for Alignment to the OQF is carried out consistently and that all Aligned qualifications, placed on the National Register of Qualifications (NRQ) meet the Alignment Criteria.

Alignment is defined as `an evaluation of a Foreign or International qualification against the Alignment Criteria and the OQF Level Descriptors to determine the OQF Level that the qualification aligns to and, if applicable, the comparable OQF Credit Value of the entire qualification`.

Foreign qualifications are qualifications awarded by an Awarding Body from a country other than Oman. International qualifications are qualifications awarded by an International Awarding Body (e.g., Cisco and Microsoft).

This policy sets out the:

- Benefits of a common approach to the Alignment of Foreign and International qualifications delivered in Oman
- Alignment Criteria
- Roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders

This policy should be read in conjunction with the OAAAQA Policy for the Quality Assurance of the OQF.

### **2. Scope**

This policy applies to the Alignment of Foreign and International qualifications, delivered in Oman, from all sectors of education and training. Alignment to the OQF is mandatory<sup>1</sup> and applies to:

- New and existing Foreign and International qualifications that are owned and/or awarded by Foreign or International Awarding Bodies
- Qualifications developed by Omani education or training providers that are awarded by Foreign or International Awarding Bodies
- Training certificates developed by employers that are awarded by Foreign or International Awarding Bodies

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<sup>1</sup> Royal Decree 9/2021.

From the date of the OQF implementation, Foreign and International Awarding Bodies must apply for the Alignment:

- Within 5 years, for qualifications currently offered in Oman
- Before they can be delivered, for qualifications not currently offered in Oman

## 2.1 Users of the Policy

This policy applies to:

- Oman Authority for Academic Accreditation and Quality Assurance of Education
- Foreign and International Awarding Bodies of Education and Training Qualifications
- Education and Training Providers that award Foreign or International Qualifications
- Foreign and International Professional Bodies

This policy may also be of interest to the following stakeholders:

- The Ministry of Education
- The Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation
- The Ministry of Labour
- The Oman Medical Specialty Board
- Other Ministries and Government Bodies
- Education and Training Providers
- Employers
- Other Interested Parties<sup>2</sup>

## 3. Policy Statement

Alignment is the process of evaluating a Foreign or International qualification against the Alignment Criteria and the OQF Level Descriptors to determine the OQF Level of Alignment and the comparable OQF Credit Value, if applicable, before the placement of the qualification on the Alignment section of the NRQ.

### 3.1 Alignment Criteria

The Foreign or International Awarding Body must:

- Own and/or award the programme that leads to the qualification
- Be quality assured/accredited by a recognised external quality assurance agency
- Have robust institutional quality assurance measures in place, ensuring comparability with that required by Omani Awarding Bodies for the institutional license
- Have arrangements in place for communicating with each education or training provider delivering the qualification in Oman

The Foreign or International qualification must have:

- A programme license from the relevant licensing body, as required by the Omani licensing regulations
- Quality assurance measures in place
- Clear Learning Outcomes that are subject to quality-assured summative assessment

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<sup>2</sup> e.g., learners and their families, people looking for employment, employees looking for a better job or a career progression, anybody who is interested in the economic and social development of Oman.

### **3.2 Benefits of a Common Approach to the Alignment of Foreign and International Qualifications Delivered in Oman**

The Alignment of a Foreign or International qualification to the OQF is a matter of professional judgment by those who have knowledge, skills and experience in the relevant subject/occupational discipline and knowledge of the OQF. A common approach to Alignment provides the following benefits:

- Informing Foreign and International Awarding Bodies of the quality assurance arrangements required to meet the Alignment Criteria
- Ensuring fairness and consistency of the Alignment process
- Developing mutual trust in the quality assurance of the OQF across all Awarding Bodies and other stakeholders
- Increasing the understanding of the OQF across Foreign and International Awarding Bodies and other stakeholders

### **3.3 OQF Level**

The OQF Level indicates the complexity of learning and is defined as 'an indicator of relative demand, complexity, depth of knowledge and learner autonomy as described by the OQF Level Descriptors'.<sup>3</sup> The OQF Levels reflect the progression in learning; Level 1 is for elementary learning and Level 10 is for the most complex learning, at the forefront in the development of new knowledge and skills.

The OQF Level of Alignment is determined through an evaluation of the modules that comprise the qualification, against the Alignment Criteria and the OQF Level Descriptors to establish the Alignment of the entire qualification. Alignment enables comparability of a Foreign or International qualification to an Omani qualification at the same OQF Level.

### **3.4 OQF Credit**

OQF Credit is defined as 'a numerical indicator of the volume of learning, awarded for the achievement of all the Learning Outcomes of a unit, module, course and/or qualification, expressed in either OQF Credit Points or OQF Credit Hours'.

Both OQF Credit Points and OQF Credit Hours are based on notional learning hours defined as 'the volume of learning estimated to be required by a typical learner at a specified level to achieve the Learning Outcomes of the units, modules or courses that comprise a qualification'.

The calculation of notional learning hours includes all the learning activities needed to achieve the Learning Outcomes. Examples of activities include, but are not exclusive to, class/lecture contact time; laboratory work; workshops, self-study; research; homework; fieldwork; assignments; preparation for assessment and assessment.

As OQF Credit indicates the size or volume of the learning required to achieve the Learning Outcomes of the modules that comprise the qualification, it can be used to describe and compare qualifications.

#### **3.4.1 OQF Credit Points**

- One OQF Credit Point equates to ten notional learning hours
- Whole OQF Credit Points must be allocated, not fractions

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<sup>3</sup> Adapted from D Gosling and J Moon, *How to Use Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria* (London: Southern England Consortium for Credit Accumulation and Transfer, SEEC Office, 2001).

- A minimum of four OQF Credit Points (minimum 40 notional learning hours) can be awarded
- A minimum of twelve OQF Credit Points is required for a qualification to be placed on the NRQ (minimum 120 notional learning hours)

### 3.4.2 OQF Credit Hours

- One OQF Credit Hour equates to three hours per week for one semester (a minimum of 14 weeks)
- Based on a 14-week semester, each OQF Credit Hour equates to a minimum of 42 notional learning hours
- Each OQF Credit Hour comprises a combination of activities, for example, this may be, but is not exclusive to:
  - One-hour class contact time and two hours of learning activities
  - Two hours of class laboratory work and one hour of learning activities
  - Three hours of learning activities<sup>4</sup>
- A minimum of one OQF Credit Hour can be awarded (minimum 42 notional learning hours)
- A minimum of three OQF Credit Hours are required for a qualification to be placed on the NRQ (minimum 126 notional learning hours)

### 3.4.3 Comparable OQF Credit Value

The OQF Credit Value is defined as 'the number of OQF Credit Points, or OQF Credit Hours, which are allocated to units, modules, courses and qualifications for learning that is verified through reliable and valid assessment'.

The Foreign or International Awarding Body must determine the comparable OQF Credit Value for each module and for the entire qualification. This can be based on the number of notional learning hours required, equated to either OQF Credit Points or OQF Credit Hours. Alternatively, where the Foreign or International Awarding Body uses a different 'set of principles according to which the Credit Value of units, modules, courses and qualifications are calculated' e.g., Credit Units used by Australian HEIs, the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) or the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET), the comparable OQF Credit Value may be calculated on the equivalence of the credit system used to either OQF Credit Points or OQF Credit Hours e.g., 60 ECTS Credit Points is broadly equivalent to 120 OQF Credit Points.

## 3.5 Institutional Quality Assurance and Communication Arrangements

### 3.5.1 Institutional Quality Assurance Arrangements

As a Foreign or International Awarding Body does not require an institutional license from a licensing body in Oman, **in addition** to the information and evidence for the quality assurance of the qualification, they must also provide evidence of their institutional quality assurance arrangements. The Foreign or International Awarding Body must submit their most recent external quality assurance report/accreditation report together with information and relevant supporting material to provide evidence that there are:

- Defined governance and management arrangements
- Sufficient resources to operate in Oman and meet relevant Omani regulations
- Current strategic and operational plans

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<sup>4</sup> Section 3.3 sets out examples of learning activities.

- Policies and procedures for the development, approval, delivery, assessment and review of qualifications
- Policies and procedures to ensure the delivery and assessment of the qualification are consistent in Oman and internationally
- Policies and procedures to ensure the integrity and fairness of qualifications, such as those on cheating, plagiarism and misconduct, disability and equality
- Efficient and accurate information management system to ensure the maintenance of accurate records and registration of learners
- Efficient and transparent complaints and appeals procedures
- Policies and procedures, which ensure the continuous improvement of its operations

Where a Foreign or International Awarding Body already has a qualification Aligned to the OQF and wishes to apply for the Alignment of additional qualifications, the information requested in this section does not need to be provided for three years from the date that the first qualification was placed on the Alignment section of the NRQ as the Foreign or International Awarding Body has already satisfied the evidence required.

### **3.5.2 Communication Arrangements**

There must be a communication strategy and/or detailed arrangements in place to ensure effective communication between the Foreign or International Awarding Body and the education or training provider(s) delivering the qualification in Oman.

## **3.6 Roles and Responsibilities for the Alignment of a Foreign or International Qualification to the OQF**

### **3.6.1 Foreign or International Awarding Body**

A Foreign or International Awarding Body makes an Alignment application for a qualification that it owns or awards. Applications can be made in either English or Arabic, depending on the language in which the qualification is delivered. To complete the Alignment Application Form, the Foreign or International Awarding Body establishes an Alignment Committee responsible for:

- Ensuring the quality assurance measures for the qualification comply with the OAAAQA Policy for the Quality Assurance of the OQF
- Evaluating the qualification to ensure it meets the Alignment Criteria (see section 3.1)
- Checking the Alignment application for completeness and consistency
- Proposing the OQF Level of Alignment and, if applicable, the comparable OQF Credit Value for each module and the entire qualification
- Completing the online Alignment Application Form, checking to ensure it is complete with:
  - Appropriate and relevant supporting material, as required
  - Details of the contact person within the Foreign or International Awarding Body with responsibility for communication on all issues related to the Alignment application
  - The signature of the authorised representative from the Foreign or International Awarding Body with authority to submit Alignment applications
- Submitting the Alignment Application Form electronically to the DGNQF together with the relevant supporting material

The Alignment Application Form includes a template, which must be completed for each module to provide the module overview, the Learning Outcomes and the Assessment Criteria

along with the Committee's proposal for the OQF Level of Alignment and, if applicable, the comparative OQF Credit Value.

### **3.6.2 Directorate General of the National Qualifications Framework (DGNQF)**

The DGNQF is responsible for:

- Appointing an OQF Alignment Panel for each Alignment application
- Implementing the Alignment Process following the relevant OAAAQA Policies relating to the OQF to reach the Final Alignment Evaluation Report
- Placing Aligned qualifications on the NRQ, where appropriate
- Providing feedback and support to the Foreign and International Awarding Body concerning the Alignment process, as required
- Implementing the OQF appeal process for appeals against the Alignment Evaluation Report and/or the outcome, including amending the Final Listing Evaluation Report based on the decision of the OQF Appeal Committee, if applicable
- Providing OAAAQA capacity building training on the Alignment process for stakeholders, as required

### **3.6.3 OAAAQA Executive Office**

The OAAAQA CEO is responsible for:

- Approving the:
  - Appointment of OQF External Reviewers (OQFERs) to the National Register of External Reviewers, recommended by the DGNQF or, where required, the removal of OQFERs from the register
  - Second Draft of the Alignment Evaluation Report for approval as the Final Alignment Evaluation Report

### **3.6.4 OAAAQA Board**

The OAAAQA Board is responsible for:

- Approving the:
  - Outcomes of Alignment evaluations and, where appropriate, the placement of qualifications on the Alignment section of the of the NRQ
  - Yearly (annual) report on the OQF which includes the number and level of Foreign or International qualifications Aligned to the OQF and placed on the NRQ and issues (if any) arising from the implementation of Alignment
  - Fees for activities associated with the Alignment process

## **4. Procedure:**

Below are the steps to be followed in the implementation of this policy.

### **4.1 Foreign or International Awarding Body**

To prepare the Alignment application, the Foreign or International Awarding Body that owns the qualification forms a small OQF Alignment Committee comprising subject and quality assurance experts who are familiar with NQFs. Ideally, this should be no more than five suitably competent individuals, facilitated by an OQF Alignment Committee Chair. More than one OQF Alignment Committee may be formed, depending on the size of the qualification, available resources and/or the specialisations within the qualification; but the one OQF Alignment Committee Chair facilitates and coordinates the Alignment activity across multiple OQF Alignment Committees.

The OQF Alignment Committee may comprise the same professional who completed the programme license documentation, where it was required, and may also include subject experts

from the Qualification Design Team (QDT). For objectivity, where possible, it is advisable to have at least one member who is independent of the qualification.

#### **4.1.1 The OQF Alignment Committee**

The OQF Alignment Committee:

- Takes responsibility for the completion of the online Alignment Application Form and gathers information and evidence in relation to the Criteria for Alignment (see section 3.1)
- Provides information and supporting material on the quality assurance of the qualification to ensure compliance with the OAAAQA Policy for the Quality Assurance of the OQF and the OAAAQA Policy for the Alignment of Foreign and International Qualifications to the OQF
- Proposes the OQF Level of Alignment for each module of the qualification by evaluating the Learning Outcomes, Assessment Criteria and other relevant information against the OQF Level Descriptors and provides a rationale for the proposed Alignment
- Determines the comparable OQF Credit Value of each module, based on the equivalence of the credit system used by the Foreign or International Awarding Body or on the notional learning hours, as applicable
- Proposes the OQF Level of Alignment and, if applicable, the comparable OQF Credit Value of the entire qualification
- Completes the online Alignment Application Form
- Puts a mechanism in place to check the completeness of the Alignment application before its submission to the DGNQF ensuring that it:
  - Includes the most recent quality assurance/accreditation report from the external quality assurance agency
  - Details of the institutional and programme quality assurance measures are in place to meet the Alignment Criteria<sup>5</sup>
  - Details of the arrangements in place for communicating with the education or training providers delivering the qualification in Oman
  - Is completed fully with all the supporting material mentioned in the Alignment Application Form attached
  - Consistent in that there is no conflicting information in the application form and the Alignment templates
  - Signed by the senior member of staff within the Foreign or International Awarding Body with the authority to submit Alignment applications. Incomplete Alignment applications are not accepted
- Sends the fees for Alignment to the OAAAQA Financial Affairs Department<sup>6</sup>
- Submits the Alignment application to the DGNQF

#### **4.1.2 Institutional Quality Assurance Measures**

The OQF Alignment Committee submits: the most recent quality assurance/accreditation report from a recognised external quality assurance agency together with relevant supporting material demonstrating that the following institutional quality assurance measures are in place.

##### **a. Defined Governance and Management Arrangements**

The Foreign or International Awarding Body provides information on its governance and management arrangements, institutional structure and relevant committees to ensure that it can operate effectively.

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<sup>5</sup> OAAAQA Policy for the Quality Assurance of the OQF.

<sup>6</sup> See the OAAAQA Policy on Fees Charged for OQF Activities and Appeals.



**b. Sufficient Resources to Operate in Oman and Meet Relevant Omani Regulations**

The Foreign or International Awarding Body provides evidence that it has the necessary expertise, sufficient financial and human resources and quality management arrangements to effectively carry out its operations in Oman. It also ensures that it meets any relevant Omani regulations.

**c. Current Strategic and Operational Plans**

The Foreign or International Awarding Body provides its Strategic and Operational Plans to demonstrate the commitment of management to meeting organisational goals and to demonstrate its relationship with the education or training providers delivering the qualification in Oman.

**d. Development, Approval, Delivery, Assessment and Review of Qualifications**

The Foreign or International Awarding Body provides its policies and procedures for:

- The design, development and approval of qualifications
- Arrangements in place for the delivery, assessment and review of qualifications

**e. Consistency in Delivery and Assessment of the Qualification in Oman and Internationally**

The Foreign or International Awarding Body provides its policies and procedures for the delivery and assessment of its qualifications to ensure the consistency of the delivery and assessment of the qualification in Oman and internationally.

**f. Integrity and Fairness of Qualifications**

The Foreign or International Awarding Body provides evidence that there are policies and procedures in place on cheating, plagiarism and misconduct, which are implemented and communicated to learners in Oman. Disability and equality policies are in place to ensure that where possible, reasonable adjustments are made for learners with disabilities and that all learners are treated fairly and impartially.

**g. Efficient and Accurate Information Management Systems**

The Foreign or International Awarding Body provides evidence that it has an efficient information management system in place for:

- The maintenance of accurate records and documents
- The registration of learners
- Its agreements with the education or training providers delivering the qualification in Oman

**h. Efficient and Transparent Complaints and Appeals Procedures**

The Foreign or International Awarding Body and the education or training providers delivering the qualification in Oman provide policies and procedures to deal with complaints and appeals effectively and impartially within a documented timescale.

**i. Continuous Improvement of Operations Policies and Procedures**

The Foreign or International Awarding Body provides evidence that it carries out systematic reviews and evaluation of its policies, procedures and operating arrangements within a documented timeframe.

The only exemption to this requirement is where a Foreign or International Awarding Body has one or more qualifications Aligned to the OQF, it does not need to resubmit the information on the institutional quality assurance measures for a period of three years from the date that the first qualification was placed on the Alignment Section of the NRQ as it has already satisfied the evidence required.

#### **4.1.3 Effective Communication Arrangements**

The OQF Alignment Committee:

- Provides the communication strategy and/or detailed information describing how the Foreign or International Awarding Body plans to communicate with staff and learners registered for the qualification within each education or training provider delivering the Foreign or International qualification in Oman.

#### **4.1.4 Review of the First Draft of the Alignment Evaluation Report**

The First Draft of the Alignment Evaluation Report is sent to the Foreign or International Awarding Body by the DGNQF. The Awarding Body reviews the First Draft of the Report, checking for accuracy and, providing feedback, if any. The Foreign or International Awarding Body returns the Draft Report to the Director General of the DGNQF within ten working days of receipt.

#### **4.1.5 Intention to Appeal**

The Director General of the DGNQF sends the Final Alignment Evaluation Report to the Foreign or International Awarding Body along with information that they may raise an appeal against the outcome and/or the content of the report. The Awarding Body acknowledges receipt of the Final Alignment Evaluation Report within ten working days.

The Foreign or International Awarding Body is requested to inform the Director General of the DGNQF of an intention to appeal the Alignment outcome and/or the Evaluation Report using the OQF Appeal Application Form which should be submitted to the DGNQF within ten working days from the date the Foreign or International Awarding Body received the Final Alignment Evaluation Report.

The OQF appeal process is set out in OQF Appeals Manual which is available from the DGNQF or can be accessed from <https://oaaqa.gov.om/>.

### **4.2 Directorate General of the National Qualifications Framework (DGNQF)**

The Director General of the DGNQF:

- Forms an OQF Alignment Panel for each Alignment application (see sections 4.3)
- Acknowledges receipt of an Alignment Application Form from the Foreign or International Awarding Body
- Agrees the timescale for the Alignment evaluation with the OQF Review Director (OQFRD)
- Supports the OQF Alignment Panel on issues concerning the Alignment of the qualification, if needed
- Reviews the First Draft of the Alignment Evaluation Report from the OQFRD and provides feedback, as required
- Submits the First Draft of the Alignment Evaluation Report to the Foreign or International Awarding Body to check for accuracy and provide feedback, as required
- Reviews the Second Draft of the Alignment Evaluation Report and provides feedback, as required
- Submits the Second Draft of the Alignment Evaluation Report to the OAAAQA CEO for consideration of approval as the Final Alignment Evaluation Report
- Prepares the documentation for the OAAAQA Board, with the outcome of the Alignment evaluation for consideration of approval
- Sends the Final Alignment Evaluation Report to the Foreign or International Awarding Body, informing them of the approved outcome of the Alignment evaluation and calling

attention to the opportunity that the Foreign or International Awarding Body may appeal the Alignment Evaluation Report and/or the outcome

- Places the qualification on the NRQ, if the qualification is approved for Alignment to the OQF (See Appendix A)
- Provides feedback and support, as required, to the Foreign or International Awarding Body
- Takes forwards actions as directed by the OAAAQA Board, if the recommended Alignment outcome is not approved
- Informs the OQF Alignment Panel of the OAAAQA Board decision and, where appropriate, discusses the actions to be taken
- Implements the OQF appeal process for an appeal against the Final Alignment Evaluation Report and/or the outcome following the OAAAQA appeals process set out in the OQF Appeals Manual
- Amends the Final Alignment Evaluation Report based on the decisions of the OQF Appeal Committee, if applicable

#### **4.3 OQF Alignment Panel**

The OQF Alignment Panel comprises an OQFRD and a minimum of two approved OQFERs that must:

- Have knowledge and experience of the subject area of the qualification
- Have completed OAAAQA capacity building training on the Alignment process
- Be from different organisations
- Have no conflict of interest with the Foreign or International Awarding Body applying for Alignment

Collectively, the OQF Alignment Panel:

- Prepares the First Draft of the Alignment Evaluation Report for review by the Director General of the DGNQF and actions feedback, if any
- Considers and actions feedback, if any, on the First Draft of the Alignment Evaluation Report from the Awarding Body
- Completes the Second Draft of the Alignment Evaluation Report for review by the Director General of the DGNQF and actions feedback, if any, in preparation for the submission of the Second Draft to the OAAAQA CEO for consideration of approval as the Final Alignment Evaluation Report
- Actions feedback, if any, from the OAAAQA CEO to reach the Final Listing Evaluation Report

The specific responsibilities of the OQFERs and the OQFRD are set out in 4.3.1 and 4.3.2.

##### **4.3.1 OQF External Reviewer (OQFER)**

Each OQFER:

- Checks that the quality assurance measures for the qualification comply with the OAAAQA Policy on the Quality Assurance of the OQF
- Independently evaluates the Alignment application together with the qualification and the supporting material to ensure compliance with the Alignment Criteria (see section 3.1)
- Reviews the Alignment rationales for each module that comprises the qualification and the reasons for the proposed OQF Level of Alignment to ensure that they are valid and consistent with information in the module specifications and the OQF Level Descriptors

- Reviews the proposed comparable OQF Credit Value, if applicable, for each module that comprises the qualification to ensure the proposal for the comparable OQF Credit Value is justified or consistent with the credit system used by the Foreign or International Awarding Body
- Provides written details to the OQFRD where an Alignment evaluation cannot progress because further information is required or there are concerns regarding the Alignment application
- Attends and participates in OQF Alignment Panel meetings and meetings with the Foreign or International Awarding Body staff that were directly involved in the Alignment process and other relevant staff, as appropriate
- Completes the initial Alignment Evaluation Report, providing an initial recommendation on the:
  - Foreign or International Awarding Body's institutional quality assurance measures
  - Evaluation of the quality assurance measures in place for the qualification
  - OQF Level of Alignment and, if applicable, the comparable OQF Credit Value of each module together with comment and/or conditions on any aspect of the proposal from the Foreign or International Awarding Body, including the Learning Outcomes, Assessment Criteria and rationale, as required
  - Alignment to the OQF and the comparable OQF Credit Value for the entire qualification together with conditions, if any
- Submits the completed initial Alignment Evaluation Report to the OQFRD within the agreed timescale
- Works in conjunction with the OQFRD to complete the First and Second Drafts of the Alignment Evaluation Report, actioning feedback from the Director General of the DGNQF, Foreign or International Awarding Body and the OAAAQA CEO, as required, to reach the Final Alignment Evaluation Report

#### **4.3.2 OQF Review Director (OQFRD)**

The OQFRD is the point of contact between the OQFERs and the Foreign or International Awarding Body. The OQFERs do not contact Awarding Body directly; all contact is made through the OQFRD.

The OQFRD:

- Reviews the Alignment application from the Foreign or International Awarding Body and brings together the initial Alignment Evaluation Reports from the OQFERs
- Considers the initial recommendations of the evaluation by the OQFERs regarding the Foreign or International Awarding Body's institutional quality assurance measures, the quality assurance for the qualification, the OQF Level of Alignment and, if applicable, the comparable OQF Credit Value
- Facilitating discussions with the:
  - OQFERs where there are different views in the outcome of the initial Alignment evaluations (for example)
  - Foreign or International Awarding Body and the OQF Alignment Panel for example where there are different views on the OQF Level of Alignment and/or the comparable OQF Credit Value for the entire qualification
- Evaluates an agreed percentage of the modules comprising the qualification to verify the Alignment to the OQF and the comparative OQF Credit Value of the modules and the entire qualification. The selection includes modules where the OQFERs have different initial recommendations on the OQF Level of Alignment and/or the comparative OQF Credit Value, if any

- Completes the Verification Report to include:
  - The outcome of the Verification Review
  - Information on modules that were subject to further evaluation, if any
  - Details of discussions between the OQF Alignment Panel and/or the Foreign or International Awarding Body, if any
- Informs the Director General of the DGNQF of issues concerning the Alignment, as required
- In conjunction with the OQFERs, prepares the first and second drafts of the Alignment Evaluation Report
- Prepares for and conducts meeting of the OQF Alignment Panel and meetings between the OQF Alignment Panel and the staff within the Foreign or International Awarding Body that were directly involved in the Alignment process and other relevant staff, as required, to discuss any aspect of the Alignment application and clarify issues raised, if any

#### **4.4 OAAAQA Executive Office**

The OAAAQA CEO considers for approval:

- Recommendations from the Director General of the DGNQF for the appointment of OQFERs to the National Register of External Reviewers or, where required, the removal of OQFERs from the Register
- The Second Draft of the Alignment Evaluation Report for approval as the Final Alignment Evaluation Report

#### **4.5 OAAAQA Board**

The OAAAQA Board considers for approval the:

- Outcome of the Alignment evaluation as given in the Final Alignment Evaluation Report
- Placement of the qualification on the NRQ, if applicable (see Appendix A)
- Yearly (annual) report on the OQF, which includes the number of Foreign and International qualifications placed on the NRQ along with their OQF Level of Alignment and issues, if any, arising from the implementation of OQF Alignment
- Fees for activities associated with the Alignment process, including those for Alignment applications and Alignment appeals following the OAAAQA Policy on Fees Charged for OQF Activities and Appeals<sup>7</sup>, before submission to the Ministry of Finance for approval

#### **4.6 Major Change**

The Foreign or International Awarding Body must inform the DGNQF in writing of any major change to the programme of an Aligned qualification.<sup>8</sup> A major change is defined as 'a change that affects the OQF Level and/or OQF Credit Value of the qualification or impacts on the qualification meeting the Listing or Alignment Criteria and subsequently its placement on the National Register of Qualifications'. Examples include, but are not limited to, changes to the:

- Institutional quality assurance
- Quality assurance of the qualification
- Name of the Awarding Body
- Qualification title
- Design and/or length of the qualification, including the addition of new modules

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<sup>7</sup> To be developed.

<sup>8</sup> See the OAAAQA Policy on Major Change Notification.

Minor changes, that do not affect the OQF Level of Alignment and/or the comparable OQF Credit Value, may be made to modules without the need to inform the DGNQF but they should be noted in the Re-Listing or Re-Alignment Application Form.

#### 4.7 Annual Report

The DGNQF prepares a yearly (annual) report for the OAAAQA Board on the implementation of the OQF. The report includes the number of Aligned qualifications together with details of the level of Alignment to the OQF and comparable OQF Credit Value, subject discipline; and issues (if any) arising from the Alignment process.

#### 5. Abbreviations

ECTS	European Credit Transfer System
ECVET	European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NRQ	National Register of Qualifications
OAAAQA	Oman Authority for Academic Accreditation and Quality Assurance of Education
OQF	Oman Qualifications Framework
OQFERs	Oman Qualifications Framework External Reviewers
OQFRDs	Oman Qualifications Framework Review Directors
QDT	Qualification Design Team

#### 6. Definitions

Accreditation	A formal, periodic, external quality assurance process, undertaken by a national or international body with a formal remit to undertake assessment of educational institutions and/or programmes, which determines whether or not a defined set of standards has been met. The assessment body is external to- and independent from- the institution. Accredited status is conferred by this body for a defined period of time <sup>9</sup>
Alignment [of a qualification to the OQF]	An evaluation of a Foreign or International qualification against the Alignment Criteria and the OQF Level Descriptors to determine the OQF Level that the qualification aligns to and, if applicable, the comparable OQF Credit Value of the entire qualification
Assessment	The process of judging performance against specified targets/reference points <sup>10</sup>
Awarding Body	An organisation that issues education or training awards following formal assessment (for example, Academic Higher Education Institutions and their Affiliates, Technological Institutions, Professional Bodies and Technical and Vocational Education and Training Providers <sup>11</sup>
Characteristic	An attribute of the OQF Level Descriptors. There are six characteristics: Knowledge; Skills; Communication, Numeracy, Information Communication Technology Skills; Autonomy and Responsibility; Employability and Values and Learning to Learn. These six characteristics combine to form the OQF Level Descriptors
Credit System	A set of principles according to which the credit value of units, modules, courses and qualifications are calculated

<sup>9</sup> See OAAAQA Online Glossary, [www.oaaa.gov.om/Training.aspx#Glossary](http://www.oaaa.gov.om/Training.aspx#Glossary) (accessed on 19.04.2021).

<sup>10</sup> See OAAAQA Online Glossary, [www.oaaa.gov.om/Training.aspx#Glossary](http://www.oaaa.gov.om/Training.aspx#Glossary) (accessed on 19.04.2021).

<sup>11</sup> Adapted from <http://qualityresearchinternational.com/glossary/#a>.

Credit Transfer	The process of using the credit gained for completed stand-alone units, modules or courses of a programme or qualification in the pursuit of another programme or qualification <sup>12</sup>
Evaluation [of Listing or Alignment]	A systematic method of examination of each module comprising a qualification to determine the extent to which the entire qualification meets the criteria as set out in the relevant OAAAQA Policy together with the qualification's OQF Level and OQF Credit Value
Foreign and International Qualifications	Foreign qualifications relate to qualifications awarded in a country other than Oman (for example, a United Kingdom Awarding Body). International qualifications relate to qualifications awarded by an International Awarding Body (for example, Cisco and Microsoft)
Institution	Education or training provider for schools, academic, technological, professional and technical and vocational qualifications
Knowledge	The acquisition and comprehension of facts, principles, theories and practices related to an area of work or learning
Learning Outcome	What a learner is expected to know (knowledge), do (skills) or apply (competencies), as a result of his/her undertaking a unit, module, course or a programme leading to a qualification <sup>13</sup>
Level Descriptors [of the OQF]	A set of progressive statements, which describe the expected outcomes at each level of the OQF in regard to the six characteristics of Knowledge; Skills; Communication, Numeracy, Information Communication Technology Skills; Autonomy and Responsibility; Employability and Values and Learning to Learn
Licensing	An evaluative process leading to formal approval from the relevant Omani government body for institutions and/or their programmes. Institutions include organisations such as schools, universities, technical and vocational education and training providers
Listing [a qualification on the OQF]	An evaluation of an Omani qualification against the Listing Criteria and the OQF Level Descriptors to determine the OQF Level and the OQF Credit Value of the entire qualification
Major Change	A change that affects the OQF Level and/or OQF Credit Value of the qualification or impacts on the qualification meeting the Listing or Alignment Criteria and subsequently its placement on the National Register of Qualifications
Module	A component of a qualification. Also known as course or unit by some Awarding Bodies
National Register of Qualifications [NRQ]	An online official record of all nationally recognised qualifications Listed on, or Aligned to, the OQF. Managed by the DGNQF, the NRQ is available to stakeholders and the general public. Submission and evaluation of Listing and Alignment applications are carried out through the NRQ online system, allowing for secure storage and easy retrieval of documentation
Notional Learning Hours	The volume of learning estimated to be required by a typical learner at a specified level to achieve the Learning Outcomes of the units, modules or courses that comprise a qualification
Oman Qualifications Framework [OQF]	An instrument to describe; compare; and classify qualifications from all sectors of education and training in Oman. It is based on one set of generic Level Descriptors, which describe the expected outcomes at each of its ten levels. The OQF provides a reference point for qualifications delivered and awarded in Oman; the comparison between Omani qualifications and Foreign or International qualifications; and the Recognition of Prior Learning

<sup>12</sup> Adapted from OAAAQA Online Glossary, [www.oaaa.gov.om/Training.aspx#Glossary](http://www.oaaa.gov.om/Training.aspx#Glossary) (accessed on 19.04.2021).

<sup>13</sup> See OAAAQA Online Glossary, [www.oaaa.gov.om/Training.aspx#Glossary](http://www.oaaa.gov.om/Training.aspx#Glossary) (accessed on 19.04.2021).

QQF Credit	A numerical indicator of the volume of learning, awarded for the achievement of all the Learning Outcomes of a unit, module, course and/or qualification, expressed in either QQF Credit Points or QQF Credit Hours
QQF Credit Hour	A unit of measurement, which describes the volume of learning required by a typical learner to achieve the Learning Outcomes of the units, modules or courses, which lead to a qualification. One QQF Credit Hour is three hours per week for one semester (minimum 14 weeks), which equates to a minimum of 42 notional learning hours <sup>14</sup>
QQF Credit Point	A unit of measurement, which describes the volume of learning required by a typical learner to achieve the Learning Outcomes of the units, modules or courses, which lead to a qualification. One QQF Credit Point equates to ten notional learning hours <sup>15</sup>
QQF Credit Value	The number of QQF Credit Points or QQF Credit Hours, which are allocated to units, modules, courses and qualifications for learning that is verified through reliable and valid assessment
QQF Level	An indicator of relative demand, complexity, depth of knowledge and learner autonomy as described in the QQF Level Descriptors <sup>16</sup>
Placement [of a qualification on the NRQ]	The inclusion of a qualification on the National Register of Qualifications following the Listing or Alignment process, which involves a Proposal, Recommendation, Verification and Approval of the QQF Level and QQF Credit Value of the qualification
Programme	A set of units, modules or courses, which are designed to lead to a qualification on a national qualifications framework
Progression	A learning pathway taken by learners as they develop their expertise in a discipline and achieve qualifications at higher levels on the QQF
Qualification	An award issued by an Awarding Body when, following established standards, the Awarding Body determines that the learner has achieved the Learning Outcomes of all the units, modules or courses of the programme
Quality	The extent to which an educational institution's systems, processes and structures result in outcomes for the institution and/or its programmes, which meet stakeholder needs through the attainment of relevant standards/benchmarks <sup>17</sup>
Quality Assurance	The implementation of planned and systematic processes and systems, either internal or external and independent to an educational institution, that assess the institution's programmes, services and activities as well as the processes that support these, in relation to relevant standards/benchmarks/frameworks <sup>18</sup>
Re-Listing or Re-Alignment	A review process for Listed and Aligned qualifications to ensure that the Listing or Alignment Criteria were maintained throughout the delivery of the qualification and no major changes were made to the Learning Outcomes of the units, modules or courses that impacted on the QQF Level and/or QQF Credit Value of the entire qualification

<sup>14</sup> Each QQF Credit Hour comprises a combination of activities that are required to achieve the Learning Outcomes, such as class or lecture contact time, laboratory work, workshops, self-study, research, homework, fieldwork, assignments, preparation for assessment and assessment.

<sup>15</sup> Each QQF Credit Point comprises a combination of activities that are required to achieve the Learning Outcomes, such as class or lecture contact time, laboratory work, workshops, self-study, research, homework, fieldwork, assignments, preparation for assessment and assessment.

<sup>16</sup> Adapted from D Gosling and J Moon, *How to Use Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria* (London: Southern England Consortium for Credit Accumulation and Transfer, SEEC Office, 2001).

<sup>17</sup> See OAAAQA Online Glossary, [www.oaaa.gov.om/Training.aspx#Glossary](http://www.oaaa.gov.om/Training.aspx#Glossary) (accessed on 19.04.2021).

<sup>18</sup> Adapted from OAAAQA Online Glossary, [www.oaaa.gov.om/Training.aspx#Glossary](http://www.oaaa.gov.om/Training.aspx#Glossary) (accessed on 19.04.2021).



Stakeholder	Any party that has an interest in the activities of the OQF <sup>19</sup>
Summative Assessment	An evaluative process, which measures a learner’s ability to demonstrate knowledge, skills and other characteristics against Assessment Criteria; the results are recorded and contribute to the learner’s overall mark and/or grade
Verification [of Listing or Alignment]	An objective moderation of a Listing or Alignment application and its associated Evaluation Report to check that the Listing or Alignment process was carried out correctly and is consistent across different OQF External Reviewers, thus ensuring the qualification (and modules) meet the Listing or Alignment Criteria and the outcomes of the relevant OQF Level Descriptors

## 7. References

**Gosling, D and J Moon**, *How to Use Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria* (London: Southern England Consortium for Credit Accumulation and Transfer, SEEC Office, 2001).

## 8. Document History

Document History				
Version	Date Approved	Circulation	Approved by	Brief Description
1	18 May 2022	-	OAAAQA Board	This first version contained the procedure for the Policy for the Alignment of Foreign and International Qualifications to the Oman Qualifications Framework.

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<sup>19</sup> Adapted from OAAAQA Online Glossary, [www.oaaa.gov.om/Training.aspx#Glossary](http://www.oaaa.gov.om/Training.aspx#Glossary) (accessed on 13.09.2018).

## **APPENDIX A: Actions following the OAAAQA Board Decision for Alignment**

The following actions are taken, depending on the decision of the OAAAQA Board on the Alignment outcome.

- If the OAAAQA Board approves the outcome that recommends the qualification for Alignment, the DGNQF:
  - Informs the Foreign or International Awarding Body
  - Sends the Final Alignment Evaluation Report to the Foreign or International Awarding Body
  - Places the qualification on the NRQ
- If the OAAAQA Board approves the outcome that recommends the qualification for Alignment with conditions, the DGNQF:
  - Informs of the Foreign or International Awarding Body
  - Sends the Final Alignment Evaluation Report to the Foreign or International Awarding Body
  - Discusses the requirements of the conditions with the Foreign or International Awarding Body and reaches an agreement on a suitable timeframe to allow for the necessary changes to be made
  - Informs the Foreign or International Awarding Body of the opportunity to appeal the Final Alignment Evaluation Report and/or the outcome

The qualification is not placed on the NRQ until the conditions on the qualification are met by the Awarding Body within a timescale agreed with the DGNQF.

- If the OAAAQA Board approves the outcome that recommends the qualification is Not Recommended for Alignment, the DGNQF:
  - Informs the Foreign or International Awarding Body
  - Sends the Final Alignment Evaluation Report to the Foreign or International Awarding Body
  - Informs the Foreign or International Awarding Body of the opportunity to appeal the Final Alignment Evaluation Report and/or the outcome
- If the OAAAQA Board does not approve the Alignment outcome as it does not agree with the recommended OQF Level of Alignment and/or the comparative OQF Credit Value, it sets out the reasons and provides the DGNQF with direction regarding the actions to be taken so that the Alignment application can be re-evaluated and resubmitted for approval