



Indicator Review Project

Briefing Paper for HEIs – March 2022

1. Introduction

Last year, Oman Authority for Academic Accreditation and Quality Assurance of Education (OAAAQA) conducted a full review of all ISA standards to ensure that they remained fit for purpose in the context of global challenges. The OAAAQA Board approved the release of the results of this review in February 2022 in the form of a set of revised Institutional Standard Assessment (ISA) indicators. These revisions are designed to help Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) when preparing for External Quality Assurance (EQA) activities. In particular, the revised indicators reflect an increased reliance on distance learning since 2020 when Covid-related restrictions impacted upon campus attendance and resulted in the need to diversify teaching, learning and assessment through digital means. While non-mandatory, the ISA indicators are intended as an important guide for HEIs in preparing their self-study for ISA Application. It is hoped that the recommended revisions to the indicators will give greater guidance to HEIs given the current circumstances, while also giving confidence to External Reviewers (ERs) that they are covering distance learning adequately during EQA activities.¹

The opportunity has been taken to introduce some additional minor revisions that have been suggested through the conducting of ISAs since 2015. This experience has shown where further guidance is required by HEIs and where important clarifications are helpful. HEIs are respectfully reminded that indicators are non-mandatory in nature and EQA Panels are instructed to measure an HEI against standards and criteria only.

2. Background

When the national response to Covid required the introduction of extensive distance learning measures in 2020, OAAAQA endeavoured to support the HE sector in two ways: firstly, the Board took the decision to postpone for one year all EQA activities to allow HEIs time to adapt to the new teaching and learning environment, and secondly, the Authority launched a review of the ISA indicators. A project consultant, selected from our ER Register, was appointed to conduct the review and further consultation was undertaken in-house. The Board approved the revisions to the indicators in 2021 with the instruction that they should be released as part of the comprehensive review of ISA that is scheduled at the end of the first cycle, ahead of Reaccreditation. During a presentation to members of the private Higher Education sector in November 2021, however, OAAAQA recognised that it would be helpful to release the revised non-mandatory indicators before the end of the first cycle and the Board approved this measure in February 2022.

3. Indicator Review in the Context of a Full ISA Review

It may be wondered why only a partial review of ISA is taking place at the present time and whether this represents a missed opportunity to review all aspects of the standards and processes. The reason for this is twofold. Firstly, the current ISA standards and criteria are sufficiently generic to cover a wide range of practices in the HE sector, including the new emphasis on distance learning, teaching and assessment – as such, they remain fit for purpose, particularly now that extra guidance is given through the revision of indicators. Secondly, a full review of ISA – both standards and processes – is already planned to commence at the end of 2022 ahead of the introduction of Institutional Reaccreditation (IR). This consultation will take several months and may result in a radical overhaul that extends well beyond the current need to give targeted advice on distance learning.

¹ See Table 1 for abbreviations.

4. Outcome of the Indicator Review Project in Summary

The indicator review project demonstrated that the current indicators remain helpful in supporting the activities of those HEIs and ERs who are either preparing or reviewing an ISA or ISR Application. Despite this, minor revisions to indicators across all nine standards have been identified – some of which help apply the experience of conducting ISA reviews and range beyond the original remit to respond only to new teaching, learning and assessment context. The revisions take the form of 62 amendments to wording in existing indicators (Appendix A); the addition of 18 indicators (Appendix B), and the deletion of three indicators where overlapping concepts have been merged into a single indicator (Appendix C). It is hoped that all HEIs will find the guidance given therein helpful in their quality assurance activities.

Table 1: List of Abbreviations Used in this Document

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ERs	External Reviewers (as in approved members of the OAAAQA ER Register)
EQA (activity)	External Quality Assurance (activity)
HEI	Higher Education Institution
IR	Institutional Reaccreditation
ISA	Institutional Standards Assessment
ISR	Institutional Standards Reassessment
OAAAQA	Oman Authority for Academic Accreditation and Quality Assurance of Education

Appendix A: Amendment to Existing ISA Indicators

Table 1: ISA Indicator Review - Amendments				
Standard	Criteria	Current Indicator	Revised Indicator	Rationale for Amendment
1	1.1	a) The Mission, Vision and Values effectively guide the HEI, are consistent with the HEI's purpose and its ability to meet the national priorities of Oman, and community expectations.	a) The Mission, Vision and Values effectively guide the HEI, clearly define the HEI's purpose and its ability to meet the national priorities of Oman, and community expectations.	Since the Mission, Vision and Values (MVVs) define the purpose of the HEI, the statement that they 'are consistent with the HEI's purpose' is confusing. The amendment brings the indicator in line with the criterion requirements.
	1.1	c) Key stakeholders have been consulted and support the Mission, Vision and Values.	c) Key internal and external stakeholders have been directly consulted in the development of the Mission, Vision and Values, and support their implementation.	Many HEIs are unable to provide clear evidence of direct stakeholder input into the development of the MVVs. The amendment will focus their efforts on ensuring that both internal and external stakeholders have a direct input into the MVVs.
	1.2	b) Membership of the governing body ensures an appropriate balance of individuals with the range of perspectives and expertise necessary to guide the HEI.	b) Membership of the governing body ensures an appropriate balance of individuals with the range of perspectives and expertise necessary to guide the HEI, and complies with regulations stipulated by relevant government authorities.	HEIs need to ensure that they are in compliance with any relevant decrees and regulations concerning the composition of the membership of the governing body.
	1.2	d) There is a clear distinction between the role of governance and the routine management of the HEI.	d) There is a clear distinction between the role of governance and the routine management of the HEI that ensures that operational activities remain independent of interventions by governance bodies.	The separation of governance and management needs to be clearly highlighted because previous ISAs have shown this distinction to be blurred, with governance bodies becoming involved in operational matters.
	1.3	a) The HEI has a clear management structure with defined roles and delegated responsibilities for management team members.	a) The HEI has a clear management structure, with defined roles and delegated responsibilities for management team members, that is effectively deployed through appropriate full-time appointments to key management positions in the HEI.	The current indicator stops at the Approach and does not address how the management structure is deployed. Previous ISAs have highlighted the lack of management continuity in many HEIs, with high turnover of managerial appointments and many acting management positions; this impacts negatively on the effectiveness and robustness of the management system.
	1.5	b) The HEI's strategic planning process clearly articulates priorities, ensures alignment of the HEI's purposes, core functions and resources, and defines the future direction of the institution.	b) The HEI's strategic planning process clearly articulates institutional priorities, and ensures alignment of the HEI's purpose, strategic goals, core functions, resources and risk appetite.	The Strategic Plan, by nature, defines the future direction of an institution. This part of indicator b) is more appropriate as part of indicator a) (see below) which states the overall purpose of the Strategic Plan. Indicator b) has been revised to indicate the required alignment of organisational goals with resources, the organisational structure (functions) and potential risks, such as the Covid pandemic.

	1.5	a) The HEI's Strategic Plan is effective in guiding and driving all the HEI's activities.	a) The HEI's Strategic Plan defines the direction of the HEI and is effective in guiding and driving all the HEI's activities	The latter part of indicator b) has been moved to indicator a) as it is a better fit with this indicator.
	1.8	b) The risk management system is sufficiently comprehensive to address relevant strategic and operational risks.	b) The risk management system is sufficiently comprehensive to address relevant strategic and operational risks, in addition to 'force majeure' events.	The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the need to consider the impact of 'force majeure' events more rigorously. Many HEIs in Oman already include inclement weather (storms, flooding) in their risk management plans. Other 'force majeure' events should also be considered and mitigated against.
	1.8	c) The HEI ensures the appropriate delegation of responsibility for the effective management of risks.	c) The HEI ensures the appropriate delegation of responsibility and allocation of resources for the effective management of risks.	Risk management requires both delegation of responsibility and access to resources to mitigate risks. These resources typically include relevant training and professional development for staff.
	1.9	a) The HEI has a comprehensive set of policies and procedures which guide all its academic, administrative and support services, and external engagement activities.	a) The HEI has a comprehensive set of policies and procedures which guide the management and delivery of programmes, research activities, the provision of all academic, administrative and support services, and external engagement activities.	Indicator amended to specifically refer to academic programmes and research activities, which are not typically deemed to be 'services'. Policies related to the delivery of academic programmes are of particular importance.
	1.9	b) The processes used to develop, implement and review policies and procedures are clearly documented and consistently applied.	b) The processes used to identify, develop, disseminate, implement, review and amend policies and procedures are clearly documented and consistently applied.	Indicator amended to include three additional key steps related to policies: proposing policies (ie, where policies originate), disseminating policies (ie, how policies are communicated to stakeholders) and amend policies (ie, the most frequent policy management process).
	1.10	d) The entity and activity review system involves all core functions of the HEI; is led by a senior member of staff and involved external reviewers where appropriate; review findings are systematically reported to management.	d) The entity and activity review system involves all core functions of the HEI; is led by a senior member of staff and involved external reviewers where appropriate; review findings are systematically reported to management and the governing body where required.	Outcomes of entity and activity reviews which have strategic, reputational and significant financial implications should also be reported to the governing body. For example, reviews by the affiliate which impact the deployment of the Affiliation Agreement.
	1.10	e) Entity and activity monitoring and review systems are used to identify areas for improvement and result in action plans used to support and promote a culture of quality improvement across the HEI. Entity and activity monitoring and review draw on a range of evidence.	e) Entity and activity monitoring and review systems are used to identify areas for improvement and result in action plans used to support and promote a culture of quality improvement across the HEI. The HEI ensures the appropriate delegation of responsibility, division of work and follow up mechanisms for	The last part of indicator e) does not align well with the first part because it is about the deployment of monitoring and review activities, while the first part is about the outcomes. Suggest deleting the last part and moving it to indicator c) (see below). An additional part about clearly allocating responsibilities for the implementation and follow up of action plans is recommended as previous ISA experience shows that it is often not clear in the HEI where this responsibility lies (with the relevant department or the QA office/function).

			the deployment and monitoring of action plans.	
	1.10	c) There is a regular review schedule of all the HEI's core functions.	c) There is a regular review schedule of all the HEI's core functions. Entity and activity monitoring and review draw on a range of evidence from internal and external stakeholders.	The last part of indicator e) has been moved to indicator c) as both are related to implementation. Also added a reference to stakeholders to ensure that HEIs include external stakeholders in their reviews, as this is often overlooked.
2	2.1	b) The HEI's policies and procedures for the design, development and approval of its programmes ensure that full consideration is given to all aspects of programme design, including level of learning outcomes and the position of the award on the Oman Qualifications Framework; programme duration and credit points/hours, structure, components and pathways of the program, and exit awards.	b) The HEI's policies and procedures for the design, development and approval of its programmes ensure that full consideration is given to all aspects of programme design, including level of learning outcomes and the position of the award on the Oman Qualifications Framework; programme duration and credit points/hours, structure, modes of delivery, components and pathways of the programme and exit awards.	Adding modes of delivery indicates to HEIs the need to consider multiple modes of delivery for a programme.
	2.1	h) Graduate attributes are clearly articulated to prospective and current students and staff. Strategies for developing graduate attributes are implemented across all programmes and mechanisms for assessing and reporting students' achievements of these attributes are in place.	h) Graduate attributes and learning outcomes are clearly articulated to prospective and current students and staff. Strategies for developing graduate attributes are implemented across all programmes, and mechanisms for assessing and reporting student achievements of these attributes are in place.	Learning outcomes also need to be clearly communicated to stakeholders as they represent the target achievement for every course and programme.
	2.2	a) The HEI's policies and procedures ensure the review of existing programmes includes: the purpose of the programme and its relevance to the HEI's Mission and strategic objectives; incorporation of national requirements (such as entrepreneurship); demand for graduates; and relationship to, and likely impact on, other programs.	No change	This indicator fits better under Criterion 2.1 since it is related to programme reviews. Suggest moving it from Criterion 2.2 to 2.1.
	2.2	d) Where applicable, the role of academic affiliates	d) Where applicable, the role of academic affiliates in the	The additional part of indicator d) had been adopted and adapted from indicator g) in

		in the development of new curricula and the ongoing review of curricula is clear, appropriate and effectively implemented.	development of new curricula and the ongoing review of curricula is clear, appropriate and effectively implemented. Where the curriculum of the affiliate has been adopted, there are processes to ensure that it is consistent with Omani laws and requirements, and adapted to the local context.	Criterion 1.4. Based on previous ISA experience, some HEIs view the curriculum as being the affiliate's responsibly and do not have locally-based processes for developing or reviewing the curriculum, despite having to incorporate Omani requirements.
	2.3	d) Entry standards are set in the context of student support being provided at every level.	d) Entry standards are set within the context of any planned support provided for students at each level of their studies to ensure maximum access of students to programmes.	This indicator was not clear. It has been clarified.
	2.4	c) The HEI has a defined and appropriate approach to teaching and learning which is effectively implemented. The approach reflects contemporary pedagogies and incorporates the appropriate use of learning technologies.	c) The HEI has a defined and appropriate approach to teaching and learning which is effectively implemented. The approach includes a range of teaching and learning methods, reflects contemporary pedagogies and incorporates the appropriate use of learning technologies for all modes of delivery.	The criterion refers to 'teaching and learning methods' but none of the indicators mention methods specifically. Recommend adding this reference to indicator c).
	2.6	d) Plagiarism detection methods are in place, and cases of plagiarism are effectively addressed through the implementation of appropriate policies and procedures.	d) Plagiarism detection methods are in place, and cases of plagiarism are effectively tracked and addressed through the implementation of appropriate policies and procedures, including measures for managing repeat offenders.	Many HEIs have processes in place to monitor plagiarism in individual courses, but few have mechanisms for tracking repeat offenders (ie, students who plagiarise several times during their enrolment in several courses). This creates a situation whereby a student may only be penalised with a reduced mark in an assessment despite having plagiarised a number of times. The indicator has been revised to include references to repeat plagiarism and the need for tracking it.
	2.6	e) The HEI has mechanisms to ensure students and staff understand what constitutes cheating and collusion and which help students avoid these forms of academic misconduct. Cases of cheating and collusion are effectively addressed through the implementation of appropriate policies and procedures.	e) The HEI has mechanisms to ensure students and staff understand what constitutes cheating and collusion and which help students avoid these forms of academic misconduct. The HEI has mechanisms for detecting cheating and collusion, and cases of cheating and collusion are effectively addressed through the implementation of appropriate policies and procedures.	The indicators only refer to plagiarism detection mechanisms, but not to mechanisms for detecting cheating (in exams, using 'essay mills', etc) or collusion. This has been added to indicator e).

	2.8	b) The HEI has effective mechanisms to ensure that assessment methods in all programmes are appropriate and benchmarked against current best practice.	b) The HEI has effective mechanisms to ensure that assessment methods in all programmes and for all modes of delivery, are appropriate, reliable and benchmarked against current best practice.	Different modes of delivery require different assessment approaches, and this requirement has been added to the indicator.
	2.9	e) The HEI has effective policies and procedures to ensure paper-based and online examinations are handled securely	e) The HEI implements effective policies and procedures to ensure paper-based and online examinations are managed securely.	Indicators a) to e) are related to the existence of policies and procedures (approach) but there are no indicators about the implementation (deployment) of these policies. Indicator e) has been amended to address this.
3	3.1	a) The HEI's policies and procedures ensure that factors considered in the development of new research programmes include alignment with the Oman Qualifications Framework, alignment with the HEI's academic and research profile, availability of appropriately qualified staff, and availability of appropriate research equipment, facilities and resources.	a) The HEI's policies and procedures ensure that development of new research programmes includes alignment with various external factors. These factors include alignment with the Oman Qualifications Framework and alignment with the HEI's academic and research profile. The development of research programmes should also take into consideration internal factors such as availability of appropriately qualified staff and the availability of appropriate research equipment, facilities and resources.	The language of the indicator has been tightened to be clearer.
	3.3	d) The HEI has processes to ensure that intellectual property generated by its students is protected.	x) The HEI has processes to ensure that intellectual property generated by its students is protected and managed in line with the HEI's intellectual property policies and procedures.	This indicator fits better under Criterion 3.8 since it references intellectual property. This should be moved from Criterion 3.3 to 3.8, and adding last part referencing the HEI's intellectual property policies and procedures.
	3.4	c) The HEI requires that all research students be provided with a supervisory team which includes as a minimum a main supervisor who is the clearly identified primary point of contact and support.	c) The HEI requires that all research students be provided with a supervisory team which includes, as a minimum, a main supervisor who is the clearly identified primary point of contact and support, and, as and where the HEI feels it appropriate, a co-supervisor.	Having two supervisors (main supervisor and co-supervisor) as a minimum is not only good practice, but also vital in this region with a transient expatriate population. If a supervisor leaves the HEI or Oman, a student is left with no supervisor. Having at least two supervisors mitigates this risk.
	3.8	b) The HEI's policies and procedures support the ethical conduct of research.	b) The HEI's policies and procedures support the ethical conduct of all research.	Some ISAs have shown that ethics considerations are not seen as being applicable to certain types of research. However, all types of research should be subject to ethics regulations.

	3.8	c) The HEI provides research students with appropriate support and training in preparing an application for ethics approval.	c) The HEI provides research students with appropriate support and training in preparing an application for ethics approval. Ethics approval, as applicable, is obtained prior to the commencement of the research project.	Clarification added to ensure that ethics approval must be secured before data collection commences.
4	4.1	a) The HEI has a strategic approach to research which is consistent with its Mission and research objectives. The approach includes the use of appropriately benchmarked targets to measure research performance.	a) The HEI has a strategic approach to research which is consistent with its Mission, institutional classification, and research objectives. The approach includes the use of appropriately benchmarked targets to measure research performance.	Added alignment with institutional classification which is part of the criterion requirements and very important to the HEI's research strategy.
	4.1	c) The HEI ensures there is a fair, timely and transparent research approval process for research involving ethical or biosafety consideration which is readily accessible and effectively implemented.	c) The HEI ensures there is a fair, timely and transparent research approval process for all types of staff research (including that involving ethical and/or biosafety considerations) and is readily accessible and effectively implemented.	The original indicator only refers to approvals for research involving ethical or biosafety considerations. This suggests that research which does not involve these considerations does not require approval. Indicator has been amended to refer to approval process for all types of staff research, as stated in the criterion text ('research activities are formally approved').
	4.1	e) The HEI regularly monitors and reviews research performance against appropriate benchmarked key performance indicators to ensure research targets are being met.	e) The HEI regularly monitors and reviews research activities to ensure research goals and targets are being met.	Indicator e) is more relevant to Criterion 4.2 which relates to research performance. Since Criterion 4.1 is about research planning and management, the indicator has been 'generalised' and references research activities and goals. The original indicator e) can be moved to Criterion 4.2.
	4.3	c) A number of internal research grants are provided to support new research proposals and projects.	c) A number of internal research grants are provided to support research proposals and projects. Research grants are assessed fairly and impartially, and ensure that all staff are treated equitably.	Deleted reference to 'new research' because it may be misinterpreted. Added text to indicate that all grants should be evaluated without bias and all staff should be treated equitably. This is in line with the criterion text.
	4.5	a) The HEI's research policies and procedures are informed by international research conventions and are effectively implemented to ensure that all research activities carried out by staff and students are of the highest ethical standards.	a) The HEI's policies and procedures support the ethical conduct of research and are informed by international research conventions. Research policies are effectively implemented to ensure that all research activities carried out by staff and students are of the highest ethical standards.	Added references to the HEI having policies and procedures to support the ethical conduct of research. This highlights the need for having separate policies for this, and also brings the indicators in line with Criterion 3.8.

	4.5	c) The HEI has a high-level committee that includes senior researchers and external experts to approve the ethics of research projects involving humans, animals or genetic considerations.	c) The HEI has a high-level committee (or committees) that include senior researchers and external experts to approve the ethics of research projects involving humans, animals or genetic considerations, and biohazardous materials.	Indicators c) and d) have been combined into one indicator and allowance made for multiple committees.
	4.8	a) The HEI actively encourages a culture of entrepreneurship and promotes the appropriate commercialisation of research by staff. The HEI actively supports staff involved in research commercialisation activities.	a) The HEI actively encourages a culture of entrepreneurship and innovation, and promotes the appropriate commercialisation of research by staff. The HEI actively supports staff involved in research commercialisation activities.	Added the term 'innovation' in line with national priorities.
5	5.2	d) The HEI keeps informed of relevant labour market requirements.	d) The HEI keeps informed of relevant labour market requirements to enhance graduate employability prospects.	The revised indicator provides states how the labour market data should be used and links Criterion 5.2 to Criterion 2.11.
	5.3	c) The HEI provides professional bodies with an opportunity to contribute to the design and review of programs.	c) The HEI provides professional bodies with an opportunity to contribute to the design and review of programmes and seeks professional accreditation for its programmes.	Indicators c) and d) overlap. Suggest merging these into one indicator as given.
	5.5	c) The HEI keeps its alumni informed about institutional developments and encourages participation in relevant academic and community engagement activities.	c) The HEI keeps its alumni informed about institutional developments and provides alumni with opportunities to provide input into its academic and community engagement activities.	The second part of indicator c) (encourages participation in relevant academic and community engagement activities) and the second part of indicator d) (the latter has opportunities to provide input into its academic and community engagement activities) overlap. Delete the second part of indicator d) and revise indicator c).
6	6.1	b) Academic support services planning and management takes into account the specific needs of students in non-standard modes of study and/or studying in different locations.	b) Academic support services planning and management takes into account the specific needs of students in non-standard modes of study, online or distance learning, and/or studying in different locations.	Non-standard modes of study are usually interpreted as part-time or evening study. Online/distance learning has been added to emphasise virtual modes of study which need to be catered for.
	6.1	d) The HEI undertakes ongoing analysis of the profile of its student population to inform strategic decision making and longer-term planning and development of academic support services.	a) There are effective mechanisms and processes for analysing the profile of the student population and identifying the learning needs of students; these are implemented and used to inform strategic decision making and longer-term planning and development of academic support services.	Indicator has been extended to be more specific and include the need for mechanisms to analyse student profile data and identify student learning needs. This also brings the indicator in line with indicator a) in Criterion 7.1.

	6.2	a) The HEI's student registration procedures are efficient, and use appropriate data recording and retrieval systems adequate for accurate reporting requirements.	a) The HEI's student registration procedures are efficient and accessible, and use appropriate student management systems adequate for accurate reporting requirements.	Accessibility has been added to ensure that students can register even if they are not on campus. 'Data recording and retrieval systems' has been replaced with 'student management systems' as a more encompassing term.
	6.2	d) The HEI has clear rules governing the privacy of information which effectively control access to individual student records.	d) The HEI has clear rules governing the privacy, security and integrity of information which effectively control access to all student records. Appropriate access rights are in place based on access permission levels assigned to staff and students.	Rules related to security and integrity of all student records (not just individual students) have been added because indicator c) does not refer to security of access. The need for assigning access rights based on permission levels has been added.
	6.3	e) Library resources are maintained in a readily accessible location. The library is open to students and staff for appropriate periods to enable access both during and after class time.	e) Physical library resources are maintained in a readily accessible location. The library is open to students and staff for appropriate periods to enable access, both during and after class time.	Indicator amended to refer to physical resources only. New indicator proposed for online resources (see Table 2, Criterion 6.3).
	6.4	e) Both short-term and longer-term plans for the improvement of information and learning technology services are implemented and staff and other stakeholders are involved in the development of these services.	e) Both short-term and longer-term plans for the maintenance and improvement of information and learning technology services are implemented. Staff, student and other stakeholders input is utilised to inform planning and improvements.	Maintenance has been added to this indicator as it is part of the criterion requirement. Staff and stakeholders are not normally directly involved in developing IT services; their input/feedback, however, is taken into consideration. The indicator has been revised to reflect this.
	6.4	g) The HEI takes steps to ensure that the security of the IT infrastructure is maintained (for example, protected from hacking).	g) The HEI takes steps to ensure that the security, continuity and accessibility of IT infrastructure is maintained (for example, protected from hacking).	The IT infrastructure forms a significant part of business continuity planning and the continuity and accessibility of IT services is critical to the continued functioning of the HEI. The indicator has been revised to include continuity and accessibility.
	6.5	a) The HEI's academic advising policies and procedures ensure regular opportunities are provided for individual students to discuss with their adviser issues about their programme choices and academic progress. The approach includes specific arrangements for students in non-standard modes of study and/or studying in different	a) The HEI's academic advising policies and procedures ensure regular opportunities are provided for individual students to discuss with their advisor issues about their programme choices and academic progress. The approach includes specific arrangements for students in non-standard modes of study, students in online or distance learning, and/or studying in	Specific reference added to online/distance learning students to distinguish them from part time or evening study (non-standards modes of study).

		locations or students with special needs.	different locations or students with special needs.	
	6.6	f) The HEI has appropriate mechanisms to assist students when first undertaking study in a higher education environment.	f) The HEI has appropriate mechanisms (for example, induction or orientation programmes) to assist and support students when first undertaking study in a higher education environment or those who are new to the HEI.	Indicator amended to include those students who are new to the HEI (eg, transfer students), and not just students who are new to higher education. Examples also included to clarify meaning.
	6.7	c) The HEI ensures that the physical and virtual learning environments are safe, accessible, supportive and reliable for all its students, and that the environment and facilities meet national health and safety requirements.	c) The HEI ensures that the physical and virtual learning environments are safe, secure, accessible, supportive and reliable for all students, and that the physical environment and facilities meet national health and safety requirements.	Security of learning environments added to highlight the need for securing online delivery so that it is only accessible to authorised stakeholders. Second part of indicator amended to show it refers to the physical environment and facilities.
7	7.1	a) The HEI's approach to the planning and management of student support services includes the identification of student needs, including the specific needs of students in non-standard modes of study and/or studying in different locations.	a) The HEI's approach to the planning and management of student support services includes the identification of student needs, including the specific needs of students in non-standard modes of study, online or distance learning, and/or studying in different locations.	Non-standard modes of study are usually interpreted as part time or evening study. Online/distance learning has been added to emphasise virtual modes of study which need to be catered for.
	7.3	f) The HEI regularly reviews and evaluates student satisfaction and climate and its systems for effectively ensuring student representation on formal bodies and gaining their feedback in order to address student views and make improvements.	f) The HEI regularly reviews and evaluates its approach to monitoring student satisfaction and climate, and systems for effectively ensuring student representation on formal bodies and gaining their feedback in order to address student views and make improvements.	The original indicator refers to evaluating student satisfaction, which is covered in indicators a) and d). The indicator has been revised to show that the HEI regularly evaluates its <i>approach</i> to monitoring student satisfaction.
	7.4	e) The HEI regularly reviews its approach to managing student behaviour in order to ensure student rights, representation, discipline and students' right to appeal is effectively implemented.	e) The HEI regularly reviews its approach to managing student behaviour in order to reinforce student rights, representation and discipline, and ensure student right of appeal is effectively implemented.	Indicator revised for readability.
	7.5	c) The HEI has effective processes for identifying employment market needs, and for collecting and analysing data on graduate destinations	c) Career support services actively seek information about labour market needs, graduate destinations and feedback from alumni and employers and effectively use	Indicators d) in Criterion 5.2 and b) in Criterion 2.11 already refer to the HEI having processes for identifying labour market needs and collecting data about graduate destinations/feedback from employers. The indicator has been revised to focus on how

		and feedback from the alumni and employers.	this information to effect improvements in the career guidance given to students.	this information is <u>used</u> by the career support services.
	7.5	d) Keep students informed about national initiatives related to the labour market requirements, such as those identified in national graduate surveys.	d) The HEI keeps students informed about national initiatives related to labour market requirements, such as those identified in national graduate surveys.	Indicator amended to bring the grammatical format in line with other indicators.
	7.6	b) The provision of HEI funded financial aid and scholarships is governed by policies and procedures and ensures an equitable distribution of funds to students in need. The amount of financial aid and the number of scholarships provided are periodically reviewed.	b) The provision of HEI funded financial aid and scholarships is governed by policies and procedures and ensures a transparent and equitable distribution of funds to students in need. The amount of financial aid and the number of scholarships provided are communicated to students and periodically reviewed.	Revisions made to include transparency in the allocation of scholarships and financial aid. Some HEIs do not provide this information to students and students remain unaware of financial aid opportunities that may be available to them. Furthermore, the allocation of these types of funds is not always carried out in a transparent manner.
	7.8	b) Provision is made for emergency medical assistance when required.	b) Provision is made for emergency medical assistance (including during a public health crisis such as a pandemic or campus incident) when required. Information about First Aid trained staff is readily available and accessible.	Information about staff members who are first aid trained needs to be made available to ensure a first aid responder can be contacted without delay in case of an emergency.
	7.8	d) Medical and counselling facilities are readily accessible and the availability of these services is effectively communicated to students at the outset of their studies.	d) Medical and counselling facilities are readily accessible and the availability of these services is effectively communicated to students at the outset and throughout their studies.	Indicator has been amended to include the need to communicate availability of medical services to students throughout their studies, and not just at the outset. The services may change and students need to be up to date.
	7.10	b) The HEI actively supports student involvement in social and recreational activities and monitors participation rates in order to ensure activities are well attended.	b) The HEI actively supports student involvement in social and recreational activities and monitors participation and satisfaction rates in order to ensure activities are well attended and appropriate.	Monitoring <i>satisfaction</i> with social and recreational activities added to the indicator. Participation is not a reliable indicator of satisfaction levels.
8	8.1	a) The HEI's approach to human resources management includes the identification of staff needs	a) The HEI engages in workforce planning and has short term and long term plans in place to identify staffing needs, achieve strategic goals and ensure adequate human resources are available to support programme delivery and	The original indicator is ambiguous because it is not clear whether it refers to the needs of staff members or the HEI's needs for staff. The revised indicator provides more specific guidance about what is expected in this regard.

			provision of academic and support services.	
	8.3	a) The HEI's policies and procedures specify the approach to advertising vacant positions, and selecting and appointing academic and non-academic staff.	a) The HEI's policies and procedures specify the approach to advertising vacant positions, and selecting and appointing academic and non-academic staff, and comply with national labour laws and relevant HEI supervisory requirements.	Revised to include compliance with national laws.
	8.4	b) Newly appointed staff are provided with a structured orientation programme to ensure familiarity with the institution, its services, programmes and priorities.	b) Newly appointed staff are provided with a structured orientation programme to ensure familiarity with the institution, its services, programmes and priorities, when they commence their role at the HEI.	Previous ISAs have shown that most HEIs only have one induction programme at the start of the academic year in September. Staff who join later do not have this opportunity. The revision is intended to highlight the need for providing an orientation to staff when they join the HEI, and not just in September.
9	9.2	c) The HEI's public relations and marketing activities meet high ethical standards, and accurately and truthfully represent the HEI's academic goals, programmes and services to students, prospective students and other stakeholders.	c) The HEI's public relations and marketing activities meet high ethical standards, comply with relevant laws, rules and regulations, and accurately and truthfully represent the HEI's academic goals, programmes and services to students, prospective students and other stakeholders.	Compliance with laws, rules and regulations has been added to the indicator based on previous ISA experience. Some HEIs misrepresented their institutional classification and the relationship with the affiliate.
	9.4	a) The HEI has a comprehensive strategy for the planning and management of its facilities and grounds.	a) The HEI has a comprehensive strategy for the planning, management and maintenance of its facilities and grounds.	The term 'maintenance' has been added to the indicator as this is the most commonly used term to refer to the upkeep of facilities. It also helps to clarify the distinction between Criteria 9.1 and 9.4, with the former concerned with overall planning and management of general services, and the latter with facilities management and campus maintenance specifically.

Appendix B: Additions to List of ISA Indicators

The indicators below are nominally listed as ‘x’ under each criterion. As all indicators are intended for guidance only, the placement of these additions within the current sequence of indicators will form part of the consultation with HEIs on the ISA standards and criteria ahead of the introduction of Institutional Reaccreditation. They are given here, however, to help enrich the level of guidance in each area shown until the point that a full review occurs.

Table 2: ISA Indicator Review - Additions			
Standard	Criteria	Indicator for Inclusion	Rationale for Inclusion
1	1.2	x) The governing body has oversight of risk management at the HEI as one of its key responsibilities, and ensures that strategic risks are effectively managed through mitigation plans and provision of resources.	The current indicators in Criterion 1.2 or 1.8 do not include provisions for the role of the governing body in risk management, which is a fundamental governance responsibility. It has become even more prominent since the Covid pandemic commenced and HEIs are being faced with multiple strategic and academic risks.
	1.3	x) The HEI’s management is responsible for ensuring that appropriate and sufficient resources are available to effectively deliver all of its academic programmes and support services.	The provision of resources is a key management responsibility and ensuring that the right resources are available to sustain programme and service delivery has become critical, as evident in 2020 with the move to online delivery. This indicator goes ‘hand-in-hand’ with the proposed new indicator under Criterion 1.2 (above). Although resources are covered in Criterion 1.5 in relation to strategic goals, this indicator specifically requires the management to ensure that these resources are in place when needed.
	1.6	x) Operational planning systems are revised and adapted in response to internal and external changes affecting the HEI and emerging needs.	While indicator e) in Criterion 1.6 refers to performance against operational plans being reviewed annually, there needs to be a provision for ensuring flexibility in operational plans as circumstances change. With reference to the pandemic, specifically, HEIs need to adjust their annual operational plans to successfully deliver academic programmes and support services.
	1.10	x) The HEI clearly communicates improvements that have been made, as a result of action plans being implemented, to all relevant stakeholders.	The criterion is missing an indicator related to ‘closing the loop’ and communicating to stakeholders the improvements and changes that have been made following entity and activity reviews.
2	2.1	x) Where a programme is delivered in multiple locations and/or through multiple modes of delivery (including online delivery), the HEI has taken this into consideration when designing the programme and implemented appropriate mechanisms to ensure consistency and parity in the delivery of the programme and the achievement of graduate attributes and learning outcomes.	This indicator has been added to highlight the need for ensuring learning outcomes and graduate attributes are achieved regardless of the mode or location of programme delivery, at the time that the programme is being developed.
	2.4	x) The HEI maintains appropriate staff/student ratios which reflect national or international norms and benchmarks, and ensures adequate staffing resources are available to support teaching quality.	Criterion 2.4 refers to staff/student ratios but there is no indicator related to this.
	2.7	x) The HEI has processes in place to mitigate any unforeseen disruptions to student placements which are a formal requirement of the programme, and these processes are informed by the HEI’s approach to risk management.	The impact of unforeseen situations (such as Covid-19) on student placements needs to be taken into account as part of the HEIs risk management strategy. The proposed indicator highlights the need for this.
3	3.1	x) The HEI has effective policies and procedures for the design, development and approval of its research programmes which	Indicator added in line with indicator a) in Criterion 2.1 to ensure the HEI has specific policies and procedures in place for developing research programmes, which differ from coursework programmes and have specific requirements.

		are applied systematically and implemented consistently.	
	3.1	x) The HEI maintains a definitive record or specification of each of its research programmes and the awards to which they lead. The record constitutes the reference point for delivery and assessment of the programmes, programme monitoring and review, and for the provision of records of study to students.	Indicator added in line with indicator f) in Criterion 2.1 to ensure the HEI has a formal programme specification for every research programme.
	3.8	x) Plagiarism and cheating detection methods are in place, and cases of plagiarism and cheating are effectively addressed through the implementation of appropriate policies and procedures.	None of the indicators address provisions for detecting plagiarism and cheating, which are crucial in research programmes. Indicator d) only refers to having an approach to ensuring students understand academic misconduct.
	3.8	x) The HEI has made it clear to students that all work must be the students' own original work and not purchased or obtained by some other means.	Indicator added in line with indicator f) in Criterion 2.6.
4	4.2	x) The HEI regularly monitors and reviews research performance against appropriate benchmarked key performance indicators to ensure research targets are being met and to inform evaluation of the HEI's research performance.	This was originally indicator e) in Criterion 4.1. Suggest moving it to Criterion 4.2 as it is directly related to research performance. Also suggest replacing indicator d) in Criterion 4.2 with this one.
	4.5	x) The HEI ensures that appropriate ethics approvals have been obtained by staff prior to the commencement of any data collection.	Indicator added to ensure that ethics approval must be secured before data collection commences.
5	5.4	x) The outcomes of collaborations and relationships with other education providers are recorded and monitored to ensure the relationships are constructive.	From previous ISA experience, many HEIs have earnest intentions to collaborate and partner with other educational institutions and sign MoUs. However, in many instances these MoUs are not executed and there are no outcomes. The proposed indicator emphasises the need for outcomes as evidence of constructive relationships.
6	6.3	x) Adequate online library resources are available and accessible to students. Where applicable, appropriate arrangements are in place for students to access and utilise online resources provided by the affiliate.	This indicator requires HEIs to provide online resources, which is the international norm and important to ensure continuity of access at times when it is not possible to be physically present on campus.
7	7.7	x) Where the HEI outsources the provision of catering, accommodation and transportation services to external parties, the HEI maintains oversight of these to ensure that they are appropriate, safe and effectively delivered.	The current indicators only refer to services provided by the HEI, but a number of HEIs outsource these services. Proper oversight needs to be maintained to ensure that these outsourced services are appropriate as previous ISAs have shown high levels of dissatisfaction amongst students with external providers.
8	8.5	x) The HEI ensures that professional development and training opportunities for staff are aligned with needs identified in performance reviews, feedback from staff and external requirements.	This is a criterion requirement but does not appear as an indicator. It is only briefly listed in indicator b) in Criterion 8.6. The need for providing PD opportunities in response to external requirements (eg, directives from supervising Ministry or Ministry of Labour, requests from the affiliate and other external factors such as the Covid 19 pandemic).
	8.8	x) Analysis and evaluation of staff severance rates and feedback from exit interviews are used to inform human resource planning and staff recruitment.	While many HEIs conduct exit interviews, there is no indication how this information is used to make improvements to HR management and practices. If staff terminations are high, this may point to problems with recruiting the right candidates.

Appendix C: Deletions to List of ISA Indicators

The following indicators have been subsumed into other indicators through the process of indicator review communicated herein.

Table 3: ISA Indicator Review - Additions			
Standard	Criteria	Indicator for Deletion	Rationale for Deletion
4	4.2	d) Data on the HEI's overall research activity is maintained and used to inform evaluation of research performance.	Replaced with new indicator (see Table 2 above, Criterion 4.2).
	4.5	d) The HEI has a high-level committee that includes senior researchers and external experts to approve research projects involving biohazardous materials.	Merged with indicator c)
5	5.3	d) Those programmes seeking accreditation by professional bodies benefit from input from the professions on the programme design.	Overlap with indicator c). Subsumed within indicator c) (see Table 1, Criterion 5.3).