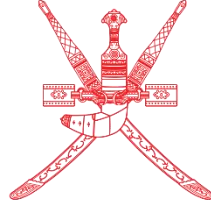


Sultanate of Oman  
Oman Authority for  
Academic Accreditation and  
Quality Assurance of Education



سلطنة عمان  
الهيئة العمانية للاعتماد الأكاديمي  
و ضمان جودة التعليم



## POLICY ON ACCESS TO HEI INFORMATION AND STAKEHOLDERS

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<b>Category</b>	General Technical Matters (GTM)		
<b>Initiator</b>	Centre for Higher Education Quality Assurance (CHEQA)		
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## **POLICY ON ACCESS TO HEI INFORMATION AND STAKEHOLDERS**

### **1. Purpose**

This policy outlines the principles and procedures by which the Oman Authority for Academic Accreditation and Quality Assurance of Education (OAAAQA) seeks the cooperation of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in providing the OAAAQA with access to relevant information and stakeholders during any External Quality Assurance (EQA) activity. This policy is set in the context of Royal Decree 9/2021 which established the OAAAQA (formerly known as Oman Academic Accreditation Authority (OAAA)) and which states that all public and private higher education institutions, along with other concerned entities, shall 'provide the authority with the information and statistics it deems requisite for the discharge of its terms of reference' (Article 7).

### **2. Scope**

This policy applies to any HEI undergoing an OAAAQA EQA activity. It should be read in conjunction with OAAAQA EQA manuals and policies, and in particular the OAAAQA Policy on Deferral of a Scheduled External Quality Assurance Activity ('Deferral Policy') which sets out the procedure for requesting a delayed EQA Application and stipulates OAAAQA's response to an HEI failing to submit this application.

### **3. Policy Statement**

HEIs are required to cooperate fully with the OAAAQA's EQA activities by providing the OAAAQA and its EQA Panels with appropriate documents and all the other information the OAAAQA requires, in a complete and timely fashion in order for the OAAAQA to fulfill its responsibilities effectively. If this information is not forthcoming in this way, or where an HEI fails to facilitate reasonable access to relevant stakeholders during the EQA activity, the OAAAQA reserves the right to make this public, for the protection of public interest. It also reserves the right to reflect the consequences of this lack of access to documentation or interviewees in the outcomes of the EQA activity in the manner described in the procedure herein.

## 4. Procedure<sup>1</sup>

### 4.1 Non-submission, Incomplete or Late Submission of Additional Supporting Information

During an EQA activity after the initial submission of an EQA Application or Portfolio, the OAAAQA (through an appointed EQA Panel) requires an HEI to provide various further or 'additional' information about their systems or programmes in the form of extra supporting materials or demonstrations. This information assists the Panel Members in their deliberations. In the event that the HEI either does not make this information available, or does not submit it in a complete or timely fashion, and where the OAAAQA has reasonable grounds to believe that the information exists, this is reflected in the resulting EQA report. The Panel has the right, in such circumstances, to do the following:

- 4.1.1 Include commentary about any perceived lack of cooperation, and the effect of this on the EQA activity
- 4.1.2 Reflect any lack of information in outcomes (such as in IQA Recommendations or ISA criteria ratings) if and where applicable.

### 4.2 Non-availability of HEI Stakeholders during an EQA Visit

During an EQA activity, the OAAAQA requests that the HEI facilitates access to specified stakeholders to assist the Panel Members in their deliberations. While the OAAAQA understands that it is sometimes impossible for a person to be available to the Panel at the required time for logistical reasons, it nevertheless expects the HEI to treat the EQA activity as a priority and make every effort to meet the Panel's requests.. In the event that the OAAAQA has reasonable grounds to believe that the HEI has been less than fully cooperative in making people available, this is reflected in the resulting EQA report. The Panel has the right, in such circumstances, to do the following:

- 4.2.1 Include commentary about any perceived lack of cooperation, and the effect of this on the EQA activity
- 4.2.2 Reflect any lack of access to stakeholders in outcomes (such as in IQA Recommendations or ISA criteria ratings) if and where applicable.

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<sup>1</sup> This section should be read within the context of the OAAAQA Policy on Deferral of a Scheduled External Quality Assurance Activity which covers the normal way in which an HEI informs OAAAQA of any inability to submit an EQA application on time and explains the reasons for any deferral request. The Deferral Policy also sets out the fees due for late notification of the standard request to defer and covers the actions taken by OAAAQA if an HEI fails to request deferral or withdrawal through the appropriate channels. The procedure herein, by contrast, describes the actions taken in the event of an HEI failing to supply supporting documentation and/or give access to interviewees at any point once the EQA activity has commenced.

### 4.3 General Procedures

The OAAAQA recognises that EQA activities can be complex and seeks to work in cooperation with each HEI to achieve an efficient and effective process. To this end, the OAAAQA endeavours to ensure that the Review Director (RD) of the appointed EQA Panel maintains close contact with the HEI's nominated Contact Person to resolve any difficulties in respect of provision of information as soon and as constructively as possible and without recourse to the penalties noted in the above procedure in this policy.

## 5. Abbreviations

DG-CHEQA .... Directorate General of the Centre for Higher Education Quality Assurance  
EQA ..... External Quality Assurance  
HEI ..... Higher Education Institution  
OAAAQA ..... Oman Authority for Academic Accreditation and Quality Assurance of  
Education  
RD ..... Review Director

## 6. Definitions

**External Quality Assurance (EQA) Activity:** Any OAAAQA Quality Audit or Standards Assessment activity, including:

- Institutional Quality Audit
- Institutional Standards Assessment
- Institutional Standards Reassessment
- Institutional Reaccreditation
- Programme Standards Assessment
- Programme Standards Reassessment
- General Foundation Programme Quality Audit

**EQA Application:** The document that reports on an HEI's self-study of their institution or programme, together with any supporting materials due at the time of submission.

**Stakeholders:** All those who an EQA Panel may request to interview as part of an EQA Visit.

## 7. References

OAAAQA Appeals Manual [http://www.oaaa.gov.om/Institution.aspx#Inst\\_Appeals](http://www.oaaa.gov.om/Institution.aspx#Inst_Appeals)

## All OAAAQA External Quality Assurance Manuals

**8. Document History**

Document History				
Version	Date Approved	Date of Circulation	Approved by	Brief Description
v1	24 January 2009	-	OAC Board	This was the first OAAAQA Policy in relation to provision of information and access to people within HEIs.
v2	24 March 2016	-	OAAAQA Board	Policy was updated to reflect current EQA activities and the current approved Policy Document Template.
v3	10 February 2022	27 April 2022	OAAAQA Board	This version includes changes in the Policy's formatting to align with OAAAQA policy on policies and changes in OAAAQA name according to Royal Decree 9/21. It no longer reflects the non-submission of an EQA Application which is now covered in the OAAAQA Policy on Deferral of a Scheduled External Quality Assurance Activity.