

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



سلطنة عُمان  
الهيئة العمانية للاعتماد  
الأكاديمي وضمان جودة التعليم



## POLICY ON ACCESS TO HEI INFORMATION AND STAKEHOLDERS

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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 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 EQA activity. It should be read in conjunction with OAAAQA EQA manuals and [policies](#), and in particular the OAAAQA Policy on Major Change Notification for Higher Education External Quality Assurance Activities which sets out the procedure for requesting a rescheduling of an 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 (for example Mandatory Materials (MMs) and Supplementary Materials (SMs), 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 (for example in interviews during an EQA visit), 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 Report and outcomes of the EQA activity in the manner described in the procedure herein.

### **4. Procedure**

This section should be read within the context of the OAAAQA Policy on Major Change Notification for Higher Education External Quality Assurance Activities 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 rescheduling request. 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.

#### **4.1 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, matters for clarification or demonstrations. This information assists the Panel Members in their deliberations and review. It is the responsibility of the Review Director (RD) to raise the request for this additional information, through the HEI's contact person. 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 and outcomes. 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; and/or
- 4.1.2 Reflect any lack of information in EQA outcomes (such as in ISA and PSA criteria ratings or QA Recommendations), 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 and review. It is the responsibility of the RD to raise the request for this additional information, through the HEI's contact person. 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 and outcomes. 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; and/or
- 4.2.2 Reflect any lack of access to stakeholders in outcomes (such as in ISA and PSA criteria ratings or QA Recommendations) if and where applicable.

#### **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 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 or granting access to stakeholders 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...Director 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):** Any OAAAQA Quality Audit or Standards Assessment activity such as:
  - Institutional Standards Assessment and Reassessment
  - Programme Standards Assessment and Reassessment
  - General Foundation Programme Quality Audit
  - Institutional or Programme Reaccreditation activities
  - Appeals
- **EQA Application or Portfolio:** 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 available on the OAAAQA website ([www.oaaaqa.gov.om](http://www.oaaaqa.gov.om))
- OAAAQA Policy on Major Change Notification for Higher Education External Quality Assurance Activities available on the OAAAQA website ([www.oaaaqa.gov.om](http://www.oaaaqa.gov.om))
- All OAAAQA External Quality Assurance Manuals available on the OAAAQA website ([www.oaaaqa.gov.om](http://www.oaaaqa.gov.om))