



## **Oman Academic Accreditation Authority**

### **Institutional Standards Reassessment**

February 2018 v1

As indicated in the HEI accreditation system, HEIs that have been conditionally accredited or placed on probation following Institutional Standards Assessment (ISA) are expected to undergo Institutional Standards Reassessment (ISR). A proposal outlining OAAA's approach to ISR was circulated on 25 December 2017 to international and local external reviewers (ERs) on OAAA's Register of ERs and more broadly to the higher education sector in Oman. The feedback from this exercise informed a review of the approach and contributed to the current shape of the ISR process which is documented herein. In due course the sections on ISR outcomes will be embedded within Part C of a revised ISA Manual (ISAM v2) while the section on process will be located under Part E.

This addendum was approved for circulation by the OAAA Board on 1 February 2018.



**Oman Academic Accreditation Authority**

# **Institutional Standards Assessment Manual**

**Institutional Accreditation: Stage 2**

**ADDENDUM:**

**INSTITUTIONAL STANDARDS REASSESSMENT**

**February 2018**

## 9. Institutional Standards Reassessment<sup>1</sup>

Unsuccessful Institutional Standards Assessment (ISA) results in one of two outcomes: “Conditionally Accredited” (i.e. when an HEI demonstrates unsatisfactory performance in one or two of the applicable Standards) or “On Probation” (i.e. an HEI demonstrates unsatisfactory performance in three or more of the applicable Standards)<sup>2</sup>. An HEI that is conditionally accredited or placed on probation is normally required to begin Institutional Standards Reassessment (ISR) up to a year after the HEI receives the final version of the ISA Report. If an HEI is conditionally accredited or placed on probation after ISR, a second and final opportunity to undergo ISR may be given. In each case, the Panel recommends to the OAAA Board the length of time it considers the HEI needs to prepare for a Standards Reassessment. This recommendation is based partly on the number and nature of the ISA criteria needing to be met<sup>3</sup>.

During Standards Reassessment, standards (together with all their associated criteria) that have been assessed as *Met*, either at the time of the initial Standards Assessment, or, where applicable, the subsequent Standards Reassessment, are not re-examined in the ISR process. Only the following criteria associated with unmet Standards are reassessed:

- All criteria which were *Not Met* at the time of the initial Standards Assessment, or, where applicable, the subsequent Standards Reassessment.
- All criteria which were *Partially Met* at the time of the initial Standards Assessment, or, where applicable, the subsequent Standards Reassessment.

The ISA principles set out in Section 10.1 of the ISAM are applicable to the ISR. The ISR Panel is provided with the initial ISA or subsequent ISR Report in order to have a full understanding of the context. However, the ISR Panel is not expected to reconsider the ratings of the standards and criteria given by the initial ISA Panel not included in the Standards Reassessment.

### 9.1 Summary of Stages in Institutional Standards Reassessment

The Standards Reassessment process follows the key stages of the initial Standards Assessment (refer to Table 2 in Section 3.5). The indicative timeline will vary, however, depending on the number of standards and criteria to be reassessed.

### 9.2 Outcomes of an Institutional Standards Reassessment

The approach to ratings against standards and criteria is set out in Part C of this manual<sup>4</sup>. The possible outcomes of an initial Standards Reassessment are as follows:

- If the ratings of the reassessed criteria now fulfil the requirements for the standard(s) to be *Met*, the ISR Panel recommends to the OAAA Board that the HEI is accredited. Note that up to two criteria in each standard undergoing reassessment may still be *Partially Met*, providing these do not impact on the overall ability of the HEI to meet the requirements of the standard as a whole.
- If the ratings of the reassessed criteria do not fulfil the requirements for the standard(s) to be *Met*, but the ISR Panel considers good progress has been made and the standard(s) are likely to be *Met* in the near future, the ISR Panel recommends to the OAAA Board that the conditional accreditation or probationary period be extended. The HEI then undergoes a

<sup>1</sup> This section replaces Part C Section 9 of the current *Institutional Standards Assessment Manual – Institutional Accreditation: Stage 2 (ISAM)* <http://www.oaaa.gov.om/InstitutePdf/ISAM%20Book%20Final.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.oaaa.gov.om/Training.aspx#Glossary>

<sup>3</sup> Refer to ISAM, Section 22; this section addresses procedures for resolution of any disagreement between the Panel and the HEI regarding the length of time required.

<sup>4</sup> Refer to ISAM, Part C Section 5, Tables 3-7 for a summary of ratings and outcomes.

second Standards Reassessment at a time to be approved by the OAAA Board. Conditional accreditation or probation can only be extended for a maximum period of one year.

- If the ratings of the reassessed criteria still do not fulfil the requirements for the standard(s) to be *Met*, and the ISR Panel determines that the HEI is unable to meet the requirements of the standards and criteria in the near future, the ISR Panel recommends to the OAAA Board that the HEI is not accredited. The OAAA issues an outcome of Not Accredited and the institutional accreditation process is terminated. The OAAA advises the Education Council and the HEI's supervising Ministry (if applicable) accordingly.

The possible outcomes of a subsequent Standards Reassessment are as follows:

- If the ratings of the reassessed criteria now fulfil the requirements for the standard(s) to be *Met* (up to two criteria may still be *Partially Met*), the ISR Panel recommends to the OAAA Board that the HEI is accredited.
- If the ratings of the reassessed criteria do not fulfil the requirements for the standard(s) to be *Met*, the ISR Panel recommends to the OAAA Board that the HEI is not accredited. The OAAA issues an outcome of Not Accredited and the OAAA institutional accreditation process is terminated. The OAAA advises the Education Council and the HEI's supervising Ministry (if applicable) accordingly.

For each Standards Reassessment, an ISR Panel is convened. The ISR Panel has a minimum of three external reviewers; these reviewers may or may not have been involved in the initial Standards Assessment or, where applicable, the subsequent Standards Reassessment (refer to Section 28).

## **24. Institutional Standards Reassessment (ISR)<sup>5</sup>**

### **24.1. The Institutional Standards Reassessment Application (ISRA)**

#### **24.1.1. The Format of the ISRA<sup>6</sup>**

The template for the ISRA can be downloaded from the OAAA website. The HEI should add the standard(s) and criteria to be reassessed (as indicated in the outcome of the ISA) to the template.

#### **24.1.2. Official Declaration**

The HEI's most senior representative should sign the declaration stating that the information contained in the ISRA is complete and accurate and that the HEI adheres to all applicable laws and regulations.

#### **24.1.3. Completing the ISRA**

As in the ISAA, the HEI Overview should provide a brief and succinct context for the HEI (refer to Section 11.3.1). The HEI should indicate if any major changes have taken place since the original ISA or subsequent ISR.

The HEI is required to rate its performance against each criterion to be reassessed (as per the criterion ratings in Part C, table 3). The accompanying commentary should indicate how the HEI meets the requirements of the criterion. The HEI is expected to include references and links to key evidence which support its claims and self-assessment rating for each criterion to

<sup>5</sup> This new section will be included in Part E of a revised ISAM (version 2).

<sup>6</sup> This abbreviation will be added to ISAM, Appendix B.

be reassessed. For further information on self-ratings and the commentary, refer to Section 11.3.2.

The ISRA should be submitted with the relevant Supporting Materials. The purpose of these materials is to help the ISR Panel verify claims in the ISRA for each of the criteria to be reassessed. These Supporting Materials should be clearly indexed and submitted electronically with the ISRA (refer to Sections 11.3.4 and 11.3.7).

#### 24.1.4. Requirements for Submitting the ISRA

- The ISRA should be written in the language of the original ISA, i.e. in the main language of the HEI/language of instruction.
- The ISRA should be professionally typeset, printed and published. Electronic copies should also be made available on a USB data stick in a searchable and printable PDF format.
- A minimum of five hard copies and e-version on USB data sticks should be submitted to the OAAA; however, the exact number of copies to be submitted is to be confirmed by the Review Director.
- Supporting Materials must be submitted together with the ISRA (electronically on a USB data stick). These should be cross-referenced in the ISRA when used as evidence for multiple criteria. All electronic copies of Supporting Materials must be in a searchable and printable PDF format. The HEI is encouraged to provide English translations of key documents to facilitate the work of the Panel.
- Where the ISRA or any Supporting Materials refer to information or evidence on the HEI's website, the web link reference (URL) should be written in full, together with the exact location of the relevant information (for example, the name of the document and page number or section number that is being referred to). The URL reference should hyperlink to that URL. If information is referred to on a website, ensure:
  - the system is accessible by the OAAA;
  - appropriate checks have been made to ensure that access is not hindered by internal firewall protection; and
  - there is a facility to print, save and download the documents.

#### 24.1.5. Fees

The fees for Standards Reassessment are set out in the OAAA Policy on Fees<sup>7</sup>.

### 24.2. Institutional Standards Reassessment Process

The Standards Reassessment process is based on the External Assessment process set out in Part E of this manual. The following section aims to highlight where the ISR process needs clarification or differs from the ISA process. The indicative timeline will vary depending on the number of standards and criteria to be reassessed during Standards Reassessment.

The Standards Assessment protocols apply to Standards Reassessment (refer to Section 13) including the inclusion of observers in the Standards Reassessment process.

#### 24.2.1. Commencing the Institutional Standards Reassessment

At least three months prior to the date by which an HEI plans to submit an ISRA, the OAAA contacts the HEI in writing to commence general arrangements for the Standards Reassessment.

#### 24.2.2. Appointing a Contact Person

For each Institutional Standards Reassessment, there is a single communication channel between the HEI and the OAAA. For the OAAA, the point of contact is the Review Director

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.oaaa.gov.om/About.aspx#OAAAPolicy>

appointed to the ISR Panel. The Review Director is usually a professional staff member of the OAAA and may have been involved with the original Standards Assessment or subsequent Standards Reassessment. The HEI should designate its own Contact Person. All communication between the OAAA and the HEI about Standards Reassessment matters should be conducted through these contact people. For further details, refer to Section 14.2.

#### **24.2.3. Notification of Submission Date**

The Review Director notifies the HEI in advance of the due date for ISRA submission (in accordance with the date indicated by OAAA in the letter which accompanied the final agreed version of the ISA or ISR Report). Note that requests for deferral of the ISRA submission date must be made six months in advance and are considered as specified in the OAAA Policy on Deferral of an External Quality Assurance Activity<sup>8</sup>.

#### **24.2.4. ISRA Completeness Check**

Upon receipt of the ISRA, the OAAA Review Director conducts a completeness check of the ISRA (refer to Section 14.3). Note that, unlike ISA, ISR does not automatically consider an HEI's responses to formal conclusions in the Quality Audit Report (see ISAM Section 10.1): reference to previous conclusions depend on the nature of those conclusions.

#### **24.2.5. The Institutional Standards Reassessment Panel**

The ISR Panel is drawn from the Register of External Reviewers and the criteria for external reviewers on ISR Panels are the same as for ISA Panels (refer to Section 15). The ISR Panel is normally comprised of three to five members; the number of Panel Members depends on the number of criteria and standards to be reassessed. The Panel may include one (but no more than one) member of the original ISA Panel. The ISR Panel includes both international and local-based external reviewers.

The roles and responsibilities of the ISR Panel, ISR Panel Chairperson, Review Director, OAAA CEO and OAAA Board are set out in Section 17. Observers are permitted to observe Standards Reassessment.

### **24.3. Before the Institutional Standards Reassessment Visit**

#### **24.3.1. Establish Institutional Standards Reassessment Folders**

As per Section 18.1 above, ISR Panel Members are expected to store electronic and hard copy documentation securely and confidentially. Upon the completion of the ISR, i.e. the release of the ISR Accreditation Outcome, all folder contents should be deleted or destroyed. However, these folder contents should not be deleted or destroyed before the Accreditation Outcome and ISR Report is released to the HEI as they may be required in case the HEI submits an appeal.

#### **24.3.2. Preliminary Comments**

The ISRA and Supporting Materials are circulated to ISR Panel Members once the completeness check has been carried out. These are accompanied by the HEI's initial ISAA and resulting ISA Report, any Appeal report where the Appeal was upheld, and any former ISR Report. Each ISR Panel Member is asked to read the entire ISRA and consider all the Supporting Materials in order to provide preliminary comments and provisional ratings of all standards and criteria included in the ISRA. For further guidance on preliminary comments, refer to Section 18.2.

#### **24.3.3. The Institutional Standards Reassessment Preliminary Meeting**

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.oaaa.gov.om/About.aspx#OAAAPolicy>

The Preliminary Meeting is held to discuss the HEI's ISRA. International ISR Panel Members are invited to participate in this meeting by communication technology. For further information on the Preliminary Meeting, refer to Section 18.3.

#### **24.3.4. Additional Supporting Materials**

ISR Panel Members may request Additional Supporting Materials (ASM) in order for them to have a better understanding of the HEI's performance in relation to the standard(s) and criteria included in the ISRA. These ASM are requested during the ISR Planning Visit. Further requests for ASM may also be made during the ISR Visit through the Review Director. For further information on ASMs, refer to Section 18.4.

#### **24.3.5. The Institutional Standards Reassessment Planning Visit**

The ISR Panel Chairperson (or representative) and the Review Director visits the HEI prior to the ISR Visit to discuss matters relating to the ISR and to prepare for the ISR Visit. For further information on the Planning Visit, refer to Section 18.5.

#### **24.4. Public Submissions**

Unlike the Standards Assessment, there is no call for public submissions for the Standards Reassessment as it is focused on specific criteria rather than the HEI's activities as a whole.

#### **24.5. Institutional Standards Reassessment Visit**

As with Standards Assessment, Standards Reassessment includes a visit to the HEI (refer to Section 20). The purpose of the ISR Visit is to help the ISR Panel verify the HEI's claims in relation to its ratings against the criteria included in the ISRA. The ISR Visit takes place, usually with all Panel members present, even if only one criteria is being reassessed. It is likely to be shorter than the original ISA Visit, depending on the number of standards and criteria to be reassessed during the ISR. The ISR Visit program is discussed during the Planning Visit. For information regarding the logistics of the ISR Visit, refer to Section 20.3.

#### **24.6. The Institutional Standards Reassessment Report**

As with the ISA Report, there are a number of draft versions of the ISR Report. Draft v1 is prepared by the Review Director and incorporates the provisional ratings and preliminary comments submitted by the Panel Members. ISR Report Draft v2 is written by the Review Director and incorporates the ISR Panel's discussions during the Standards Reassessment Preliminary Meeting. ISR Report Draft v3 is based on the Panel Members' contributions prepared prior to and during the ISR Visit. ISR Report Draft v3 is circulated for Panel feedback and ISR Report Draft v4 is prepared. ISR Report Draft v4 is submitted for internal and, normally, external moderation. ISR Report Draft v5 is developed in response to feedback from the internal and external moderation process and submitted to the OAAA Board for provisional approval. This version of the report is forwarded to the HEI for comment (for further information on the different versions of the report, refer to Section 21 including Section 21.4 which gives further details on moderation).

The HEI's response to ISR Report Draft v5 is forwarded to the Panel for comment and this feedback is collated and analysed. Any changes are reflected in ISR Report Draft v6, which is submitted to the OAAA Board for final approval (refer to Section 21.6).

The Final ISR Report (that is the approved ISR Report Draft v6) is sent to the HEI under embargo for ten days. If the HEI does not lodge an appeal against the Standards Reassessment Accreditation Outcome or ratings against standards and criteria within the ten-day period, the Accreditation Outcome and ratings are made public on the OAAA website (refer to Section 21.8). The Standards Assessment Accreditation Outcome and ratings on the website are replaced by the results of the Standards Reassessment. Following Standards Reassessment, the

Standards Assessment Report is printed, which incorporates the outcomes of the initial Standards Assessment and the subsequent Standards Reassessment(s).

The ISR Report is not made public but is circulated as a confidential document to OAAA Board Members, the Education Council; the HEI's supervising ministry (if applicable); and to other government bodies on request subject to OAAA Board approval. The final ISR Report will also be made available to members of OAAA external quality assurance activity (EQA) Panels such as subsequent Reassessment Panels, Reaccreditation Panels, Program Standards Assessment Panels, and General Foundation Program Quality Audit Panels.

For information regarding media management, refer to Section 21.9.

#### **24.7. Disputes and Appeals**

For any disputes and complaints regarding the ISR process, refer to Section 22. The appeals process is set out in the OAAA Appeals Manual<sup>9</sup>.

#### **24.8. After the ISR process**

The OAAA is interested in the continuous improvement of all its activities and therefore seeks feedback from a variety of sources on each Standards Reassessment. Feedback is sought from ISR Panel Members and HEI representatives. The Review Director also prepares a confidential report. The OAAA CEO draws together all the feedback received along with the Review Director's Report and prepares a Debriefing Report which is submitted to the OAAA Board.

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<sup>9</sup> [http://www.oaaa.gov.om/Institution.aspx#Inst\\_Appeals](http://www.oaaa.gov.om/Institution.aspx#Inst_Appeals)