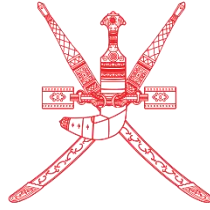*Sultanate of Oman*
Oman Authority for
Academic Accreditation and
Quality Assurance of Education

سلطنة عمان
الهيئة العمانية للاعتماد الأكاديمي
وضمان جودة التعليم

POLICY ON ACCESS TO OAAAQA INFORMATION AND STAFF

Number of Policy	OAAAQA/PDM/01		
Category	Planning and Development Matters (PDM)		
Initiator	Directorate General of Planning and Development		
Contact Person	Director General of Planning and Development (DG-PD) Email: dgpd@oaaa.gov.om		
Related Policies/Manuals	OAAAQA Research, Publication & Presentation (RPP) Policy OAAAQA Mechanism for Access to Superseded EQA Reports		
Version	4		
Approved by	OAAAQA Executive Committee	**Date:** 15 March 2022	(v4)
	OAAAQA Legal Affairs Department	**Date:** 29 March 2016	(v2)
	OAAAQA Board	**Date:** 07 March 2021	(v3)
Circulation	Internal and External		
Review Date	December 2026		

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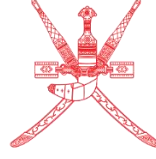Quality Assurance of Education

سلطنة عمان
الهيئة العمانية للاعتماد الأكاديمي
وضمان جودة التعليم

POLICY ON ACCESS TO OAAAQA INFORMATION AND STAFF

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to regulate stakeholders' access to Oman Authority for Academic Accreditation and Quality Assurance of Education (OAAAQA) staff and information, including archived Quality Audit reports. The OAAAQA places a high value on transparency and institutional disclosure and supports researchers and the development and conduct of research in Oman. In keeping with international best practice in the field, however, the OAAAQA expects all stakeholders to observe the highest research ethics and standards in the conduct of their research and respect the integrity, confidentiality and independence of OAAAQA's External Quality Assurance (EQA) processes.

2. Scope

This policy applies to external stakeholders requesting access to OAAAQA information, such as archived Quality Audit Reports or data that is not in the public domain, or staff. It also regulates OAAAQA staff engagement with external researchers.

3. Policy Statement

In line with Oman Vision 2040 Objectives, and its values, the OAAAQA as a government administrative body is committed to transparency and institutional disclosure and respects the rights of its stakeholders to access information. Key information about its EQA activities and their outcomes is available in the public domain through its website. Information that is not published, or archived for specific purposes, may also be accessed, if OAAAQA deems the reasons to be legitimate and lawful. The OAAAQA also understands that sometimes external stakeholders, such

as researchers, may need to interview or survey the views of some of its staff on matters related to accreditation or quality assurance of education in Oman and it is committed to meeting such needs, without jeopardising the integrity or independence of its EQA processes, violating any research ethics or harming its reputation.

OAAAQA staff shall not comment on the quality of specific educational institutions or their programmes, as such information is officially published in OAAAQA reports and is available on the OAAAQA website. Furthermore, OAAAQA staff shall not comment on the effectiveness or the roles/mandates of other government organisations or officials. Similarly, researchers are not expected to seek information or comments on the quality of specific educational institutions, programmes or the education sector as a whole.

4. Procedure

In the first instance, any external stakeholder interested in obtaining OAAAQA information that is not in the public domain or undertaking research involving the OAAAQA staff should observe the following:

4-1 Any external stakeholder wishing to gain access to OAAAQA information or staff for research purposes must complete the Application Form to Access OAAAQA Information/Staff for Research Purposes (see Appendix A) and submit it by email (dgpd@oaaa.gov.om) addressed to the Director General of Planning and Development (DGPD), OAAAQA. Similarly, any external stakeholder wishing to gain access to OAAAQA archived Quality Audit Reports, should complete Application to Access Archived Quality Audit Report (see Appendix B), and submit it by email (dgpd@oaaa.gov.om), addressed to the DGPD .

4-2 The DGPD is the focal point for all applications and shall be responsible for the provision of information and setting up of appointments with any relevant OAAAQA staff, when needed. OAAAQA staff shall not meet with researchers without prior approval and appointment.

4-3 OAAAQA shall review the application and determine whether it would be appropriate for the OAAAQA to provide information, share archived Quality Audit Reports, or approve staff to participate in research.

4-4 OAAAQA shall take into account the following when reviewing the application:

4-4-1   The nature of the application and its relevance to OAAAQA work;
4-4-2   The intended use and dissemination of the proposed research;
4-4-3   The volume of applications and their impact on OAAAQA workload;
4-4-4   The availability of OAAAQA staff and their willingness to participate;

4-4-5   The focus of the research, e.g. perceptions, personal views, opinions, etc.

4-5   Arrangements for interviews and/or data collection will be agreed with the DGPD.

4-6   If OAAAQA agrees to participate, the DGPD shall decide what information is available or which staff are the most appropriate to give the information or participate in the research, in consultation with concerned OAAAQA Directorates. The DGPD shall approach the concerned OAAAQA staff to see if they are willing to participate.

4-7   If the staff member agrees to participate, the DGPD shall then coordinate with the researcher to set up a meeting with that particular member of staff.

4-8   The researcher needs to agree to forward a copy of the final research report/ article once it is published to OAAAQA (for example, a copy of the final thesis/ report or published article).

4-9   The researcher must sign an undertaking that they will abide by this Policy (see Appendix A).

5. Abbreviations

DGPD   Director General of Planning and Development

HEIs   Higher Education Institutions

OAAAQA   Oman Authority for Academic Accreditation and Quality assurance of Education

6. Definitions

External stakeholder: Any individual, local or international, other than OAAAQA staff, who may approach the OAAAQA requesting access to information or staff for the purpose of research or other purposes, as indicated in the relevant application form.

7. References

Auckland University of Technology. *Policy on Access by External Researchers (Appendix R).* [Online] Available from: http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics/permission-to-recruit-aut-staff-orstudents-for-research/policy-on-access-by-external-researchers-appendix-r   [Accessed: 6 January 2013]

Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA). (Feb. 2013) *Consultation Paper Proposed National Registration and Accreditation Scheme- Data Access Research Policy.* [Online] Available from: http://www.ahpra.gov.au/documents/default.aspx?record=WD13%2F10001&dbid=AP&chksum=a%2FGNcrc4qZV%2B0uvL4ZUmsw%3D%3D [Accessed: 30 December 2013]

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Deanship of Research, Sultan Qaboos University. *Research Regulations.* [Online] Available from: http://www.squ.edu.om/Default.aspx?alias=www.squ.edu.om/researchdepartment [Accessed: 30 December 2013]

University Administration and Services, Oxford University. *Research Integrity and Ethics.* [Online] Available from: http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/researchsupport/integrity/ [Accessed: 30 December 2013]

8. Document History

Document History				
Version	**Date Approved**	**Circulation**	**Approved by**	**Brief Description**
1	NA	-	NA	Draft policy to guide OAAAQA's approach to applications from external researchers to access information and/or staff. It was approved by the Executive Committee only.
2	24 March 2016	-	OAAAQA Board	Policy was updated to reflect current process for engaging with external researchers. The Policy has also been reformatted in line with the current approved Policy Document Template.
3	07 March 2021	04 May 2021	OAAAQA Board	In this version, the policy was updated to include access to Archived Quality Audit Reports; and with this addition, the name of the policy was changed from "OAAAQA Policy on Researchers Access to OAAAQA Information/Staff" to "OAAAQA Policy on Access to OAAAQA Information and Staff".
4	15 March 2022	24 April 2022	OAAAQA EXCo.	Adding a note to applicants about the need to obtain the approval of National Centre for Statistics and Information for any data collection activities in the country, including data collected for the purpose of research. This was added in the Appendices. In addition, the name of OAAAQA and names of DGs mentioned in this policy were updated in reference to Royal Decree 9/2021.

Appendix A

OMAN AUTHORITY FOR ACADEMIC ACCREDITATION AND QUALITY ASSURANCE OF EDUCATION

Application Form to Access OAAAQA Information/ Staff for Research Purposes
Please submit this form by email to Director General of Planning and Development
dgpd@oaaa.gov.om

Part A: Key Details	
Researcher Details	
Full Name	
Designation	
Place of Work *(please provide full contact details)*	
Place of Study *(please provide full contact details)*	
Current qualifications of researcher	
Full name and contact details of the research supervisor(s)	

Postal address		**Email Address**	
Mobile number		**Date of Application**	[dd/mm/yyyy]

Part B: Required Supporting Evidence *(please attach required supporting evidence with your application from)*		
I confirm that I have:		**Yes/No [1]**
1	Completed all parts of this application form	
2	Provided proof that the research has been approved by a recognised ethics and/or research committee	
3	Provided a copy of the approved research proposal	

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[1] If you answer 'No' to any questions herein, please clarify in the "Notes/Clarifications by the Applicant" section.

4	Provided a letter of informed consent for participants	
5	Provided a copy of the approved data collection tool(s), e.g. questionnaire; questions for interviews; guidelines for focus group discussions; observation checklist, etc.	
6	Specified the method of reporting and presenting information collected from OAAAQA staff (**OAAAQA staff will only participate if the information is anonymous, that is individuals will not be quoted directly**).	
7	Provided evidence of approval from National Centre for Statistics and Information for data collection for the purpose of research.	

Notes/ Clarifications by the Applicant:

Part C: Declaration:

Please sign the declaration below:

I declare that I have read and agreed to the OAAAQA Policy on Access to OAAAQA Information and Staff. I also declare that the information I have provided in this application form and in the supporting evidence is accurate and authentic and that my application is not motivated by any malicious intent to unlawfully use the information provided to me.

Name: …………………………………………………………………

Signature: …………………………………………………………..

Date: ………………………………………………………………..

Appendix B

OMAN AUTHORITY FOR ACADEMIC ACCREDITATION AND QUALITY ASSURANCE OF EDUCATION

Application to Access Archived Quality Audit Reports
Please submit this form by email to Director General of Planning and Development
[(dgpd@oaaa.gov.om)](dgpd@oaaa.gov.om)

Part A: Key Details			
Applicant Details			
Full Name			
Designation			
Place of Work and/or Study			
Request Endorsed by			
Email Address		**Date of Application**	[dd/mm/yyyy]
EQA Report(s) Requested			
HEI Named in the Report[2]		**HEI Abbreviation**	[If known]
EQA Activity	e.g. IQA Report	**Report Number**	[If known]
Broad Reason for Request	.	**Report Needed by[3]**	[dd/mm/yyyy]
Part B: Criteria for Requesting Access to Archived Quality Audit Report(s)			
Please select at least *one* of the following criteria for accessing an archived Quality Audit Report:			

	Who?	Why?	Evidence?	Yes/No
1	I am a researcher	I request access to this/these report(s) as part of academic, scholarly or journalistic study regarding quality assurance, OAAAQA, higher education activity in Oman	I have attached proof of affiliation with an academic or media institution.	Yes/No
2	I am a member of the HEI concerned	I request access to this report as our HEI no longer has access to the original report	This application is signed by the highest authority in our HEI	Yes/No
3	I am a member of another HEI	I request access to this/these report(s) for benchmarking purposes	This application is signed by the highest authority in our HEI	Yes/No

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[2] Use one row for each Quality Audit Report requested, adding rows as required.

[3] This should be no less than one month from the date the request is received by OAAAQA.

4	I represent a government or legal entity	I request access to this/these report(s) to inform decision making regarding the concerned HEI(s)	This application is being sought through normal inter-authority channels of communication	Yes/No
5	I represent a quality assurance agency	I request access to this/these report(s) to gain a perspective on the operation and performance of OAAAQA	This application is being sought through normal inter-agency channels of communication	Yes/No

Part C: Declaration and Supporting Evidence	
I confirm that I have:	**Yes/No (or N/A)[4]**
1	Read the above criteria for access to an archived Quality Audit Report (Part B)	
2	Identified which criterion pertains to the request	
3	Completed all parts of this application form	
4	Attached a proposal (no more than 400 words) regarding any intended research or article that is prompting this request and have stated the intended output (publication, report etc) of my use of this report	
5	Provided the appropriate evidence that the request is *bona fide* (as given in Part B) and not motivated by malicious intent	
6	Provided evidence of approval from National Centre for Statistics and Information for data collection for the purpose of the research (where applicable).	
If my request for access to an archived report is granted, I undertake to:	
8	Treat the information within the Quality Audit Report in the spirit in which it was written (ie, as the first stage of a two-stage quality assurance process)	
9	Acknowledge that this report has been superseded by information that is more current in relation to the HEI(s) concerned	
10	Respect OAAAQA's copyright of the Report and, given that the report is no longer in the public domain, refrain from sharing the Report with others	

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[4] If you answer 'No' to any questions herein, your request may be rejected; if you answer 'Not Applicable (N/A)', OAAAQA may require further information.