



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



سلطنة عُمان
الهيئة العمانية للاعتماد
الأكاديمي وضمان جودة التعليم

POLICY ON THE MANAGEMENT OF THE OMAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK EXTERNAL REVIEWERS

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POLICY ON THE MANAGEMENT OF THE OMAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK EXTERNAL REVIEWERS

1. Purpose

This policy outlines the principles and procedures to support the effective, transparent and consistent selection, approval and management of OQF External Reviewers (OQFERs) and their inclusion in the National Register of External Reviewers (National ER Register).

2. Scope

This policy applies to all aspects of the selection, approval and management of OQFERs, including the issuance of contracts and the removal process.

3. Policy Statement

OQFERs fulfil an important role in the implementation of the OQF. Selected for their knowledge and skills to assist with Listing Omani qualifications on the Oman Qualifications Framework (OQF) and the Alignment of Foreign and International qualifications to it. OQFERs support the Oman Authority for Academic Accreditation and Quality Assurance of Education (OAAAQA) in relation to all OQF activities. In addition to serving on Listing or Alignment Panels, some OQFERs may serve as OQF Review Directors (OQFRDs), as well as serving on Re-Listing and Re-Alignment Panels and OQF Appeal Committees.

3.1 Criteria for the Selection of Locally Based OQFERs

OQFERs must perform their role according to the highest professional standards. These standards encompass confidentiality, punctuality, curtesy, integrity and commitment (for example in timeliness of completing allocated tasks).

OQFERs must:

- Have knowledge and experience of the subject area of the qualification

- Have knowledge of the OQF processes and criteria
- Have completed the OAAAQA capacity building training on the OQF processes
- Have experience in designing and/or reviewing programmes¹, module learning outcomes, related assessment methods and/or quality assurance of education or training
- Be willing to undertake the OAAAQA capacity building training for OQFERs and other OQF development opportunities when they arise
- Have excellent written and verbal communication skills in English and/or Arabic
- Maintain confidentiality
- Be able to provide feedback in an understanding and supportive manner
- Be able to work individually and in a team
- Be able to work under pressure to agreed deadlines

Prospective OQFERs come from the wide range of education and training sectors in Oman, including the military. They can be self-nominated, nominated by their institution or identified by OAAAQA. Self-employed or retired individuals that meet the requirements may also be eligible.

To this end, the OAAAQA contacts education and training providers on a regular basis to invite applications to ensure the National ER Register has sufficient approved OQFERs, across a wide range of subject areas, to meet the demand of all OQF activities.

All applications are scrutinised to ensure the integrity of the selection and approval process. As part of the approval process, all prospective OQFERs attend the OAAAQA capacity building training for OQFERs.

Employees of the OAAAQA are not eligible to act as OQFERs for the duration of their tenure (see Section 4.6).

¹ In either higher education, technical and vocational, professional, school or employment contexts.

3.2 Criteria for the Selection of International OQFERs

On occasion, it may be necessary to engage internationally based individuals to fulfil the role of the OQFER, for example, where there are a limited number of individuals with the required knowledge and expertise in Oman. Potential internationally based OQFERs must meet the criteria given in Section 3.1 and have knowledge and experience in the subject, discipline, occupation or profession. They must also know and understand the principles behind a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and be able to apply that to the Omani context and to the OQF in particular.

3.3 Equal Opportunity

Those who are self-employed or retired are eligible for appointment regardless of age, ethnicity or gender.

3.4 The National ER Register

The OAAAQA updates the National ER Register as and when the OAAAQA CEO approves an OQFER for inclusion or, where necessary, the removal of an OQFER.

The Head of the External Reviewers Affairs Section (ERAS) regularly reviews the National ER Register to ensure there is a sufficient number of approved OQFERs, from a wide range of subject areas, to carry out the scheduled and anticipated OQF activities.

3.5 Formation of OQF Panels

The OAAAQA Policy for Listing Qualifications on the OQF or the Policy for the Alignment of Foreign and International Qualifications to the OQF, as appropriate, governs the formation of Listing and Alignment Panels. The OAAAQA Policy for Re-Listing and Re-Alignment of Qualifications on the OQF governs the formation of a Re-Listing or Re-Alignment Panel².

OQF Panel members are selected from the approved OQFERs on the National ER Register. OQF Panel members must:

- Have knowledge and experience of the subject area of the qualification
- Have completed the OAAAQA capacity building training on the OQF Listing and Alignment processes
- Be from different organisations

² See OAAAQA (2023), OQF Document, Appendix C.

- Have no conflict of interest with the Awarding Body applying for Listing or Alignment
- Hold a qualification at least one OQF level above the qualification they are reviewing or hold the same qualification level and specialty with ten years of experience in the field post-qualification

Approved OQFERs are contacted by the External Reviewers Affairs Section (ERAS) to ascertain their availability and willingness to participate in an OQF Panel before being appointed by the Director General of the DGNQF³.

OQF Panel members are contracted by the OAAAQA for undertaking time limited and defined work in relation to Listing, Alignment, Re-Listing or Re-Alignment. When the work is completed, the OQF Panel is disbanded.

4. Procedure

This section sets out the procedures for the selection, approval and management for OQFERs, including the removal of an OQFER from the National ER Register.

4.1 Selection of Locally Based OQFERs

- a. Those interested in becoming an OQFER complete the Online OQF External Reviewer Application Form (**see Appendix A**) accessed from the OAAAQA website at www.oaaaqa.gov.om. Applicants submit the completed online application to the ERAS in the DGNQF together with their CVs
- b. Received applications are logged by the ERAS
- c. The ERAS forwards applications to the Director General and the Directors of Listing and Alignment Departments
- d. The Director General, Head of the ERAS and the Directors of Listing and Alignment Departments review the application in accordance with the OQF External Reviewer Application Review Form (**see Appendix B**)
- e. Based on the outcome of the review, the Director General makes an initial recommendation⁴ on whether to progress or reject the application
- f. Initially approved OQFERs are invited to attend the Capacity Building Workshop for OQFERs where their performance is evaluated (**see Appendix C**)

³ Henceforth the Director General.

⁴ Based on the outcome of the collective review 4.1 d.

- g. The OAAAQA CEO approves the appointment of OQFERs based on the data provided by candidates⁵ and the recommendations of the Director General
- h. Successful candidates are informed by the ERAS and asked to submit a current **200**-word biography
- i. The ERAS informs unsuccessful candidates
- j. Details of the OQFERs are added to the National ER Register by the ERAS
- k. The OAAAQA Board is informed of updates to the National ER Register

4.2 Selection Process for International OQFERs

- a. Internationally based individuals interested in becoming an OQFER complete the Online OQF External Reviewer Application Form (**see Appendix A**) accessed from the OAAAQA website at www.oaaaqa.gov.om. The completed application is submitted to the ERAS together with the most recent CV
- b. Received applications are logged by the ERAS
- c. The ERAS forwards applications to the Director General and the Directors of Listing and Alignment Departments
- d. The Director General, the Head of ERAS and the Directors of Listing and Alignment Departments review applications in accordance with the OQF External Reviewer Application Review Form (**see Appendix B**)
- e. Based on the outcome of the review, the Director General makes an initial recommendation⁶ on whether to progress or reject the application
- f. Initially approved candidates are invited to an online interview with the Director General, the Head of ERAS and the Directors of Listing and Alignment Departments in order that the candidate's knowledge, experience and understanding of NQFs, the Omani context and the OQF can be determined.
- g. The Director General, the Head of ERAS and the Directors of Listing and Alignment Departments complete the OQF External Reviewer Online Interview Assessment (**see Appendix D**)

⁵ In the application form, the applicant provides key data such as their' name, position and place of work.

⁶ Based on the outcome of the collective review 4.2 d.

- h. The OAAAQA CEO approves the appointment of OQFERs based on the data provided by candidates⁷, the outcome of the online interview and the recommendations of the Director General
- i. Successful candidates are informed by the ERAS and asked to submit a current **200**-word biography
- j. The ERAS informs unsuccessful candidates
- k. Details of the OQFERs are added to the National ER Register by the ERAS
- l. The OAAAQA Board is informed of updates to the National ER Register

4.3 Appointment of OQF External Reviewers

- a. Once an Awarding Body has confirmed its intention to submit a Listing or Alignment Application⁸, the Head of ERAS generates a long-list of potential OQFERs with relevant knowledge and experience in the subject area for the Listing or Alignment Panel
- b. The ERAS submits the long-list to the Director General for approval
- c. The approved longlist is sent to the Awarding Body to identify any potential conflicts of interest
- d. Following the response from the Awarding Body, the Director General forms the Listing or Alignment Panel and, where required, the Re-Listing or Re-Alignment Panel
- e. Before being engaged by the OAAAQA for an OQF activity, OQFERs sign a service contract and OQF External Reviewer Declaration (**see Appendix E**)
- f. Once the formation of the OQF Listing or Alignment Panel is finalised, the appointment of the OQFERs is recorded by the ERAS within the OQF Activities Record

4.4 Monitoring Performance of OQFERs

- a. Following the approval of the Listing or Alignment outcome by the OAAAQA Board⁹, the Head of ERAS in conjunction with the either the Director of Listing or Director of Alignment Department, as appropriate, evaluate the effectiveness of the OQF Listing or Alignment Panel
- b. The Head of ERAS informs the Director General of the evaluation outcome
- c. The ERAS updates the OQF Activity Record that the work of the Listing or Alignment Panel is complete

⁷ In the Application Form, the candidate provides key data such as their' name, position and place of work.

⁸ Or Re-Listing or Re-Alignment Application.

⁹ The final stage of the Listing or Alignment Process.

- d. Where the Listing or Alignment Panel is deemed ineffective, the Head of ERAS harnesses the viewpoints of all the Panel members to establish the cause
- e. The Head of ERAS reports the findings to the Director General and the Directors of Listing or Alignment
- f. Where an individual is the cause of the ineffectiveness of the Panel, the OQF Activities Record is updated that the OQFER is '*not recommended for future work*', to inform decisions regarding the inclusion of the OQFER in future OQF Panels

4.5 Removal of an OQFER from the National ER Register

- a. Cases of poor performance, unethical or unprofessional behaviour, or any activity deemed unbecoming in the role of an OQFER (see criteria below) results in removal from the National ER Register following a recommendation from the Director General and approval from the OAAAQA CEO
- b. On approval from the CEO, the Director General communicates the outcome to the OQFER
- c. Criteria for removal from the National ER Register include but are not limited to:
 - Three instances of unjustified decline of invitation to participate in an OQF activity
 - Poor performance, judged as a result of the OAAAQA review mechanisms (see 4.4)
 - Unethical or unprofessional behaviour, or any activity that may be damaging to the reputation of the OAAAQA
 - Permanent disability that prevents an OQFER from performing their role effectively
 - Self-requesting withdrawal
 - Death

4.6 Updates to the National ER Register

Circumstances requiring updates to the National ER Register are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Circumstances requiring updates to the National ER Register

	Reason	Status on OQFER Database	Actions in National ER Register
1	Poor performance or misconduct; three instances of unjustified decline of OQF activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Permanently move from `active` to `inactive` Note the reason on the OQF database 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove from the National ER Register Remove name, bio and photo from the OAAAQA website Inform the CEO
2	Death, or self-requesting withdrawal from the National ER Register	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Permanently move from 'active' to 'inactive' Note reason on the OQF database 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove from the National ER Register Remove name, bio and photo from the OAAAQA website Inform the CEO
3	Justifiable unavailability (Short term)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep under `active` Note the short period of unavailability on the OQF database 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep on the National ER Register Keep name, bio and photo on the OAAAQA website No need to inform the CEO
	Justifiable unavailability (Long term)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Temporarily move from 'active' to 'inactive' Note reason on the OQF database 	
4	Employment at the OAAAQA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Temporarily move from 'active' to 'inactive' Note reason on the OQF database. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Temporarily remove from the National ER Register Remove name, bio and photo from the OAAAQA website Inform the CEO

4.7 Reactivation of an OQFER on National ER Register after Tenure at OAAAQA

If and when an approved OQFER is recruited as an OAAAQA staff member or is appointed to the OAAAQA Board, he or she is removed from the National ER Register for the duration of their tenure. The names of former OQFERs in this category are retained on the OQFER database but rendered 'inactive' so that they cannot mistakenly be appointed to a Listing or Alignment Panel. Their profiles are removed from the OAAAQA website.

At the end of the period of tenure within the OAAAQA or on the OAAAQA Board, any former OQFER is reinstated on the National ER Register and they are requested to update their profile for the OAAAQA website.

5. Abbreviations

DGNQF	Directorate General of the National Qualifications Framework
ER	External Reviewer
ERAS	External Reviewers Affairs Section
NRQ	National Register of Qualifications
OAAAQA	Oman Authority for Academic Accreditation and Quality Assurance of Education
OQF	Oman Qualifications Framework
OQFER	Oman Qualifications Framework External Reviewer
ToR	Terms of Reference

6. Definitions

Alignment [of a qualification to the OQF]	An evaluation of a Foreign or International qualification against the Alignment Criteria and the OQF Level Descriptors to determine the OQF Level that the qualification aligns to and, if applicable, the comparable OQF Credit Value of the entire qualification
Awarding Body	An organisation that issues education or training awards following formal assessment (for example, Academic Higher Education Institutions and their Affiliates, Technological Institutions, Professional Bodies and Technical and Vocational Education and Training Providers) ¹⁰
Evaluation [of Listing or Alignment]	A systematic method of examination of each module comprising a qualification to determine the extent to which the entire qualification meets the criteria as set out in the relevant OAAAQA Policy together with the qualification's OQF Level and OQF Credit Value
Foreign and International Qualifications	Foreign qualifications relate to qualifications awarded in a country other than Oman (for example, a United Kingdom Awarding Body). International qualifications relate to qualifications awarded by an International Awarding Body (for example, Cisco and Microsoft)

¹⁰ Adapted from <http://qualityresearchinternational.com/glossary/#a>.

Learning Outcome	What a learner is expected to know (knowledge), do (skills) or apply (competencies), as a result of his/her undertaking a unit, module, course or a programme leading to a qualification ¹¹
Listing [a qualification on the OQF]	An evaluation of an Omani qualification against the Listing Criteria and the OQF Level Descriptors to determine the OQF Level and OQF Credit Value of the entire qualification
Module	A component of a qualification. Also known as course or unit by some Awarding Bodies
Oman Qualifications Framework [OQF]	An instrument to describe, compare and classify qualifications from all sectors of education and training in Oman. It is based on one set of generic Level Descriptors, which describe the expected outcomes at each of its ten levels. The OQF provides a reference point for qualifications delivered and awarded in Oman; the comparison between Omani qualifications and Foreign or International qualifications; and the Recognition of Prior Learning
OQF Level	An indicator of relative demand, complexity, depth of knowledge and learner autonomy as described in the OQF Level Descriptors ¹²
Qualification	An award issued by an Awarding Body when, following established standards, the Awarding Body determines that the learner has achieved the Learning Outcomes of all the units, modules or courses of the programme
Re-Listing or Re-Alignment	A review process for Listed and Aligned qualifications to ensure that the Listing or Alignment Criteria were maintained throughout the delivery of the qualification and no major changes were made to the Learning Outcomes of the units, modules or courses that impacted on the OQF Level and/or OQF Credit Value of the entire qualification

7. References

OAAAQA (2023), OQF Document

¹¹ See OAAAQA Online Glossary, <https://www.oaaaqa.gov.om/About-the-OAAA/Glossary> (accessed on 19.04.2021)

¹² Adapted from D Gosling and J Moon, *How to Use Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria* (London: Southern England Consortium for Credit Accumulation and Transfer, SEEC Office, 2001).

OAAAQA Policy on the Management of the National Register of External Reviewers

8. List of Appendices

Appendix A Online OQF External Reviewer Application Form

Appendix B OQF External Reviewer Application Review Form

Appendix C..... OQF External Reviewer Trainee Assessment

Appendix D OQF External Reviewer Online Interview Assessment

Appendix E..... OQF External Reviewer Declaration

9. Document History

Document History				
Version	Date Approved	Circulation	Approved by	Brief Description
1	13 April 2023	-	OAAAQA Board	This first version contained the principles and procedures to support the selection, approval and management of OQF External Reviewers.

Appendix A: Online OQF External Reviewer Application Form

Online OQF External Reviewer Application Form			
Personal information			
Title		Current Position	
First Name(s)		Institution/Organisation	
Last Name		Country of Residence	
Date of Birth		Office Phone Number	
Nationality		Mobile Phone Number	
Photograph		Email Address	
		Postal Address	
Qualifications and Expertise			
Highest Educational Level Obtained			
Year of Qualification			
Awarding Body			
Area(s) of Expertise and/or Field of Study	<i>(Please add row for each area of expertise)</i>		
Language Skills Please indicate competence in understanding, speaking and writing English (5/5 represents 'Excellent')	Understanding		
	Speaking		
	Writing		
Language Skills Please indicate competence in understanding, speaking and writing Arabic (5/5 represents 'Excellent')	Understanding		
	Speaking		
	Writing		
Relevant Experience			
Please list your experience of Listing qualifications on the OQF or Aligning qualifications to the OQF	<i>[Please specify dates]</i>		
Please list any training you have undertaken on the OQF or other involvement with the OQF	<i>[Please specify dates]</i>		
Please briefly state how you meet the OQFER criteria			

■ Upload CV

Appendix B: OQF External Reviewer Application Review Form

OQF External Reviewer Application Review Form								
Details								
Candidate's Name								
Nationality		Subject Area						
Highest level of qualification obtained		Year of qualification						
Date of CV Submission		Language Skills	English		Arabic		Other	
Completed OAAAQA Capacity Building Workshop for Listing Qualifications on the OQF		Date of attendance						
OQFER Criteria						Max	Score	
The candidate has knowledge, skills and/or competence in...								
1	A subject, discipline, occupation or profession						15	
2	OQF Criteria and knowledge of the OQF						15	
3	Designing and/or reviewing programmes in either higher education, technical and vocational, professional, school or employment contexts, module learning outcomes, related assessment methods and/or quality assurance of education or training						10	
4	Designing and/ or reviewing module learning outcomes and assessment						10	
5	Writing in English and/or Arabic to a good standard						10	
6	Speaking in English and /or Arabic to a good standard						10	
7	Providing feedback in a sensitive and supportive manner						10	
8	Working individually and in a team						10	
9	Working under pressure to agreed deadlines						10	
						100 ¹³		

¹³ Locally based OQFERs must attain $\geq 60\%$ in their application to be invited onto the National ER Register, prior to training; those with 50-59% will be kept pending for the result of training; those with $\leq 49\%$ will be sent a rejection letter.

OQF External Reviewer Application Review Form		
Other Comments		
	Signature	Date
Sent to the OAAAQA CEO		
CEO Approval		
Bio Received		
OQFER Name on OQFER Database and the OAAAQA Website		

International OQFERs must attain $\geq 60\%$ in their application to be invited onto the National ER Register. All invitations to join the National ER Register are subject to approval from the OAAAQA CEO.

Appendix C: OQF External Reviewer Trainee Assessment

OQF External Reviewer Trainee Assessment						
Candidate's Name		Subject Area				
Nationality						
Date of CV Submission		Language	English		Arabic	Other
Trainee Evaluation						
		Trainer 1		Trainer 2		
#	Demonstrates the following skills and qualities	Max	Score	Max	Score	
1	Punctuality (arrives on time and completes tasks by deadline)	10		10		
2	Gives considered answers and is evaluative	10		10		
3	Collaboration (works as a team)	10		10		
	Listening skills	10		10		
4	English language skills	10		10		
6	Engagement (focuses on the workshop, not on the mobile!)	10		10		
#	The candidate can participate in OQF Activities because					
7	Grasps the nature of the OQF activity	10		10		
8	Is flexible and non-prescriptive in approach	10		10		
#	The candidate can participate in OQF Activities because of					
9	Strong subject knowledge	10		10		
10	Ability to focus on evaluating detail	10		10		
Assessment Totals ¹⁴		100		100		

¹⁴ Training assessment only applies to locally based OQFERs who must attain $\geq 60\%$ to be invited to join the National ER Register; those with $\leq 59\%$ will be sent a rejection letter. All invitations to join the National ER Register are subject to approval from the OAAAQA CEO.

Other Comments Justifying Recommendation		Yes	No
Trainer 1			
Trainer 2			
Signatures		Date	
Trainer 1			
Trainer 2			

Appendix D: OQF External Reviewer Online Interview Assessment

OQF External Reviewer Online Interview Assessment							
Candidate's Name		Subject Area					
Nationality							
Date of CV Submission		Language	English		Arabic		Other
Trainee Evaluation							
	Scorecard to be given to each interviewer						
#	Demonstrates the following skills and qualities		Max				Score
1	Preparation for interview		10				
2	Gives considered answers and is evaluative		10				
3	Knowledge of NQFs, the OQF and Omani Context		10				
4	Listening skills		10				
5	English language skills		10				
6	Engagement with interviewers		10				
#	The candidate can participate in OQF Activities because						
7	Grasps the nature of the OQF activity		10				
8	Is flexible and non-prescriptive in approach		10				
#	Can participate in OQF Activities because of						
9	Strong subject knowledge		10				
10	Ability to focus on evaluating detail		10				
Assessment Totals			100				
Other Comments Justifying Recommendation			Yes				No
Director General of the DGNQF							
Head of ERAS							
Director of Listing							
Director of Alignment							

Signatures		Date
Director General of the DGNQF		
Head of ERAS		
Director of Listing		
Director of Alignment		

Appendix E: OQF External Reviewer Declaration

OQF External Reviewer Declaration			
	Please tick (✓) the appropriate column for each of the following statements:	Agree	Disagree ¹⁵
1	I have read and understood the OQF Manual on [type of OQF activity] and will carry out the tasks and responsibilities assigned.		
2	I know of no conflict of interest, as set out in the relevant section of the OQF Manual [type of OQF activity] which would jeopardise my participation in this OQF activity.		
3	During the contract period and at any time thereafter, I will not breach the confidentiality of any information in relation to this [type of OQF activity]. This includes information received in written form for example, the Awarding Body's Application for Listing or Alignment, supporting materials, Awarding Body's response to the draft OQF Evaluation Report [other OQF Report as appropriate] as well as information received in person		
4	During the contract period and at any time thereafter, I will not divulge any information shared during the [type of OQF activity] deliberations (for example, regarding preliminary comments and/or through draft versions of the OQF Evaluation Report).		
5	I will not enter into a consultancy relationship (or similar) with the Awarding Body undergoing [type of OQF activity], from the time of signing this form until one full calendar year after the public release of the [type of OQF activity]		
6	I will complete any end-of-activity report that is required by the OAAAQA		
Signature		Date	
Print Name			
Please send the completed declaration to the External Reviewers Affairs Section at the DGNQF before the [type of OQF activity] submission date.			

¹⁵ If you indicate disagreement with any of the statements in the declaration above, a staff member from the DGNQF will contact you to discuss the matter further.