

Ministry of Education and Higher Education  
Department of Higher Education Institution's Affairs



**Licensing and Accreditation  
Standards for Higher Education Institutions in  
Qatar**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Edition  
November 2018  
Doha, Qatar**



# Standards for Licensing and Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions in the State of Qatar

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## Introduction

The State of Qatar pays close attention, and gives careful consideration, to higher education in order to keep pace with the economic and social advancement which the country is experiencing, to respond to the requirements of building a knowledge society and to the need for better preparation for professional life, and to keep abreast of rapid technological and scientific developments in the contemporary world. This concern has been reflected in the expansion of higher education Institutions, increased rates of student admissions, an improved learning environment, enhanced academic achievement, large financial budgets, and idealistic plans to provide the best educational options for university students.

Quality and creation of opportunities for excellence are therefore the most important indicators that govern the policies and systems of higher education. The most important pillar supporting quality and excellence is the development, implementation and monitoring of proven standards and specifications in the licensing and accreditation of higher education Institutions and the academic programs they offer.

To achieve this goal, the Department of Higher Education Institution's Affairs at the Ministry of Education and Higher Education has established a set of standards for licensing and accreditation of higher education Institutions in the State of Qatar, approved by the Council's Executive Committee of the former Supreme Education Council ( Currently the Ministry of Education and Higher Education ) at its second meeting for the academic year 2012/2013 held on 10 December 2012. This document, in addition to the document on policy and procedures for licensing, represents the frame of reference for the establishment and accreditation of colleges and universities in Qatar, meaning only higher education Institutions that offer Diplomas and Bachelor's or higher degrees.

The standards for licensing and accreditation include the following:

- Mission, organizational structure & institutional effectiveness.
- Academic programs.
- Faculty and staff.
- Students.



- Learning resources.
- Facilities and equipment.
- Financial resources.
- Scientific research.
- Integrity, transparency and professionalism in the work environment of the Institution.



## Chapter I

### Mission, Organizational Structure and Institutional Effectiveness

The Mission is the perceived status which the university or the institution aims to attain in the educational process and is also a reflection of what tasks it intends to carry out in satisfying the needs of the educational community and students. The Institution's mission is achieved through academic rigor and an effective administrative organization, as well as clear and specific regulations. To evaluate this process, the Institution should develop a system of assessing its effectiveness in pursuing its mission.

#### 1. Mission

The Institution shall have a clear mission consistent with being an institution of Higher Education. The Institution's mission should be centered upon its identity, its educational goals, and the beneficiary groups of its services.

#### 2. Academic and administrative organization

The Institution of Higher Education shall organize its functions and authorities in a way that guarantees achievement of its mission and enhances the effectiveness of its performance. The Institution should make a clear distinction between the powers and responsibilities of the board of trustees and those of the academic and administrative staff.

##### a. Board of Trustees:

The task of the Board of Trustees is to develop high level policies of the Institution and to supervise and manage the Institution in accordance with the following criteria:

- The majority of the Board of Trustees must consist of members who are neither shareholders nor have any other financial interest in the Institution, and shall include representatives from the community.
- The instruments of governance shall ensure a separation between the work of the Board of Trustees and the daily



operation of the Institution.

- The Board of Trustees appoints the President of the Institution, with the task of implementing the Institution's policies.

b. Criteria for Administrative Management:

The Institution shall have a management system outlining the different roles and determining the responsibilities of the segments of the Institution, whether legislative, executive, or supervisory.

The Institution's most important administrative bodies shall be

- The Presidency
- Office of Academic Affairs
- Office of Administration
- Office of Student Affairs
- Office of Support Services

The Institution can add to the administrative structure such other offices or departments as shall accord with ensuring quality performance.

### 3. Rules and Regulations:

a. The Institution shall provide a set of rules and regulations that:

- i. Govern the relationship between different entities of the Institution;
- ii. Show the responsibilities of each sector;
- iii. Describe the most important procedures used in the implementation of the Institution's plans, and
- iv. Ensure appropriate coordination between the different entities of the Institution.



- b. The Institution shall publish these regulations in a manual that clearly defines its mission and the organizational structure responsible for achieving that mission, and which specifies the regulations governing it. The manual shall also include procedures to be followed by the Institution to assess its effectiveness in achieving its mission.
- c. The most important rules and regulations which must be provided by the Institution include the followings:
  - i. The organizational structure of the Institution.
  - ii. The administrative structure of the offices of the Institution and its departments.
  - iii. The system of professional development, evaluation and promotion of administrative staff.
  - iv. A human resources system.
  - v. The system of student admission and registration.

Other regulations can be added according to the needs of each Institution and at the request of the licensed entity.

#### 4. Institutional Effectiveness:

The Institution shall develop a system of evaluating its effectiveness in carrying out its mission. This should involve continuous assessment of academic programs, students, and facilities management and must provide concrete evidence of this system being used, including an auditable log. The Institution must develop its programs and services and improve its use of resources based on the results of this assessment.

This is achieved in the following ways:

- I. Create a research unit to design programs to measure output per unit of academic, administrative or financial inputs.
- II. Develop long-term and short-term strategic plans which should be reviewed on a regular basis.
- III. The licensing entity is entitled to use a neutral Institution to



evaluate progress under each of the above mentioned headings.

## Chapter II





## Academic Programs

The academic program is the basis of the educational process, representing the knowledge-based content and skills which are supposed to be acquired by the student, preparing them for life and qualifying them to join the labor market. There must therefore be reliable standards, including objectives and regulations, for academic programs, as well as criteria for decision-making, for standards of examinations and for assessment methods. The following is a list of those standards:

1. The program is approved by the competent authority in the accrediting state of the Institution's parent body.
2. Each academic program contains a mission, general objectives and educational outputs commensurate with the overall mission of the Institution.
3. Organizational regulations must be in place across all academic programs, covering:
  - i. Launching of programs and curriculum development.
  - ii. Graduation requirements
  - iii. Evaluation of students
  - iv. Examinations
  - v. Academic Counseling.
4. The teaching curriculum contains a number of courses commensurate with modern and global standards in terms of the number, content, presentation, and evaluation of the students.
5. Each curriculum contains a number of diverse and progressive courses (specialized courses, public courses, elective courses).
6. The courses integrate general learning outcomes at the university level that are linked to aspects of knowledge and skills in general.
7. Each program shall provide and meet students' needs in order to obtain the degree for which they are studying, including:



- i. A sufficient number of faculty and teaching staff with the required expertise and credentials.
  - ii. Appropriate equipment and key educational technologies and learning support resources.
  - iii. Student support services.
  - iv. Support Courses.
  - v. Practical and field training.
  - vi. Adequate number of appropriately equipped classrooms and science laboratories.
8. The program shall include a comprehensive evidence-based system of periodic evaluation to ensure that the objectives and learning outcomes of the program are being achieved.
9. The Institution shall be responsible for the quality of programs and courses in Qatar offered in collaboration with any other educational Institution.
10. Each program shall provide a system of effective academic counseling, commensurate with the requirements of graduation, to serve students prior, during, and after college.
11. Each program shall be consistent with the needs of human development and the labor market in Qatar and all activities and courses provided shall take into account the values and culture of the Qatari society.
12. Course teaching is carried out by professors with appropriate specializations and professional manners.

### Chapter III



## Faculty and Teaching Staff

The faculty and teaching staff constitute one of the most important components of the implementation and effectiveness of higher education institutions and play a key role in achieving the stated goals and objectives of the university or college. Accordingly, emphasis must be placed on providing all the factors and elements related to quality teaching and assessment competencies of the members of the teaching staff.

To ensure that quality is achieved in this area, the following principles should be followed:

1. The Institution provides the appropriate number of suitably-qualified academic and administrative staff to achieve its mission and the implementation of programs and services.
2. The Institution shall have policies and supporting regulations on the academic and administrative aspects of faculty and teaching staff, including:
  - i. Employment policy.
  - ii. The terms of reference and requirements of academic and administrative staff.
  - iii. Promotions and incentives.
  - iv. Teaching load.
  - v. Code of ethics, disciplinary actions, grievance, and appeal.
3. The Institution shall maintain a system of professional development for academic and administrative staff.
4. The Institution shall have an annual appraisal system for the performance of all its employees.
5. The Institution's plans shall describe the contribution of faculty members to Institutional work as a whole.

## Chapter IV

### Students



Students constitute the cornerstone and the most significant factor in the educational process. Their selection and admission is the first priority for the quality of tertiary education. A university or higher education institution must provide a learning environment that contributes to the integrated development of students from physical, intellectual, cultural, social, moral, mental, and health wellbeing perspectives.

### 1. Student Guide:

The Institution should have a student guide that contains all policies, procedures, and information related to the Institution's educational programs and courses, as well as showing the types of services it provides for students.

### 2. Student Admission Policy:

- i. The Institution should clearly define student numbers and specifications as well as general policies for admission that are applied commensurate with the requirements of the offered programs. Furthermore, student admission procedures to the Institution should be approved, consistent, effective and easy for students to use.
- ii. The Institution should implement language requirements for student admissions and should adhere to a requirement for appropriate test scores in the language in which the academic programs are taught. Such criteria should be included in the Students' Admission Manual.

### 3. Student Records:

The Institution should formulate and apply appropriate policies regarding the collection, maintenance, storage and safety of all information and official records related to students, and should keep student records in confidential and safe locations. Furthermore, the necessary statistical data of students' academic progress and achievements should be available through systematic procedures that protect the confidentiality of student information.



#### 4. Student General Policy:

The Institution should develop a system and regulations for fair and consistent procedures for student management, with policies in place to ensure petitioning and appeal procedures, as well as unbiased mechanisms for decision-making. In addition, policies and procedures sufficient to address inappropriate behavior including plagiarism and other forms of trickery and deceit must be formulated and applied.

#### 5. Student Services:

- i. The Institution should be responsible for the planning and implementation of student services, which must be run by qualified and experienced personnel.
- ii. The Institution should provide orientation programs and counseling services for students which address their academic, professional and personal needs.
- iii. The Institution should provide health services and health education programs for students.
- iv. The Institution should provide programs and services that are suitable for students' cultural, sports, and entertainment activities.

#### 6. Student Accommodation:

If student accommodation is provided by the Institution, the Institution should establish, apply and monitor policies and plans to provide healthy and safe accommodation for students, with special considerations for girl students' accommodation. Student accommodation should be also supported with adequate and qualified administrative personnel.

## Chapter V

### Learning Resources



Learning resources encompass libraries, textbooks, reference books and electronic systems. The Institution must ensure that the provision of these resources meets the requirements of the educational programs offered. The Institution must also evaluate these services and improve them, in response to students' and faculty members' needs, in order to enhance the educational process and achieve the Institution's mission and objectives.

## 1. Policy and Planning

The Institution should establish policies, procedures and make adequate financial arrangements to guarantee the provision and maintenance of the resources and services necessary to support student learning. Such resources should be adequate, effective, diverse and appropriate for the various educational programs, and be evaluated and updated regularly.

## 2. Efficiency of Operation and Regulation

- i. The library and other learning resource centers should be run in such a fashion as to meet the requirements of the various educational programs in terms of being user friendly to students, faculty members, and the rest of the Institution's staff.
- ii. The Institution should work to recruit qualified and specialized staff in librarianship and information technology management.

## 3. e-Library

The Institution should provide e-library services that meet international standards and are in harmony with students' and faculty members' needs and aspirations. It shall also participate in database membership on the World Wide Web.

## 4. Users' Training and Support

The Institution should provide training and mentoring programs to enable students and faculty members to make optimal use of the library services



and other learning resources, and must work to recruit qualified personnel for the training and mentoring process.

## 5. Providing and Updating Resources

The Institution should work to provide and keep up to date the appropriate books, scientific journals, and reference books in both Arabic and English to meet the needs of its educational programs. Furthermore, the facilities and services available in the library and the technology in the computer laboratories must be current, keep pace with new developments, and fulfill the requirements and needs of academic programs, students, and faculty members.

## Chapter VI

### Facilities and Equipment



The facility is an essential element in the accreditation and licensing process. It is in the facility that events, programs and educational activities take place; therefore there must be adequate infrastructure and appropriate facilities, including buildings, halls, administrative offices, laboratories, restaurants, and provision for student activities.

## 1. Policy and Planning

The Institution should have a clear policy and an integrated plan, in the short term and the long term, to provide, maintain, and upgrade facilities in a manner consistent with the Institution's mission, programs' requirements, the number of students, and the Institution's expansion plan, and be able to introduce modifications when needed.

## 2. Buildings' Appropriateness

- i. The facilities should be in good condition and adequate to purpose and the Institution must use effective mechanisms and strategies to assess and evaluate their appropriateness for the educational programs and related services.
- ii. The buildings, premises and venues should reflect a clean and attractive environment and provide the conditions necessary for the security and safety of students, faculty members and staff.
- iii. Specifications used in constructing teaching areas, laboratories, and research areas should be appropriate to the requirements of the educational programs, as should classrooms, space, laboratories, equipment, computer areas, software, areas for individual study, and research equipment.
- iv. The Institution should provide special areas and arrangements to meet the needs of students, teachers, and administrators with disabilities and special needs.

## 3. Management Efficiency





Management of facilities, technological equipment, and related services should be effective and ensure their optimal use. The Institution should employ qualified personnel for management, operation and maintenance of the facilities.

#### 4. Equipment for Educational Programs

The Institution should provide the necessary specialized equipment appropriate to the needs of the educational programs.

#### 5. Information Technology System

The Institution should provide effective and up to date information technology systems to support the needs of its educational programs and its administrative services and activities.

#### 6. Research Equipment Availability and Efficiency

The Institution should have adequate plans so that the facilities and equipment for scientific research are at a high level of quality to support research activities appropriate to the programs and meeting the research needs of faculty members and student researchers.

## Chapter VII

### Financial Resources



The financial resources are among the most important elements that an Institution must provide and support to meet its needs and achieve its mission and desired goals. The following criteria must be taken into consideration:

1. The Institution should provide adequate financial resources for the implementation of the academic programs and educational services provided.
2. The Institution should employ qualified staff and appropriate financial systems to manage its financial resources through a specialized administrative unit.
3. The Institution should provide the Department of Higher Education Institution's Affairs with an annual report that includes the annual budget and audit reports.
4. The Institution should have an effective and secure accounting system as well as effective internal and external auditing.
5. The Institution should have organized regulations and manuals in all matters relating to the financial system.

## Chapter VIII



## Scientific Research

As appropriate and consistent with its mission and objectives, the Institution should support scientific research through the development of appropriate policies, and providing material and technological support. It must also reflect on, and report annually on, the quality of scientific research conducted by faculty members and students, as well as on the volume of knowledge product and its impact in achieving the mission of the Institution and serving the surrounding community.

## Chapter IX



## **Professional Integrity and Transparency in the Institution's Business**

The Institution should adhere to its mission in education, the dissemination of knowledge. It must apply the highest ethical and professional values in dealing with faculty members, students, and the wider community, including:

1. Ensuring that the Institution's policies, and its academic programs and educational services, correspond to the cultural and social nature of the society as well as to the legal requirements in the State of Qatar.
2. Implementing policies and procedures related to academic freedom, conflict of interest, intellectual property, research conducted on human beings, and full compliance with the ethics of scientific research.
3. The open publication of all its laws and regulations.
4. Implementing the requirements of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education in all that the Institution publishes i.e. publications and advertisements. Each Institution should also have a website and take direct responsibility for its content.
5. Ensuring that all publications and electronic and press advertisements are compatible and consistent with the mission of the Institution, particularly the licensing and accreditation of academic programs to attract students.
6. The Institution should adhere to its published policy and criteria on students' admission and not waive such criteria or policy in order to increase admission rates.