

**National Commission for Academic Accreditation &
Assessment**

**HANDBOOK FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE AND
ACCREDITATION IN SAUDI ARABIA**

PART 1

**THE SYSTEM FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE AND
ACCREDITATION**

DRAFT

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THE SYSTEM FOR ACCREDITATION AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

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Foreword

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Introduction	4
Chapter 1 Principles and Processes	5
1.1 Principles Underlying the System for Accreditation and Quality Assurance	6
1.2 Internal Quality Assurance Processes	8
1.3 External Quality Assurance Processes	8
1.4 Stages in Accreditation for New Institutions	9
1.5 Consistent Use of Titles for Awards and Types of Institutions	11
1.6 Transition to the System for Accreditation and Quality Assurance	13
1.7 Misrepresentations of the Status of an Institution or of Approvals or Accreditation	13
Chapter 2 Standards for Accreditation and Quality Assurance	14
2.1 Standards for Institutions and Standards for Programs	14
2.2 Using Evidence for Evaluations of Quality	15
2.3 Summary of Standards, Forms of Evidence and Performance Indicators	16
2.4 Requirements for a University	24
Attachment: Concepts and Terminology for Use in Accreditation and Quality Assurance in Saudi Arabia	27

INTRODUCTION

The National Commission for Academic Accreditation & Assessment has been established in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia with responsibility for determining standards and criteria for academic accreditation and assessment and for accrediting post secondary institutions and the programs they offer. The Commission is committed to a strategy of encouraging, supporting and evaluating the quality assurance processes of post secondary institutions to ensure that quality of learning and management of institutions are equivalent to the highest international standards. These high standards and levels of achievement must be widely recognized both within the Kingdom and elsewhere in the world.

This handbook has been prepared to assist institutions to introduce and develop internal quality assurance processes and to prepare for the external peer reviews that the Commission will conduct to verify the achievement of high standards of performance.

Part 1 of the handbook is intended to give a general overview of the system for quality assurance and accreditation. It describes the principles that underlie the approach taken by the Commission, summarizes standards that will be applied in quality assurance and accreditation judgments, and briefly outlines the stages involved in the approval of institutions and accreditation of programs. This part of the handbook also includes an explanation of a number of terms used for the quality assurance and accreditation system in Saudi Arabia.

Part 2 of the handbook focuses on internal quality assurance processes. It provides advice on establishment of an institution's quality center, processes of planning, evaluation and internal reporting on educational programs, and self study and improvement of institutional activities. Templates for use in preparing reports are included in appendices.

Part 3 of the handbook provides details of what is required in preparation for and conduct of external reviews. These processes relate to applications for approval and accreditation of a new institution, the accreditation and re-accreditation of programs, and institutions on a five year cycle.

Parts 1, 2 and 3 of the handbook should be read in conjunction with two other key documents, a *National Qualifications Framework* setting out the learning expectations and credit requirements for levels of academic and technical awards and two documents setting out standards for accreditation. The standards deal with eleven areas of activity in higher education institutions. The primary standards documents are *Standards for Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education Institutions* and *Standards for Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Higher Education Programs*. Both of these are accompanied by companion documents providing self-evaluation scales for assessment of performance in relation to the standards. Supplementary documents dealing with special issues relevant to distance education, and to programs in different special fields are in preparation. Separate statements of standards for technical training will also be provided. These documents explain the standards expected by the Commission and are intended to serve as important guides for continuing improvements in quality.

CHAPTER 1

PRINCIPLES AND PROCESSES

Summary of Arrangements

The National Commission for Academic Accreditation & Assessment has responsibility under its By-law for establishing standards and for accreditation of all post secondary institutions and all post secondary programs other than military education. Its responsibility relates to both institutions as a whole and to the individual programs they offer. Details of how these responsibilities will be carried out are provided in this handbook.

The Commission is an independent authority reporting directly to the Higher Council of Education. Its role is separate from that of the Ministries and other government agencies to which institutions are administratively accountable and which may establish regulations and reporting requirements for the institutions for which they are responsible.

The Commission's responsibilities relate to quality issues, which include the resources available, processes followed, the quality of services provided and the quality of students learning. The Commission has established required standards in eleven broad areas of activity, and has developed a national qualifications framework that specifies generic standards of learning outcomes for each level of qualifications. It expects that institutions establish internal quality assurance systems that ensure high levels of quality in all of these eleven areas.

These internal systems must include processes of strategic planning in relation to appropriately defined institutional mission statements, and short term and long term planning and reporting procedures based on evidence of quality of performance. Periodic comprehensive self-studies must be undertaken to assess performance and plan for improvement. These self-studies are followed by independent external peer reviews that verify the conclusions of the self-studies and consider performance in relation to international standards. The Commission considers the reports from these independent external reviews in making its decisions on accreditation.

Existing institutions are expected to introduce quality assurance systems as soon as possible during a transition period lasting several years and will be assessed for accreditation progressively during that period. New institutions are expected to develop plans for their quality assurance systems before they receive their license to operate.

For new institutions plans for establishment of the institution and for planning and delivering its programs will be reviewed to check that if properly implemented they will meet the Commission's quality requirements and any additional requirements established by the Ministry to which the proposed institution will be responsible.

If the Commission believes the plans are satisfactory it will give provisional accreditation for the institution to offer programs in certain fields up to specified levels, and will give provisional accreditation for programs for which details have been provided. If the plans also meet other government requirements a license will be issued to allow the institution to commence operating. At a later stage the Commission will conduct a further review to determine whether the plans have been properly implemented. If accreditation requirements are met at that later stage the "provisional" designation will be removed and the institution, or the programs concerned, will be fully accredited..

Existing institutions and new institutions after they have achieved full approval and accreditation, will be reviewed once every five years. Programs will also need to be re-accredited on a five yearly basis.

These arrangements will be progressively introduced during a transition period expected to extend over a period of three to five years. During this transition period the plans for new institutions will be reviewed as described above. The reviews of existing institutions will be phased in as quality assurance processes are put in place within the institutions, plans are made, and self-studies are carried out.

Some institutions have already involved international accrediting agencies in reviews of their programs. These accreditation reviews will not replace the reviews to be carried out by the Commission, but the results will be taken into account by it when its reviews are undertaken.

1.1 Principles Underlying the System for Accreditation and Quality Assurance

1.1.1 Responsibility for quality rests with institutions delivering programs.

The institutions delivering programs in Saudi Arabia are responsible for the quality of those programs and for the quality of all of their facilities and activities. An “institution” is the legal entity established in Saudi Arabia with authority to grant academic awards.

The principle of institutional responsibility has a number of important implications.

First, while an external organization such as the Commission can have an important role in assisting institutions to plan and introduce strategies for improvement and in evaluating and publicly reporting on what is achieved, this does not remove responsibility from the institution. An external authority can help, but it cannot deliver quality.

Second, although an institution may decentralize some of its responsibilities or delegate authority to an internal unit such as a college or department, this does not remove responsibility from the institution as a whole. Reviews of quality by the Commission for institutional accreditation will deal with the total institution and reviews of programs for program accreditation will deal with everything that affects the quality of the program.

Third, if an institution in Saudi Arabia delivers a program that has been developed elsewhere, it is still the institution in Saudi Arabia that must accept responsibility and will be accountable for the quality of the programs it offers. This is the case even where an academic or technical qualification may be issued by a partner institution in another country. An international institution wishing to operate in Saudi Arabia must establish a legal entity within the country, must meet the quality requirements for an institution of its type in Saudi Arabia regardless of any accreditation or quality requirements in its own country, and must provide sufficient resources and facilities within Saudi Arabia to satisfy quality standards.

1.1.2 Quality relates to all of an institution’s functions and activities.

Quality assurance processes in institutions should involve not only the educational programs, but also other matters such as the facilities and equipment, staffing, relationships with the communities served by the institution and the administrative processes that link all these together. This means that a quality assurance system should involve individuals and academic and organizational units throughout an institution, not only those directly involved in the delivery of educational programs.

Within each of these internal units consideration should be given to their inputs, processes and outcomes, with an emphasis on the quality of the outcomes of the services they provide. In the past considerations of quality were largely based on inputs such as the qualifications of faculty, provision of equipment and facilities and adequacy of resources. However, while these are still important the emphasis has shifted. The most important consideration is the quality of outcomes, although inputs and the processes used are still significant and standards relating to them must be maintained.

1.1.3 Emphasis should be on support for continuing quality improvement rather than on satisfying required standards.

The primary objective of the system for accreditation and quality assurance is continuing improvement and this orientation will permeate all of the Commission’s activities. The system is based on a fundamental assumption that institutions wish to operate with high and increasing levels of quality, comparable to, and wherever possible

exceeding international standards. The most important function of the Commission is to assist institutions in achieving those improvements.

An important consideration in accreditation judgments will be the existence and effective use of quality improvement mechanisms. Institutions will be encouraged to work towards continuing improvement beyond minimum requirements in all of their activities.

However the Commission does have a statutory obligation to ensure that necessary standards are achieved. Provided this is done, accreditation will be granted, but if inadequate standards are found this must be recognized and the need for improvement made known. Accreditation can only be granted when required standards are met.

1.1.4 Supportive relationships are essential.

Relationships of trust and support are essential within institutions and between institutions and the Commission and the reviewers with whom it works. No institution or program is perfect, and there is always scope for improvement. Willingness to acknowledge weaknesses and mistakes and work to deal with them is considered a strength, not a weakness. It must be possible for individuals, for groups within institutions, and for institutions as a whole, to frankly acknowledge difficulties and discuss plans for overcoming them without fear of damage to reputation. On the other hand attempting to conceal problems is a serious weakness that will be open to criticism.

This means that the style of interaction within an institution that is effectively working for quality improvement, and between the Commission and the institution during external reviews, should be characterized by cooperation, openness and transparency, sensitivity to mission and objectives and constructive support in identifying and resolving difficulties.

1.1.5 Assessments of quality must be evidence based and independently verified.

Conclusions about quality should be based as far as possible on directly observable evidence rather than subjective judgements. Indicators of achievement should be identified in advance, related to valid benchmarks to establish appropriate standards of performance, and systematically reviewed. Where interpretations are required, for example where indicators provide indirect evidence of achievement of objectives, interpretations should be independently verified.

1.1.6 Diversity should be encouraged.

Flexibility in organizational arrangements is necessary to meet the needs of different communities, to respond to differing missions and to reflect the differing circumstances and resources of different institutions. Allowing diversity is also essential if creativity and innovation are to be encouraged and improvements are to develop over time. Specific requirements for meeting quality standards may vary for different types of institution. For example research may be an important element in the work of some institutions and not for others, and the way an institution interacts with its community should differ for a large public university and a small college in a remote community.

However, while there are important differences in expectations for some criteria, the quality of learning expected for academic awards does not vary. If community confidence in the system of post secondary education is to be maintained it must be possible to rely on consistent standards of student achievement no matter what kind of institution students attend or how their programs are organized.

1.1.7 Stakeholders should have substantial involvement in planning and review processes with feedback regularly obtained, analyzed, and responded to.

Stakeholders include students and graduates, staff, employers, providers of funds, members of the communities served by the institution and any other groups with which the institution is involved. The stakeholders have a

right to be involved, but even more importantly, have perspectives that need to be considered if a system for quality assurance is to be effective.

1.1.8 Total institutional commitment to quality improvement should be achieved through effective leadership and widespread involvement.

A good educational institution should be a learning organization, in which all faculty and staff are involved in evaluating their performance and that of the units within which they work, and offer ideas and plan for improvement following that evaluation. There must be effective leadership and coordination at the level of the institution as a whole, but this leadership and coordination must be combined with wide participation in evaluation, planning and reporting. While effective leadership is essential at the most senior levels of the institution, it is at least equally important in internal academic and administrative units.

1.2 Internal Quality Assurance Processes

All post secondary institutions are expected to have comprehensive and effective quality assurance systems.

For a new institution a quality assurance system should be an integral part of the plans for its development. Plans for the quality system should deal with monitoring and improving the quality and effectiveness of all programs to be offered and also of the academic and administrative units and functions within it. The role and processes to be followed by a quality unit or center should be described.

For an existing institution processes of quality assurance should be fully integrated in all parts of the organization. More detailed descriptions of these expectations are set out in the part 2 of this handbook, which deals with internal quality assurance processes, and in the *Standards for Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions*. In summary, the expectations include leadership and coordination of quality assessment and improvement processes based on the mission and goals of the institution; preparation of detailed planning and reporting procedures; and implementation of those procedures in a continuing cycle of annual planning, monitoring and review. More comprehensive self-studies should be conducted periodically. These serve as a vital review and planning mechanism for the institution itself and also as the basis for independent external reviews by the Commission.

For an existing institution that does not yet have such a system, arrangements for internal quality assurance would normally start with the establishment of a quality center, appointment of key staff to that centre and appointment of a quality committee drawn from all sections of the institution. This center would involve people across the institution in an initial self evaluation, which would provide a starting point for plans for improvement where necessary and the introduction of required quality assurance processes.

Part of the institution's responsibility for its own quality assurance involves assessing itself against appropriate standards using external benchmarks or reference points. These may be descriptions of standards provided by the Commission, benchmarks relating to the performance of other comparable institutions within Saudi Arabia or elsewhere, or the opinions of independent evaluators with relevant experience in post secondary education. In some cases institutions use the judgments made by international accrediting bodies for this purpose. Although these evaluations may be made by people external to the institution, from the Commission's point of view they are part of the institution's own arrangements for quality assurance, and for the purposes of the system of accreditation and quality assurance in Saudi Arabia, are regarded as internal mechanisms.

1.3 External Quality Assurance Processes

The Commission will establish a system for external quality assurance involving accreditation of institutions and programs if they meet required quality standards. To carry out these evaluations the Commission will use trained and experienced reviewers. They will study documentary information, visit institutions and provide advice to the Commission. A summary of the processes followed is given below, and the stages are described in greater detail in Chapter 3 of this Handbook. Part 3 of the Handbook deals specifically with external review processes and the preparations that need to be made for those reviews.

For new institutions assessments by the Commission will occur at two stages. First, when a proposal to establish a new institution is being considered the Commission will review the plans. This review is designed to ensure that if the plans are properly implemented the institution and its quality assurance systems is likely to meet required standards and that programs will meet accreditation requirements. At that stage the institution and its programs will receive provisional accreditation, and if the plans also meet the standards established by the relevant Ministry a license will be given to allow it to begin operating. The second stage occurs after the institution is established and the programs have been offered for the first time. The Commission will carry out a further assessment to ensure that plans were properly and fully implemented and that standards are being met. Full institutional and program accreditation may then be given.

After full accreditation, programs will need to be re-accredited every five years. External reviews of the institution will also be conducted on a five-yearly basis. (While a five year cycle will be the norm, the Commission may at its discretion require an external review at an earlier time).

For existing institutions, the Commission will conduct initial reviews of institutions and programs following a planned schedule. This schedule will be developed in consultation with institutions, with the reviews commencing as the necessary internal processes have been put in place and initial self-studies completed. The accreditation may be either provisional or full, depending on the stage the institution has reached in developing its quality assurance processes.

After institutions and programs have been accredited, the same process will be followed as for new institutions. Programs will need to be re-accredited every five years and external reviews of the institutions will also be conducted on a five yearly basis. As for private institutions, the Commission may conduct earlier reviews if it believes it needs to do so.

The reviews of institutions and of programs are closely related. Institutional reviews will deal with all of an institution's activities, including an overview of the quality of its programs and the facilities and services to support them. Reviews of programs will deal in greater detail with individual programs and the standards of teaching and learning achieved.

To ensure that these different types of reviews are effectively coordinated and do not result in unnecessary additional work for institutions, several steps will be taken. First, while the focus of program reviews will be on individual programs, arrangements may be made for considering groups of related programs at the same time. Second, wherever possible the timing of external program and institutional reviews will be coordinated. In small institutions with only a small number of programs, the reviews may be combined so that work on preparation of material need be done only once rather than duplicated. Alternatively, for a large institution with many different programs, the reviews may be spaced apart to minimize the amount of work required at any particular time. These arrangements will be discussed with institutions at the time when reviews are scheduled. The reports on reviews that have been undertaken will be made available to the members of later review panels so that they are aware of comments and recommendations that have been made.

1.4 Stages in Accreditation for New Institutions

These notes apply to an institution responsible to the Ministry of Higher Education. For any institution that must be approved by, or is responsible to a different government agency details of requirements must be obtained from the ministry or agency concerned. The following notes are a summary of the stages involved. Further details are provided in Chapter 1 of Part 3 of this handbook.

1.4.1 Stages in Accreditation for New Private Higher Education Institutions

- The proposers of the institution apply to the Ministry of Higher Education for an Initial Licence.
- The proposers of the institution provide details of their proposal to the Ministry of Higher Education which assesses the plans in relation to the Ministries regulations, and to the NCAAA which assesses the plans in relation to its quality assurance requirements. The plans include a Stage 1 plan showing what will be done in preparations before the first students are admitted, and the proposal to the

NCAAA should include details of programs to be offered within the first three years. If the plans are acceptable the Ministry will indicate its approval and the NCAAA will give provisional accreditation. The proposers can then proceed with the Stage 1 preparations.

- When the stage 1 preparations have been completed this will be checked, and a final licence will be issued by the Minister enabling the institution to admit students and commence operations.
- Annual reports will be required to the Ministry and the NCAAA indicating progress in implementing the plans, and in the second year the NCAAA will conduct a site inspection before confirming the provisional accreditation.
- When the first group of students have completed their programs (normally in the fifth year) the institution will be required to complete a self study and will be reviewed by the NCAAA for full accreditation of the institution and of the initial programs.
- When full accreditation has been granted there will be further reviews for reaccreditation of the institution and its programs every five years.

A proposal to establish a new private university must include plans to meet the special requirements of a university. The institution will be required to start as a college, and if plans are approved, will be given the opportunity to move to university status as the requirements for a university are met.

1.4.2 Approval and Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions Based in Other Countries Wishing to Operate in Saudi Arabia.

An international higher education institution wishing to operate in Saudi Arabia should follow the same steps as a private college described above. The institution would have to be established as a legal entity (eg. a company) in Saudi Arabia (which should be done as part of the Stage 1 preparations noted above). Services and support systems provided by the “home” institution would be taken into account in judgments made by the Ministry and the NCAAA, but all requirements for a private institution in Saudi Arabia must be met.

If an international institution wishes to offer a program through a franchising agreement (or comparable process) with a Saudi Arabian institution, the Saudi Arabian institution must have a final licence whose scope of activities includes that program, the program must meet Saudi Arabian requirements for accreditation, and it must have been given provisional accreditation before it can be offered.

1.4.3 Accreditation of New Public Universities

(a) New university established from the beginning

An initial license is not applicable because the Government has made a decision to establish the university. However planning and establishment of the new university should follow a parallel process to that for a new private college.

- Plans should be prepared for the institution that meet the requirements of the Ministry of Higher Education and the Higher Council of Education and these plans should be checked by the Ministry. The plans for the quality assurance arrangements in the institution and the programs to be offered should be submitted to the NCAAA. Both sets of plans should include things to be done as Stage 1 preparations before the first groups of students are admitted. If the plans are considered satisfactory they will be approved by the Ministry and the NCAAA will give provisional accreditation for the institution and the programs to be offered in the first three years.
- When the stage 1 preparations have been completed the institution will be authorized by the Minister to admit students and start operating.
- If plans are being implemented as proposed the NCAAA will conduct a site visit in the second year and confirm the provisional accreditation.
- When the first group of students have graduated the institution will conduct self studies and the NCAAA will carry out an assessment for full accreditation of the institution and the initial programs.
- When full accreditation has been granted there will be further reviews for reaccreditation of the institution and its programs every five years.

(b) New university formed from existing public colleges or campuses

- The committee responsible for planning for the establishment of the new university should prepare plans that meet the requirements of the Ministry of Higher Education and the Higher Council of Education and these plans should be checked by the Ministry. The Committee should conduct an initial self evaluation of programs and activities on the existing campus(es) and prepare plans for quality assurance for the new institution. These plans should that meet the requirements of the NCAAA for a quality assurance system, and should also deal with any deficiencies found in the initial self evaluation. The NCAAA will assess those plans and if judged to be satisfactory will grant provisional accreditation. This should be done before the new institution begins to operate as a university under its own name.
- If plans are being implemented as proposed the NCAAA will conduct a site visit in the second year and confirm the provisional accreditation.
- When the first group of students have graduated the institution will conduct self studies and the NCAAA will carry out an assessment for full accreditation of the institution and the initial programs.
- When full accreditation has been granted there will be further reviews for reaccreditation of the institution and its programs every five years.

1.4.4 Accreditation of Existing Public Universities and Private Universities and Colleges

Existing universities and colleges have already been asked to conduct an initial self evaluation and prepare a strategic plan for quality improvement that implements the new system requirements for quality assurance and deals with any problems found in the initial self evaluation.

The NCAAA will consult with institutions and prepare a schedule for reviews for full accreditation beginning in 2009. Reviews will normally be carried out for institutional accreditation as a first step, and followed with reviews for accreditation of programs at a later time, however in a small institution the two forms of accreditation may be carried out concurrently.

Reviews for accreditation will not be carried out before the first group of students have graduated from the institution or the program concerned.

When full accreditation has been granted there will be further reviews for reaccreditation of the institution and its programs every five years.

In private institutions that were granted a licence as a university the initial accreditation will be based on the requirements for a college, but the institutions will be expected to meet the requirements for a university as soon as possible and no later than the second five year review cycle.

1.5 Consistent Use of Titles for Awards and Types of Institutions

Post-secondary education programs are provided by many different types of institutions, some designed for different types of programs such as technical training or higher education, some involved in research and the delivery of postgraduate professional and research programs and some concentrating on excellence in teaching and support for students at undergraduate level. In many countries there are also some specialized professional institutes offering high quality postgraduate professional education in specific fields for experienced practitioners in those professions, or in general areas of required expertise such as business administration.

There is potential for confusion and undermining of public confidence if titles of programs or names for categories of institutions are ambiguous or are used inconsistently. Consequently the Commission will require conformity with standard terminology in accrediting programs and institutions.

The titles and expectations for learning outcomes for programs are specified in the *National Qualifications Framework*. Where the same or similar titles are used for programs in technical training and higher education,

as in the case of diplomas and, one of the terms “technology”, “technological”, “of technology”, or “technical” should be used in the title for the technical qualification.

The levels of programs offered by institutions are as follows:

In Vocational and Technical Training

Vocational and Technical Institutes—Vocational and technical training including short courses and courses of up to 3 years up to level three in the National Qualifications Framework. Completion of these three year studies is regarded as equivalent to the completion of secondary education.

Colleges of Technology (for male students) and **Higher Technical Institutes** (for female students) — Programs normally up to two years in length following completion of secondary education or equivalent, leading to a technical diploma at level 5 of the Vocational and Technical Training strand in the *National Qualifications Framework*. In several colleges of technology and higher technical institutes an additional program is offered for trainers in the vocational and technical training system at level 6 of the National Qualifications Framework leading to the degree of Bachelor of Technology Education.

Private Training Centers and Institutes

Technical training is also offered in a variety of short courses and other training programs by private training centers and institutes up to level 4 of vocational and technical training strand in the *National Qualifications Framework*.

Programs up to level 3 of the vocational education strand of the *National Qualifications Framework* are not considered post secondary, and those programs and the institutions that operate only at those levels will not be approved or accredited by the Commission. However programs at levels 4, 5 and 6 are regarded as postsecondary, and they and the colleges of technology or private training institutes offering them will require accreditation. The Commission will liaise closely with Technical and Vocational Training Corporation (TVTC) in developing its accreditation and requirements.

In Higher Education

Community Colleges--Community Colleges are normally associated with public universities. Programs are offered up to the level of diplomas. Preparatory or foundation courses which they sometimes offer are not considered post secondary and do not carry credit towards a higher education award.

Higher Education Institutes--Programs may be offered up to level 5 of the higher education strand of the *National Qualifications Framework*, leading to the award of a diploma.

Higher Education Colleges--Programs are normally offered up to level 6 of the higher education strand of the *National Qualifications Framework*, leading to a bachelors degree. Research activities by the colleges and staff who teach in them are encouraged but not required. However teaching staff are expected to be involved in scholarly activities that ensure they remain up to date with emerging developments in their field of teaching and with associated pedagogy. In certain cases professional programs may be offered up to the level of masters degrees, subject to conditions relating to faculty expertise, resources and facilities.

University Colleges -- University colleges have a strong commitment to undergraduate teaching but also some of the requirements for a university, particularly involvement in research and high quality post graduate programs at masters level (level 7 in the higher education strand of the *National Qualifications Framework*). The level of resources and research infrastructure must be adequate to support research by teaching staff and students in all the fields in which programs are offered. Post graduate programs at masters degree level may relate primarily to professional fields.

Professional Institutes--Professional Institutes are sometimes established by professional societies or other international organizations and offer professional programs up to the level of a masters degree such as an MBA,

normally in a single field of study. Programs must meet all the accreditation requirements for the type of program concerned. The programs may be designed primarily for experienced members of the profession wishing to upgrade their qualifications through full time or part time study.

Universities--Programs may be offered up to the level of doctorates including research and professional degree programs. There are minimum requirements for breadth of study, research activity and provision of resources in support of postgraduate teaching and research that are set out in Chapter 2 of Part 1 in this handbook and the *Standards for Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions*.

1.6 Transition to the System for Accreditation and Quality Assurance

The Commission wishes to move as rapidly as possible to implement the new system for accreditation and quality assurance. Information about standards, criteria and procedures will be made generally available and all institutions will be encouraged to introduce internal quality assurance processes as soon as possible. To assist them as they do so, opportunities will be provided for training and advice, and reference documents will be made available.

1.7 Misrepresentations of the Status of an Institution or of Approvals or Accreditation

Community confidence in the system of post secondary education and training requires accurate and honest representation about institutions and programs and their accreditation status. Any misrepresentation by or on behalf of an institution will be regarded as a serious offence.

Examples include advertising or referring to a program or an institution as fully accredited when it has been provisionally accredited, using the term university in the title of an institution when it has been licensed as a college or an institute, or claiming or implying that a program is accredited by the Commission when this is not the case, or wrongly claiming that a program offering is within the scope of an institutions license. Misrepresentations such as these will lead to cancellation by the Commission of accreditation of the program concerned and of the institution, as well as incurring severe penalties from the responsible Ministry.

It is possible that an institution or a program may be accredited by an international organization outside Saudi Arabia, but not by the Commission in Saudi Arabia. This could occur for a variety of reasons including that the program (or institution) is of good quality but has not yet been considered by the Commission for accreditation, or that different standards have been applied and the institution or program would not meet the Commission's standards. To protect the community from possible misrepresentation about the quality if an institution or program reference to that accreditation can only be made in descriptive information or promotional literature if two conditions are met. (i) Any reference to accreditation by another agency must be accompanied by a statement that the institution or program is not (or not yet) accredited by the NCAAA in Saudi Arabia, and (ii) The accrediting agency is one that is officially recognized by the government in the country where it is established and is endorsed by the Commission.

CHAPTER 2

STANDARDS FOR ACCREDITATION AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

2.1 Standards for Institutions and Standards for Programs

The standards to be applied in judgments about accreditation are based on what are generally considered good practice in post secondary institutions. These “good practices” must be explained so that institutions can refer to them in their internal quality processes and external reviewers can use them as criteria in their evaluations. The practices are summarized in eleven broad statements of standards and described in two documents, *Standards for Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education Institutions*, and *Standards for Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Higher Education Programs*. The standards are also used in two companion documents prepared to help institutions and those responsible for the delivery of programs to evaluate their performance in relation to the standards, *Self Evaluation Scales for Higher Education Institutions*, and *Self Evaluation Scales for Higher Education Programs*.

The eleven broad standards apply to both institutions and programs though there are differences in how they are applied for these different kinds of evaluation. The standards are presented in five groups:

- A. Institutional Context
 - 1. Mission and Objectives
 - 2. Governance and Administration
 - 3. Management of Quality Assurance and Improvement
- B. Quality of Learning and Teaching
 - 4. Learning and Teaching
- C. Support for Student Learning
 - 5. Student Administration and Support Services
 - 6. Learning Resources
- D. Supporting Infrastructure
 - 7. Facilities and Equipment
 - 8. Financial Planning and Management
 - 9. Employment Processes
- E. Community Contributions
 - 10. Research
 - 11. Institutional Relationships With the Community

In evaluations for institutional accreditation, performance in relation to all of these areas is considered for the institution as a whole including an overview of programs across the institution. For a program evaluation each standard is considered from the perspective of the particular program under review.

Some activities of an institution affect individual programs in only a very indirect way, for example the quality of processes followed by a university council. These are not included in a program evaluation. However some activities administered centrally in an institution do have a major impact on programs, for example the appointment of staff or the effectiveness of a central library. These are considered in a program evaluation as they affect the particular program being evaluated, even though they are not controlled by the program’s managers.

The standards are applicable to all institutions, large and small, public and private. However the way tasks are carried out will vary widely, reflecting the size, complexity and resources available to an institution, the environment in which it is operating, and the priorities established in its mission.

The Commission has not established weightings for the different areas of activity in making evaluations since the relative importance can vary for different kinds of institutions and the circumstances in which they operate. For example, a university with a major commitment to research would be expected to give significant emphasis to research

and strategies to develop research capacity. However a college with undergraduate programs would be expected to have limited involvement in research, or perhaps none at all, though its teaching staff would be expected to keep up to date with developments in their field.

Despite these variations it is expected that the standard for learning and teaching, with particular emphasis on learning outcomes, will always be regarded as of primary importance.

Programs must lead to standards of student achievement that are consistent with the requirements of the *National Qualifications Framework*, a document that describes in general terms the increasing levels of knowledge and skill required for higher qualifications.

The main elements in the framework are:

- **Levels** Levels numbered and linked to qualification titles to describe the increasing intellectual demand and complexity of learning expected as students progress to higher academic awards.
- **Credits** Points allocated to describe the amount of work or volume of learning expected for an academic award or units or other components of a program.
- **Domains of Learning** The broad categories of types of learning outcomes that a program is intended to develop.

The qualification titles and levels are consistent with current practice in the Kingdom ranging from a diploma/associate degree after a minimum of 60 credit hours (two years of post secondary study) to a doctorate. Normal full time load for a student is 15 credit hours in one semester but up to 18 may be acceptable.

The domains of learning describe broad categories of learning outcomes in four broad areas with a fifth, psychomotor skills, added in particular fields of study where this kind of learning is important. The domains are:

- **knowledge**, the ability to recall, understand, and present information, including:
 - knowledge of specific facts,
 - knowledge of concepts, principles and theories, and
 - knowledge of procedures.
- **cognitive skills**, the ability to:
 - apply conceptual understanding of concepts, principles, theories and
 - apply procedures involved in critical thinking and creative problem solving, both when asked to do so, and when faced with unanticipated new situations.
- **interpersonal skills and responsibility**, including the ability to:
 - take responsibility for their own learning and continuing personal and professional development,
 - work effectively in groups and exercise leadership when appropriate,
 - act responsibly in personal and professional relationships,
 - act ethically and consistently with high moral standards in personal and public forums.
- **communication, information technology and numerical skills**, including the ability to:
 - communicate effectively in oral and written form,
 - use information and communications technology, and
 - use basic mathematical and statistical techniques.

Psychomotor skills involving manual dexterity that are extremely important in some fields of study. For example very high levels of psychomotor skills are required for a surgeon, an artist, or a musician.

The National Qualifications Framework includes broad general descriptions of the level of mastery expected in each of these domains for each qualifications level.

The standard for learning and teaching also requires that students learn the knowledge and skills expected in academic disciplines or required for professional practice in fields for which they are being prepared. To meet this requirement institutions should consider in their planning the requirements of any relevant professional body or specialist accreditor in the field, as well as any special requirements relating to circumstances in Saudi Arabia.

Judgments about quality should involve comparisons with past performance (to assess improvement) or with other institutions to make judgments about quality and relative levels of performance. The objective of the system in Saudi Arabia is that quality will be at least equivalent to that found in good quality international institutions. This will require international comparisons on at least some important matters. However points of comparison to establish benchmarks of performance must be appropriate for the institution concerned and its mission and circumstances and decisions should be made

Part 2 of this handbook includes details of what should be included in a number of planning documents and reports. In attachments to that handbook templates have been provided to assist those responsible for the preparation of these documents. These templates are designed to provide descriptions of plans and reports on activities, with summaries of evidence about performance in relation to the standards.

In the vocational and technical training strand of the *National Qualifications Framework*, six domains of learning have been identified. These differ to some extent from the domains in higher education, reflecting the different orientation of programs in that sector including the key requirement to develop a number of specific skills required for employment. As for higher education, achieving the required standards of learning in these domains is extremely important and this will require use of teaching strategies appropriate for the type of learning involved. Considerations for program accreditation will include careful consideration of the teaching strategies used to achieve those outcomes, the ways that learning is assessed, processes for verifying the quality of learning outcomes and the extent to which employment requirements are met.

The ultimate objective is that what is learned will be used effectively after graduation. This cannot be properly determined through student assessments while students are still enrolled. However the evaluation of programs is expected to include at least some evidence that what is learned is applied appropriately in personal and professional lives after graduation, and this will call for evidence based on surveys or other mechanisms to assess whether the required long term learning outcomes have been achieved.

2.2 Using Evidence for Evaluations of Quality

Judgments about quality should be based on evidence rather than relying on reputations or general impressions. Evidence can be anything that informs a decision, and in a court of law for example, a very wide range of evidence might be brought before the court. In developing a system of quality assurance it is possible to plan in advance for the kind of evidence that will be provided.

While a variety of forms of evidence can be used it is necessary to decide on at least some specific performance indicators to be used. For example, a form of evidence about the quality of teaching might be the opinions of students. A performance indicator based on student opinions would need to be quantified in some standard form such as the average rating of quality of teaching on a standard scale by students in a class. Other indicators might be the completion and passing rates of students in courses (after independent verification of the standards required), or ratings of the value of a course or program in a survey of graduates.

Performance indicators will also be used by external reviewers in an external review. However when making judgments about quality other information may come to notice, and this should also be taken into account. Part of the role of an external reviewer is to verify the conclusions made by an institution and this often involves consideration of evidence that goes beyond the performance indicators that have been selected by the institution.

In addition to the indicators that an institution selects for its own evaluations and reports, and that should reflect its own mission, priorities and organizational arrangements, the Commission will from time to time identify a limited number of key performance indicators (KPIs) that should be used in all institutions or in particular

groups of institutions. Data on those KPIs will be required in the self-study reports considered in external reviews.

2.3 Summary of Standards, Forms of Evidence and Possible Indicators

A summary of the eleven general standards, some comments on kinds of evidence that could be considered, and possible performance indicators based on this evidence is provided below. The comments on evidence and indicators presented here are intended to be illustrative. Part of the quality planning for an institution or a program is to identify evidence and indicators that will be used for that institution or program for quality assurance purposes.

It should also be noted that in these examples the standards for an institution offering face to face or on-campus instruction have been used. For an institution offering distance education programs some different forms of evidence and indicators would be required.

A. Institutional Context

Standard 1: Mission and Objectives

Institutional Standard	Program Standard
The mission of the institution must clearly and appropriately define its principal purposes and priorities, and be influential in guiding planning and action within the institution.	The mission of the program must be consistent with that for the institution and apply that mission to the particular goals and requirements of the program concerned. It must clearly and appropriately define the program's principal purposes and priorities and be influential in guiding planning and action.
Specific requirements for an institution as a whole relating to Standard 1 are specified under the headings of: 1.1 Appropriateness of the Mission 1.2 Usefulness of the Mission Statement; 1.3 Development and Review of the Mission; 1.4 Use Made of the Mission Statement; 1.5 Relationship Between Mission and Goals and Objectives.	Specific requirements for a particular program relating to Standard 1 are specified under the headings of: 1.1 Appropriateness of the Mission 1.2 Usefulness of the Mission Statement 1.3 Development and Review of the Mission 1.4 Use Made of the Mission Statement 1.5 Relationship Between Mission, Goals and Objectives.

Evidence and Performance Indicators

Evidence about the quality of the mission could be obtained from examination of the mission statement itself, copies of papers proposing the mission or modifications in it, interviews with staff and students to find out how well it is known and supported, and consideration of other reports, proposals and statements to see the extent to which the mission is used as a basis for decisions. Indicators that could be used include responses to questions on surveys to see how well the mission is known and supported, or the proportion of policy decisions that refer to the mission among criteria for the decision made.

Standard 2: Governance and Administration

Institutional Standard	Program Standard
The governing body must provide effective leadership in the interests of the institution as a whole and its clients, through policy development and processes for accountability. Senior administrators must lead the activities of the institution effectively within a clearly defined governance structure. Their activities must be consistent with high standards of	Program administration must reflect an appropriate balance between accountability to senior management and the governing board of the institution, and flexibility to meet the specific requirements of the program concerned. Planning processes must involve stakeholders (eg. students, professional bodies, industry representatives, teaching staff) in establishing

integrity and ethical practice. These activities must occur within a framework of sound policies and regulations that ensure financial and administrative accountability and provide an appropriate balance between coordinated planning and local initiative.	goals and objectives and reviewing and responding to results achieved. The quality of delivery of courses and the program as a whole must be regularly monitored with adjustments made promptly in response to feedback and developments in the external environment affecting the program.
Specific requirements for an institution as a whole relating to Standard 2 are specified under the headings of: 2.1 Governing Body; 2.2 Leadership; 2.3 Planning Processes; 2.4 Relationships Between Sections for Male and Female Students 2.5 Integrity 2.6 Policies and Regulations; 2.7 Organizational Climate; 2.8 Associated Companies and Controlled Entities.	Specific requirements for a particular program relating to Standard 2 are specified under the headings of: 2.1 Leadership 2.2 Planning Processes 2.3 Relationship Between Sections for Male and Female Students 2.4 Integrity 2.5 Policies and Regulations

Evidence and Performance Indicators

Evidence about the quality of governance and administration can be obtained from terms of reference for the governing body and major committees, samples of documents recommending decisions by these bodies, and evidence of their self-assessment. Evidence about the quality of policy and regulations, risk assessment analyses or oversight of controlled entities can be obtained by examination of relevant documents and discussions with faculty and staff who might be expected to be aware their contents. Organizational climate can be assessed by survey results or discussion with staff and students.

Standard 3: Management of Quality Assurance and Improvement

Institutional Standard	Program Standard
Quality assurance processes must involve all sections of the institution and be effectively integrated into normal planning and administrative processes. Criteria for assessment of quality must include inputs, processes and outcomes with a particular focus on outcomes. Processes must be established to ensure that teaching and other staff and students are committed to improvement and regularly evaluate their own performance. Quality must be assessed by reference to evidence based on indicators of performance and challenging external benchmarks.	Teaching and other staff involved in the program must be committed to improving both their own performance and the quality of the program as a whole. Regular evaluations of quality must be undertaken within each course based on valid evidence and appropriate benchmarks, and plans for improvement made and implemented. Central importance must be attached to student learning outcomes with each course contributing to the achievement of overall program objectives.
Specific requirements for an institution as a whole relating to Standard 3 are specified under the headings of: 3.1 Institutional Commitment to Quality Improvement 3.2 Scope of Quality Assurance Processes 3.3 Administration of Quality Assurance Processes 3.4 Use of Indicators and Benchmarks 3.5 Independent Verification of Standards	Specific requirements for a particular program relating to Standard 3 are specified under the headings of: 3.1 Commitment to Quality Improvement in the Program 3.2 Scope of Quality Assurance Processes 3.3 Administration of Quality Assurance Processes 3.4 Use of Indicators and Benchmarks 3.5 Independent Verification of Standards

Evidence and Performance Indicators

Evidence about the quality of management of quality assurance processes can be obtained by looking at the outcomes of those processes, which include progressive improvement in learning outcomes and aspects of the planning and administration of the institution.

Evidence about the processes followed can be obtained from surveys or discussions with staff or students. Other evidence can be gained from the quality of reports on performance by units within the institution, including whether they are evidence-based and appropriately benchmarked in relation to external standards. Information about the quality of services provided by a quality centre can be obtained from rates of participation in, and reports on the effectiveness of professional development programs aimed at teaching methodology and quality improvement, consistency and appropriateness of quality-related documents and reports throughout the institution and assessments of the value and effectiveness of quality assurance processes by students, staff and senior administrators.

A number of possible indicators could be derived directly from this listing of sources of evidence..

B. Quality of Learning and Teaching

Standard 4: Learning and Teaching

Institutional Standard	Program Standard
<p>The institution must have an effective system for ensuring that all programs meet high standards of learning and teaching through initial approvals, monitoring of performance, and provision of institution-wide support services. The following requirements are applicable to all programs. Student learning outcomes must be clearly specified, consistent with the National Qualifications Framework and (for professional programs) requirements for employment or professional practice. Standards of learning must be assessed through appropriate processes and benchmarked against demanding and relevant external reference points. Teaching staff must be appropriately qualified and experienced for their particular teaching responsibilities, use teaching strategies suitable for different kinds of learning outcomes, and participate in activities to improve their teaching effectiveness. Teaching quality and the effectiveness of programs must be evaluated through student assessments and graduate and employer surveys, with feedback used as a basis for plans for improvement.</p>	<p>Student learning outcomes must be clearly specified, consistent with the National Qualifications Framework and requirements for employment or professional practice. Standards of learning must be assessed through appropriate processes and benchmarked against demanding and relevant external reference points. Teaching staff must be appropriately qualified and experienced for their particular teaching responsibilities, use teaching strategies suitable for different kinds of learning outcomes, and participate in activities to improve their teaching effectiveness. Teaching quality and the effectiveness of programs must be evaluated through student assessments and graduate and employer surveys, with feedback used as a basis for plans for improvement.</p>
<p>Specific requirements for an institution as a whole relating to Standard 4 are specified under the headings of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4.1 Institutional Oversight of Quality of Learning and Teaching 4.2 Student Learning Outcomes 4.3 Program Development Processes 4.4 Program Evaluation and Review Processes 4.5 Student Assessment 4.6 Educational Assistance for Students 4.7 Quality of Teaching 	<p>Specific requirements for a particular program relating to Standard 4 are specified under the headings of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4.1 Student Learning Outcomes 4.2 Program Development Processes 4.3 Program Evaluation and Review Processes 4.4 Student Assessment 4.5 Educational Assistance for Students 4.6 Quality of Teaching 4.7 Support for Improvements in Quality of Teaching 4.8 Qualifications and Experience of Teaching

4.8 Support for Improvements in Quality of Teaching	Staff
4.9 Qualifications and Experience of Teaching Staff	4.9 Field Experience Activities
4.10 Field Experience Activities	4.10 Partnership Arrangements with Other Institutions
4.11 Partnership Arrangements with Other Institutions	

Evidence and Performance Indicators

Evidence about the quality of learning and teaching may be obtained from ratings by students, graduates and employers of the quality of programs, statistics on course and program completions and employment outcomes, ratios of students to faculty and statistics on faculty qualifications. Important sources of evidence might include independent expert advice on the appropriateness of teaching strategies and assessments for the different domains of learning in the *National Qualifications Framework*. Evidence should be available about the results of benchmarking of standards of learning outcomes in relation to appropriate external reference points. This could be done in several different ways including check marking of samples of students' work and independent assessments of the standards of test questions and students' responses.

The selection of performance indicators for quality of learning and teaching requires the use of data in a form that can be quantified and used in comparisons across the institution, with other institutions, and with past performance.

C. Support for Student Learning

Standard 5: Student Administration and Support Services

Institutional Standard	Program Standard
Administration of admissions and student record systems must be reliable and responsive, with confidentiality of records maintained in keeping with stated policies. Students' rights and responsibilities must be clearly defined and understood, with transparent and fair procedures available for discipline and appeals. Mechanisms for academic advice, counselling and support services must be accessible and responsive to student needs. Support services for students must go beyond formal academic requirements and include extra curricular provisions for religious, cultural, sporting, and other activities relevant to the needs of the student body.	Admission processes must be efficient, fair, and responsive to the needs of students entering the program. Clear information about program requirements and criteria for admission and program completion must be readily available for prospective students and when required at later stages during the program. Mechanisms for student appeals and dispute resolution must be clearly described, made known, and fairly administered. Career advice must be provided in relation to occupations related to the fields of study dealt with in the program.
Specific requirements for an institution as a whole relating to Standard 5 are specified under the headings of: 5.1 Student Admissions 5.2 Student Records 5.3 Student Management 5.4 Planning and Evaluation of Student Services 5.5 Medical and Counselling Services 5.6 Extra Curricular Activities for Students	Specific requirements for a particular program relating to Standard 5 are specified under the headings of: 5.1 Student Admissions 5.2 Student Records 5.3 Student Management

Evidence and Performance Indicators

Evidence about the quality of student administration and support services can be obtained from surveys of students about the quality and responsiveness of services provided, usage rates for particular services, response times for communicating decisions on admissions and results and the frequency and results of discipline procedures. Performance indicators can be based directly on this information, but additional evidence in a review might include such things as visits to facilities and discussions with students and staff.

Standard 6: Learning Resources

Institutional Standard	Program Standard
<p>Learning resources including libraries and provisions for access to electronic and other reference material must be planned to meet the particular requirements of the institution's programs and provided at an adequate level. Library and associated IT facilities must be accessible at times to support independent learning, with assistance provided in finding material required. Facilities must be provided for individual and group study in an environment conducive to effective investigations and research. The services must be evaluated and should be improved in response to systematic feedback from teaching staff and students.</p>	<p>Learning resource materials and associated services must be adequate for the requirements of the program and the courses offered within it and accessible when required for students in the program. Information about requirements must be made available by teaching staff in sufficient time for necessary provisions to be made for resources required, and staff and students must be involved in evaluations of what is provided. Specific requirements for reference material and on-line data sources, and for computer terminals and assistance in using this equipment will vary according to the nature of the program and the approach to teaching.</p>
<p>Specific requirements for an institution as a whole relating to Standard 6 are specified under the headings of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6.1 Planning and Evaluation 6.2 Organization 6.3 Support for Users 6.4 Resources and Facilities 	<p>Specific requirements for a particular program relating to Standard 6 are specified under the headings of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6.1 Planning and Evaluation 6.2 Organization 6.3 Support for Users 6.4 Resources and Facilities

Evidence and Performance Indicators

Evidence about the quality of learning resource provision and performance indicators derived from this evidence can be obtained from user satisfaction surveys, success rates for students in accessing course reference material, documents describing processes for identifying and responding to course requirements, and details of times when facilities are available for use by students and faculty. Information should be available about provision of orientation programs for new students and responsiveness to requests from groups of stakeholders. The institution should be able to provide information about comparisons of level of provision through books, periodicals and web-based resources with comparable institutions offering similar programs and an appropriate performance indicator would be whether that level of provision was equalled or exceeded.

D. Supporting Infrastructure

Standard 7: Facilities and Equipment

Institutional Standard	Program Standard
<p>Facilities must be designed or adapted to meet the particular requirements for teaching and learning in the programs offered by the institution, and offer a safe and healthy environment for high quality education. Use of facilities must be monitored and user surveys used to assist in planning for improvement. Adequate provision must be made for classrooms and laboratories, use of computer technology and research equipment by teaching staff and students. Appropriate provision must be made for associated services such as food services, extra curricular activities, and where relevant, student accommodation.</p>	<p>Adequate facilities and equipment must be available for the teaching and learning requirements of the program. Use of facilities and equipment should be monitored and regular assessments of adequacy made through consultations with teaching and other staff, and students.</p>
<p>Specific requirements for an institution as a whole</p>	<p>Specific requirements for a particular program relating</p>

relating to Standard 7 are specified under the headings of: 7.1 Policy and Planning 7.2 Quality of and Adequacy of Facilities 7.3 Management and Administration 7.4 Information Technology 7.5 Student Residences	to Standard 7 are specified under the headings of: 7.1 Policy and Planning 7.2 Quality of and Adequacy of Facilities 7.3 Management and Administration 7.4 Information Technology
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Evidence and Performance Indicators

Evidence about the quality of provision of facilities and equipment can be obtained from planning documents, user satisfaction surveys and reports on responses to those surveys, comparisons of provision with comparable institutions offering similar programs and direct observations by independent evaluators.

Condition assessments and maintenance schedules should provide information about the quality and maintenance of facilities and major equipment. Regulations and codes of practice relating to the use of facilities and expensive equipment provide evidence of sound management practices and security arrangements. Performance indicators could include such things as ratings on surveys of user satisfaction, statistics on equipment breakdowns, and comparisons of provision in relation to other institutions.

Standard 8: Financial Planning and Management

Institutional Standard	Program Standard
Financial resources must be adequate for the programs and services offered and efficiently managed in keeping with program requirements and institutional priorities. Budgetary processes should allow for long term planning over at least a three year period. Effective systems must be used for budgeting and for financial delegations and accountability providing local flexibility, institutional oversight and effective risk management.	Financial resources must be sufficient for the effective delivery of the program. Program requirements must be made known sufficiently far in advance to be considered in institutional budgeting. Budgetary processes should allow for long term planning over at least a three year period. Sufficient flexibility must be provided for effective management and responses to unexpected events and this flexibility must be combined with appropriate accountability and reporting mechanisms.
Specific requirements for an institution as a whole relating to Standard 8 are specified under the headings of: 8.1 Financial Planning and Budgeting 8.2 Financial Management 8.3 Auditing and Risk Management	Specific requirements for a particular program relating to Standard 8 are specified under the headings of: 8.1 Financial Planning and Budgeting 8.2 Financial Management

Evidence

Evidence about the quality of financial planning and management can be obtained from budget statements and audit reports together with relevant expenditure ratios such as staff and faculty salaries to total costs, and trends in expenditure on items such as student services, learning resources, and equipment. Reports on risk assessment should be available together with strategies for risk minimization. If the institution is involved in commercial activities the short and long term total financial impact should be identified and evaluated in relation to the institution’s mission and priorities. Performance indicators in this area commonly rely to a considerable extent on ratios of categories of expenditure with comparisons made with other institutions.

Standard 9: Employment Processes

Institutional Standard	Program Standard
<p>Teaching and other staff must have the qualifications and experience for effective exercise of their responsibilities. Professional development strategies must be followed to ensure continuing improvement in the expertise of teaching and other staff. Performance of all teaching and other staff should be periodically evaluated, with outstanding performance recognized and support provided for improvement when required. Effective, fair, and transparent processes must be available for the resolution of conflicts and disputes involving teaching or other staff.</p>	<p>Teaching staff must have the knowledge and experience needed for their particular teaching responsibilities and their qualifications and experience must be verified before appointment. New teaching staff must be thoroughly briefed about the program and their responsibilities before they begin. Performance of all teaching and other staff must be periodically evaluated, with outstanding performance recognized and support provided for professional development and improvement in teaching skills.</p>
<p>Specific requirements for an institution as a whole relating to Standard 9 are specified under the headings of:</p> <p>9.1 Policy and Administration 9.2 Recruitment 9.3 Personal and Career Development 9.4 Discipline, Complaints and Dispute Resolution</p>	<p>Specific requirements for a particular program relating to Standard 9 are specified under the headings of:</p> <p>9.1 Recruitment 9.2 Personal and Career Development</p>

Evidence and Performance Indicators

Evidence about quality of faculty and staff employment processes can be obtained from documents setting out employment and promotion processes and criteria, descriptions of orientation programs for new faculty and staff, and procedures for performance evaluation and support for improvement. Records of assessments of quality of teaching, and faculty and staff participation in professional development activities relevant to their employment can provide valuable evidence, particularly when they include ratios of participation and assessments of the value of those activities by the participants. Data on faculty turnover in parts of the institution can be used to indicate stability or instability in staffing. Regulations on dispute resolution combined with records of the incidence and outcomes of disputes can provide evidence about the effectiveness of those processes.

Performance indicators almost always include student/faculty ratios and proportions of faculty with levels of qualifications. However a number of others that can also be readily quantified are important such as participation ratios in professional development and scholarly activities. Some others such as rates of turnover of faculty and staff, and incidence of disputes might be selected if there are problems in the institution that need to be monitored.

E. Community Contributions

Standard 10: Research

Institutional Standard	Program Standard
<p>All staff teaching higher education programs must be involved in sufficient appropriate scholarly activities to ensure they remain up to date with developments in their field, and those developments should be reflected in their teaching. Staff teaching in post graduate</p>	<p>All staff teaching higher education programs must be involved in sufficient appropriate scholarly activities to ensure they remain up to date with developments in their field, and those developments should be reflected in their teaching. Staff teaching in post graduate</p>

<p>programs or supervising higher degree research students must be actively involved in research in their field. Adequate facilities and equipment must be available to support the research activities of faculty and post graduate students to meet these requirements. In universities and other institutions with research responsibility, teaching staff must be encouraged to pursue research interests and to publish the results of that research. Their research contributions must be recognized and reflected in evaluation and promotion criteria. The research output of the institution must be monitored and reported, and benchmarked against that of other similar institutions. Clear and equitable policies must be established for ownership and commercialization of intellectual property.</p>	<p>programs or supervising higher degree research students must be actively involved in research in their field. Adequate facilities and equipment must be available to support the research activities of faculty and post graduate students to meet these requirements in areas relevant to the program. Staff research contributions must be recognized and reflected in evaluation and promotion criteria.</p>
<p>Specific requirements for an institution as a whole relating to Standard 10 are specified under the headings of: 10.1 Institutional Research Policies 10.2 Teaching staff and Student Involvement in Research 10.3 Commercialization of Research 10.4 Research Facilities and Equipment.</p>	<p>Specific requirements for a particular program relating to Standard 10 are specified under the headings of: 10.1 Teaching Staff and Student Involvement in Research 10.2 Research Facilities and Equipment</p>

Evidence and Performance Indicators

Evidence about the institution’s research strategies can be obtained from documents such as a research development plan, faculty evaluation and promotion criteria, policies on commercialisation of research and ownership of intellectual property and the extent of cooperation with industry and other institutions. Further evidence can be obtained by consideration of agreements for cooperative research or shared use of major equipment items. Faculty and student surveys can provide evidence about the adequacy of provisions for research facilities and equipment.

Performance indicators for research are commonly based on statistics on the volume of research publications per faculty member, the proportions of research-active faculty (a term that needs to be defined) and numbers of research citations, with these figures compared with those of other comparable institutions. Although it may be more difficult to quantify, institutions with a commitment to community service or research contributions may wish to include indicators of the extent to which research and scholarly activities are translated into applications within the academic or professional field concerned.

Standard 11: Relationships with the Community

Institutional Standard	Program Standard
<p>Contributing to the community must be recognized as an important institutional responsibility. Facilities and services must be made available to assist with community developments, teaching and other staff must be encouraged to be involved in the community and information about the institution and its activities made known to the community through public media</p>	<p>Significant and appropriate contributions should be made to the community within which the institution is established drawing on the knowledge and experience of staff and the needs of the community for that expertise. Community contributions should include both activities initiated and carried out by individuals and more formal programs of assistance</p>

and other appropriate mechanisms. Community perceptions of the institution must be monitored and appropriate strategies adopted to improve understanding and enhance its reputation.	arranged by the institution or by program administrators. Activities should be documented and made known in the institution and the community, and staff contributions appropriately recognized within the institution.
Specific requirements for an institution as a whole relating to Standard 4 are specified under the headings of: 11.1 Institutional Policies on Community Relationships 11.2 Interactions With the Community 11.3 Institutional Reputation	Specific requirements for a program undergoing a review relating to Standard 4 are specified under the headings of: 11.1 Policies on Community Relationships 11.2 Interactions With the Community

Evidence and Performance Indicators

Evidence about quality of community relationships can be obtained from documents describing policies on service to the community, criteria for faculty evaluation that include community contributions, and guidelines and processes for community media releases and other public comments on behalf of the institution. Reports on community relationships that include such matters as community use of institutional facilities, participation of staff on community committees or development projects, and interactions with schools and other agencies can provide relevant information. Community views about the quality of the institution and its standing as a respected member of the community can be obtained from surveys.

A number of these forms of evidence include ratings that can be used directly as performance indicators. However in this area in particular the mission of the institution and the community within which it operates are important in deciding what aspects of performance should be closely monitored.

2.4 Requirements for a University

There are additional requirements for the approval and accreditation of a university before an institution can operate with that title. These relate to the breadth of program offerings, the levels of programs offered, the extent of involvement in research, the existence of sustained scholarly activity by faculty at all levels in the institution, and the size of an institution considered necessary to sustain these activities at a viable level. The requirements stated here are a minimum rather than a desirable level of performance. It is expected that an established university would have substantially higher levels of research activity and post graduate research than is stated here and would benchmark its performance in research and post graduate studies against highly regarded international universities. .

Standard

The institution must be committed to the creation, transmission and application of knowledge through research and scholarly activity and the development of highly skilled professionals and scholars in a number of fields through undergraduate and postgraduate academic, professional and research programs.

Good Practice in a University

Good practice in relation to the activities of a university is reflected in a number of the standards in the *Standards for Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education Institutions* that relate to the requirements for learning and support for scholarship and research appropriate for the programs offered. For universities these provisions will take account of the special requirements for research and program provision expected of such an institution.

Particular attention is drawn to the descriptions for:

Learning and Teaching
Learning Resources
Equipment and Facilities;
Research.

Minimum specific requirements are:

Breadth of Programs

Programs offered in at least three broad fields of learning¹ with a minimum of 10% of the institution's students enrolled in programs in each of the three fields.

Level of Programs Offered

Undergraduate programs should be provided in at least three fields of learning. At postgraduate levels programs should be offered up to the level of doctorates in at least one of those fields and at least masters degrees in a second. At least 5 % of students must be enrolled in higher degree programs. At least 2.5% must be enrolled in research degrees.

Involvement in Research

At least 2.5% of the annual operating budget of the institution (excluding student stipends) must be spent on support for or conduct of research. This amount can include special research grants, the institution's share of joint research and development projects and the provision of support for specialized research equipment for staff and postgraduate student research. However it does not include funding for the teaching of postgraduate research or other programs, or general program administration.

Sustained Scholarly Activity

Teaching faculty at all levels in the institution should be involved in scholarly activities that ensure familiarity with the latest developments in their field and include exposure to those developments in their teaching. Faculty who are teaching at postgraduate level are expected to be qualified at doctoral level and to be active scholars and researchers as evidenced by recent refereed publications. Where professional programs are offered at postgraduate level an alternative to doctoral qualifications for an appropriate proportion of teaching faculty may be extensive, successful, and recent experience in the field concerned.

Size of Institution

The minimum size of a university expressed in terms of student enrolments is 2000 equivalent full time students in higher education award programs. This number does not include students enrolled in foundation or preparatory programs, or in other non-award courses.

Evidence and Performance Indicators

Evidence about the quality of a university can be obtained from a range of sources relating to the special requirements for such an institution. General information should include statistical data on enrolments, progression rates, graduation rates, responses to surveys of graduates and employers as for other higher education institutions. Information on the extent and impact of scholarship and research could be provided through numbers and rates of publication in refereed research publications, citations in research journals, rates

For the purposes of this requirement the following are considered broad fields of learning. 1. Fine and Performing Arts, 2. Humanities and Religious Studies, 3. Education, 4. Social Sciences, 5. Business and Management, 6. Law, 7. Science, 8. Computer Science, 9. Engineering Manufacturing and Construction, 10. Agriculture and Related Studies, 11. Health Sciences, 12. Personal and Community Services. (Classification subject to review)

of publication of postgraduate student research and numbers of patents. For an established university a useful source of evidence would be inclusion and position in international rankings of universities.

For many of these items appropriate performance indicators are similar to those for other institutions and relate to all of the standards described earlier. However it is important for any university to include among the indicators it uses matters that relate to these special requirements, including the level of involvement of faculty in scholarly and research activities, the proportions of students involved in post graduate and research programs, and the level of research output for the institution as a whole.

Concepts and Terminology for Use in Accreditation and Quality Assurance in Saudi Arabia

To assist in achieving common understanding of important concepts and terms used in the system of accreditation and quality assurance, the NCAAA has determined that for its purposes the terms identified below will have the meanings described. The definitions are shown in italics, followed by explanatory notes.

Accountability

The responsibility of an individual, an institution or an organization to another authority for his or her, or its activities.

In post secondary education an institution is usually “accountable” and must provide reports to a government or government agency that provides it with funds or approves its establishment. Within an institution faculty and staff are “accountable” to senior management and senior management in turn is responsible to a Board or Council.

In systems of accreditation and quality assurance there is usually a separation of the organizations responsible for institutional accountability and those responsible for independent quality assessment.

Accreditation

Formal certification by a recognised authority that a program or an institution meets required standards.

To be accredited, institutions or programs must comply with generally expected standards of good practice. The Commission has defined the standards it will apply in two documents, *Standards for Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education Institutions* and *Standards for Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education Programs*. Reference is also made to several other documents including a *National Qualifications Framework* that describes expected general standards of learning outcomes in four domains of learning and a statement showing the application of these standards to distance education programs. Standards for technical training are in preparation. These statements are expressed in general terms applicable to all fields of study. It is also necessary for programs to meet requirements for professional practice in many professional fields. Details of these requirements are not yet available from the Commission. Until they are available institutions are expected to give consideration to the requirements of specialized international accreditors in the field of study concerned. Accreditation may be given initially on a provisional basis, and this will normally be done when plans for a new program or institution are considered. After a program has been in operation for sufficient time for the first group of students to complete their program a review will be conducted, the provisional designation may be removed and the program given full accreditation. Accreditation will normally be valid for a period of five years after which programs will need to be reviewed for reaccreditation on a five yearly basis.

In the quality assurance systems of different countries there are several different forms of accreditation. See descriptions of institutional accreditation, program accreditation, professional accreditation, provisional accreditation, and international accreditation.

Assessment

A process of measuring performance in relation to established standards or criteria

Assessment is commonly applied in two different contexts: the assessment of students performance on tests or examinations or other assigned tasks in order to measure their achievement of intended learning outcomes; and the process of measuring the quality of performance of elements within an educational institution.

In the second of these senses the term is used for assessment of quality of teaching, the effectiveness of a program or a course in achieving its objectives, or the effectiveness of many other elements of an institution's operations. Standards of performance for the purposes of these assessments can be derived from different sources, but from the perspective of the Commission in carrying out its accreditation and approval responsibilities the standards are defined in the documents it has approved for these purposes, particularly the *National Qualifications Framework* and the *Standards for Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions*.

Audit

An independent review to verify that reports represent a true and correct record of activity, and that recognized standards have been met.

The term "audit" is widely used for financial audits conducted by an independent authority to certify the accuracy of financial reports and compliance with accounting standards.

In post secondary quality systems the term is used for external independent reviews of an institution's quality and the processes of quality assurance it has established. These reviews are principally based on reports of self-studies carried out by an institution, and, like financial audits, verify the conclusions of those self studies. Although standards of good practice are considered in this process, in a quality audit it is customary to give particular attention to the objectives established by an institution and to report on whether the processes used in an institution are effective in achieving those objectives.

Benchmarks

Points of comparison or levels of performance used for establishing objectives and evaluating performance.

Benchmarks may be current levels of performance at an institution (for example, the current completion rate for students in business studies), standards established by an external agency, or standards of performance at another institution or group of institutions selected for comparison. (For example, the number of research publications per full time academic staff member at the University of xxxxx). An institution may select another institution similar to itself as a benchmark against which it can compare the quality of its work, or particular parts of an institution against which equivalent groups within their own institution can be compared. It is usually considered desirable in making these comparisons to use indicators (such as those noted above) that can be stated in specific terms.

Blended Learning

A program in which students are taught through a combination of regular on campus instruction and distance education or packaged materials.

Arrangements can be made for blended modes of instruction in a variety of ways including a regular on campus course in which sections of the course are taught using packaged self contained materials, or a program in which some courses are taught using distance education methodology and some through on campus lectures, tutorials of other face to face methodology. In situations where blended approaches are used appropriate forms of student assistance and support must be provided to support students learning in both forms of instruction.

Credits

Points or hours allocated by an institution to specify the work requirements, or the volume or amount of learning expected for a unit, subject or program of study.

It is common practice to assign a number of credits to units or courses within a program and to specify a number of credits for a total program. Credits may be associated with program inputs such as hours of instruction, laboratory work, or expectations for time spent in self-directed study. The term "credit hours" is used in these systems based on formulae that give differing levels of recognition for formal instruction, laboratory or tutorial participation, and practical work. In some other systems the term "credit points" is used for the notional amount of learning achieved by an average learner over a period of time. The number of credits allocated for a particular amount of work or

learning varies between countries. For example some countries use the American based Carnegie credit hour system which allocates 30 credit hours for the amount of academic work normally expected in a full time academic year of study at undergraduate level. Some other countries use 120 points for an equivalent volume of learning. Common practice in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is to use 30 credit hours (or slightly more depending on the number of contact hours and mode of instruction) for the work expected in an academic year.

Distance Education

A mode of teaching and learning in which students undertake a major proportion of their studies on an individual basis at a location or locations away from a campus of an institution.

Student learning may be supported by print or electronic materials, and a variety of mechanisms are sometimes used for interaction between students, through the internet, video or radio linkages, or periodic study group activities in appropriate locations. Similarly interaction with faculty may take a variety of forms used to provide for

A distance education institution is one that offers all its programs by distance education (whether through print-based materials or through electronic learning or a combination of both) to students who do not attend classes on campus, but instead study in their own locations, often at a time of their own choosing. Where combinations of distance education processes or packaged self contained materials are used within courses, or for different courses within a program, the terms blended learning or dual mode instruction are frequently used to describe what is done. Dual mode institutions are ones that offer a combination of distance education and campus based programs.

Domains of Learning

Broad categories of types of learning expected in a program of study.

Descriptions of the knowledge and skill students are expected to gain in a program are grouped into broad categories called domains. Although the number and titles for these groupings vary, domains commonly include five to seven broad categories that involve different types of learning and strategies for teaching and assessment of learning in those categories. The domains used in the higher education component of the *National Qualifications Framework* for Saudi Arabia are Knowledge, (the ability to recall and present information), Cognitive Skills (the ability to apply concepts and principles in thinking and problem solving), Interpersonal Skills and Responsibility, (the ability to work effectively in groups, exercise leadership, and take responsibility for their own independent learning, and the ethical and moral development that is associated with these abilities), and Communication, Information Technology and Numerical Skills (including basic mathematical and communication skills and ability to use communications technology). Psychomotor skills are very important in some fields of study and are considered as an additional domain where relevant to the program concerned.

Dual Mode Institution

Dual mode institutions are institutions that offer some programs to students through distance education and some through traditional campus based instruction.

It is increasingly common for institutions to use electronic materials and learning packages as supplements to the methods of instruction in campus based studies and these may take a variety of forms. Where this is done the approach may have many similarities to distance education methodology. However the terms “dual mode” is normally used for institutions that offer both off campus distance education programs and campus based instruction.

Evaluation

The process of assessing and assigning value to a facility or activity.

The term evaluation is sometimes used interchangeably with assessment but it has a slightly different meaning associated with judgments about the quality or value of the matter being considered. The “valuing” component of consideration may be more open ended and interpretive than an assessment which is normally associated with measurement of performance in relation to fixed and predetermined standards.

External Quality Assurance

Processes of review and evaluation of institutions and their programmes and activities by an independent external agency.

External quality assurance normally involves periodic, independent peer reviews based on reports of internal self-studies and designed for the dual purposes of assessing quality and validating the conclusions of internal studies.

External quality assessments are usually more selective than internal reviews, and may pay particular attention to student learning outcomes and other matters identified as policy priorities by the institution, or by the government or government to which the institution is responsible. External quality assurance may involve consideration of selected key performance indicators to be used in reviews on a national basis.

Goals or Aims

General statements of desired developments, which apply a mission to broad areas of activity and provide a guide for establishing objectives and detailed planning.

Goals or aims fall between mission, which defines a broad overall purpose, and specific objectives established as targets for achievement and which usually describe specific measurable outcomes by a specified time. They may relate to any aspect of an institution's activities.

Inputs

The resources available to and used by an institution to provide its programs.

Inputs include financial resources, facilities and equipment, faculty, and students. Indicators of quality of faculty as an input could include the number of faculty and their levels of qualifications and staff/student ratios. Indicators of equipment as an input could include such things as the ratio of computer terminals to students, or proportions of down time due to equipment malfunction.

Until recently quality assurance systems have relied heavily on input indicators as measures of quality, using things such as financial resources, qualifications of faculty, extent of library collections and availability of computer equipment. However although these are still important as enabling provisions, emphasis has shifted towards outcome measures relating to the quality of research and student learning outcomes.

Institutional Approval

The approval of an institution based on recognition that its resources, processes and learning outcomes meet required standards for an institution of its type and the level of its programs.

Approval of an institution will normally specify the fields of study the institution is able to offer and the levels at which that can be done. The final license issued to permit the institution to operate will specify the levels and range of programs it is permitted to offer. For example a college may be accredited to offer programs in business studies and engineering up to the level of bachelor, and in applied science up to the level of diploma. A university focusing on those particular fields may be approved to offer programs up to doctoral level in science, engineering and business and up to masters level in social sciences.

Institutional approval indicates that an institution is considered to have the capacity to offer programs in designated fields of study up to the level specified. The final license will formally specify what it is authorized to do. Each program offered within those limits must be accredited, to ensure that the program meets required standards.

Internal Quality Assurance

Processes of quality assurance carried out within and by or for a higher education institution.

Internal quality assurance includes not only the processes of monitoring and review that an institution manages itself, but also its use on its own initiative of outside people from other institutions, from industry or the professions, or from other accreditation or quality assurance agencies to review and provide advice on its programs and activities. Internal quality assurance is normally comprehensive, dealing with inputs, processes and outcomes, with all areas of an institution's activities, and with faculty, staff and students in all parts of the institution.

International Accreditation

Accreditation of an institution or of its programs by an accreditation agency established in another country.

A number of institutions have arranged for evaluation and accreditation of their colleges or programs by international accrediting agencies as part of their quality assurance arrangements. This has proved valuable in stimulating rigorous internal reviews and enhancing quality, and in establishing their reputation. These activities are not required as part of the accreditation and quality assurance system in Saudi Arabia, but when they are carried out they are considered part of the institution's internal quality assurance and review processes, and the work done and conclusions reached will be considered and taken into account during the reviews conducted by the Commission.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

Selected performance indicators regarded as particularly important for the purpose of assessing performance.

An institution may identify a short list of KPIs that it regards as particularly important in assessing performance, and require evidence on those KPIs from a number of sections of the institution in addition to any others that different groups may choose for their own purposes. Similarly, a national quality agency such as the Commission may identify a small list of KPIs reflecting national issues or policy objectives for use by all institutions.

Learning Outcomes

The learning that results from participation in a course or program.

The term learning outcomes is commonly used to refer to the learning that results from a course or program undertaken by students. Learning outcomes are the result of the teaching process. Reference is often made to *Intended Learning Outcomes* to mean the learning objectives a course or program is designed to develop.

The NCAAA has identified broad categories or types of learning outcomes in five groups or domains, knowledge, cognitive skills, interpersonal skills and responsibility, communication, IT and numerical skills, and psychomotor skills, and has described in general terms the level of knowledge and skill expected for different qualifications. There are differences in how these learning outcomes are developed by students and an important aspect of program and course planning is to plan for teaching processes and forms of assessment that will be appropriate for these different types of intended learning outcomes

Level

The intellectual standard and complexity of learning expected as students progress through a program of study.

The degree of difficulty or complexity of learning increases as students advance through a program and these increases are defined by descriptions of the learning outcomes that are expected. Levels may be defined for years of study—first year, second year, third year, and so on, or for academic awards such as a diploma, bachelor, master, and doctor.

License

Formal approval, normally by a government or a government agency, to operate or carry out certain activities.

A license may be given to an institution, formally authorizing it to commence operation and offer programs in fields and at levels specified in the license. If the license is revoked the institution must cease to operate. A different type

of license may also be given to individuals permitting them to engage in certain activities. A license may be granted to individuals who have completed professional programs and who wish to practice in that profession.

Licensing and accreditation are closely linked. The granting of a license for an institution to operate normally follows or is conditional on assessment of its quality through an approval and accreditation process. The granting of a license for a person to practice in a profession normally follows accreditation of the program that such a person has completed.

Major Change in a Program

A major change in a program is one that affects the basis for its accreditation.

It is expected that adjustments will be required in programs and courses from time to time in response to changing circumstances and results of course and program evaluations. Such changes are highly desirable to ensure that programs are to be kept up to date. However if there is a major change to an accredited program it could affect the program's accreditation status and any such change should be approved by an institutions senior academic committee and notified to the Commission at least one full semester before it is introduced. The Commission can then assess the impact of the change on accreditation. Examples of major changes would be the addition or deletion of a major track within a program, (eg. accounting or international finance majors within a commerce or business degree), the addition or deletion of a core course (eg. mathematics in an engineering degree), a change in title that implied a new or different field of study or qualification in a different profession, re-orientation or development of a program to prepare students for a different occupation or profession, a change in the length of a program, or a new exit point within a longer program (eg. the granting of a diploma within a bachelors degree program) The Commission should also be notified if a succession of minor programs has a cumulative effect that is equivalent to a major change as described above..

Mission

A brief general statement setting out the principal policy objectives for development of an institution.

While stated in general terms a mission statement should be sufficiently precise to serve as a guide to planning and decision making at all levels of the organization, and should actually be used as a basis for decision making. (For example, "To develop an international reputation for the quality of applied research and technology transfer, and for the creativity and entrepreneurial skill of graduates.")

Mode of Instruction

The form of instruction such as lecture, tutorial, laboratory, individual assignment etc.

Organization for instruction is normally based on planned modes of instruction with credit hour allocations based on the amount of contact time in each of these modes. Examples are lectures, tutorials, or laboratories. The term should not be confused with teaching strategies which are the techniques used by an instructor operating within one or more of those modes to present information, develop problem solving skills or habits of responsibility. Different strategies can be incorporated into various modes of instruction as part of educational planning to develop desired learning outcomes.

Objectives

Specific statements that apply the mission and goals to particular areas of activity and indicate intended results.

Desirably objectives should be stated in specific measurable terms setting out intended levels of performance that are to be achieved within stated time periods. Objectives may relate to intended learning outcomes and may be referred to as learning, course or program objectives. Objectives may also be set for program or institutional developments not necessarily related to learning outcomes. Objectives may be expressed as specific performance levels on indicators. (For example, "That by 2008, 80% of final year undergraduate students will have achieved a

score of at least xxxx on xxxx (English language test.) Objectives may be criterion referenced (based on defined levels of performance) or norm referenced (based on comparisons of performance with other groups or institutions).

Outcomes

The results of teaching, learning and research processes of an institution.

This term is usually used for qualitative descriptions of what is produced by an institution or in a program as a result of its processes. For example, reference to student learning outcomes normally means the quality of their learning and what they are able to do as a result of completing the programs in which they were enrolled. Similarly research outcomes usually relate to the quality and impact of research rather than simply a count of numbers of publications or research projects completed.

Outputs

The products of an institutions activities, normally expressed in quantitative terms.

Outputs usually refer to quantitative measures of what is produced by an institution, such as the number of graduates or the number of faculty research publications.

Partner Institution

An institution with which a higher education institution has established a formal, contractual relationship for provision of services.

The exact nature of partnership arrangements can vary. In some cases a partnership may simply involve provision of a number of support services to a local institution. In others arrangements are made for the academic awards of the partner institution to be granted for studies undertaken in a local institution under supervision. However regardless of whether the awards are granted by a local institution or by an overseas provider, the requirements for operating an institution or teaching a program in Saudi Arabia must be fully met.

Peer Review

Evaluation and report on a program, institution or part of an institution by expert evaluators from similar institutions or professions who are specialists in the field concerned or with the organization and management of higher education institutions.

An important element in this concept is that the evaluators are peers, with experience with similar programs or institutions, who understand the nature, purposes and challenges faced by an institution. It is important that their understanding is recognized by the institution under review. It is also essential that those involved be completely independent of the institution being reviewed so there is no real or perceived conflict of interest, carefully trained for their task and committed to assisting in improvement. They should be sensitive to the mission and objectives of the institution and programs involved and familiar with international standards for the type of program or institution under review.

Performance Indicators

Specific (and normally pre-selected) forms of evidence used by an institution or other agency to provide evidence about quality of performance.

Performance indicators should be as specific and as directly related as possible to the aims and objectives to which they relate. However direct measures of some of the most important objectives such as quality of students' learning are sometimes difficult to find. Consequently indirect evidence such as student evaluations of programs, employment outcomes, and employer surveys must sometimes be used. Since indirect indicators can be subject to other influences it is usual to use several different but related indicators for important objectives, and to interpret these using some independent system to verify the interpretations. The term triangulation is sometimes used where

several indicators are used to provide evidence about an objective from different points of view. For example evidence about quality of faculty could be obtained from several indicators such as levels of qualifications, research output, and student ratings of teaching effectiveness.

Processes

The administrative arrangements, policies, and organizational procedures carried out by an institution in planning, reviewing and delivering its programs.

Processes are what is done in an institution to use the inputs available to it to produce its outputs and outcomes. The term includes teaching processes, assessment procedures, and processes for managing research and community activities as well as a wide range of other activities that have direct or indirect impact on educational programs.

Professional Accreditation

The accreditation of a program to prepare students for a profession, certifying that it develops the knowledge and skills needed to practice in the profession concerned at the standard of proficiency required.

Professional accreditation is designed to ensure that in addition to meeting general academic standards, programs develop the specific knowledge and skill to practice the profession concerned in the community. In most countries this applies in professional fields such as medicine and other health-related fields, engineering, accounting, psychology, law and many others. In some countries this form of specialized professional accreditation may be given by professional associations recognized by the government for this purpose, or by government agencies.

This form of accreditation differs from academic accreditation, which certifies that a program meets academic standards and conforms to requirements of a qualifications framework. In practice, both academic and professional accreditation are normally required for professional fields although the two may be combined in a single accreditation process.

Program

A coherent program of study followed by students in an academic field or leading to a professional qualification, the successful completion of which qualifies them for an academic award.

A program is regarded as an integrated package of courses and activities leading to a qualification, but the distinction between what is regarded as a single program or a cluster of related programs is difficult to define and may be best explained through examples.

A bachelors degree program to prepare a student as a civil engineer would be regarded as a different program from one to prepare a mechanical engineer, even though there may be some courses that are common to both. Similarly, if a student had completed the bachelors degree program and wished to take a post graduate program leading to a masters degree or a doctorate in the same general field, that would be regarded as a separate program. The test in these examples relates to there being a qualification that is regarded as being complete in itself, and in the case of a professional program, qualifying the person who has taken the program for professional practice in the field. The distinction does not necessarily relate to organization of an institution or college into departments. In the particular example given it is likely that a civil engineering department would offer both the undergraduate and the postgraduate programs. It would also be possible if an institution wished to organize itself in that way for a single department to offer programs in both civil and mechanical engineering.

The title of an academic award is not necessarily a useful guide to what should be regarded as a program. For example general titles such as Bachelor of Arts, or Business, or Science, could include many different programs. In an Arts degree there could be programs in history and or social sciences, in psychology, in social work, or many others. A Business degree could include separate programs for accountants, for economists, or for management and administration, and these would be different programs leading to quite different occupational skills.

While the programs that have been used in these examples should be regarded as separate entities, and should be accredited as such, groups of related programs can be considered together in the accreditation process provided it is possible for external review panels to include the necessary expertise.

Program Accreditation.

Accreditation of a program of study certifying that it meets standards required for the delivery of a program in that field at the level concerned.

Accreditation of a programs involves a judgment that the quality and standards are appropriate for the award to which it leads. The assessment of standards takes into account both the nature of teaching and learning in different fields of study, and the level, complexity, and quantity of learning required for the award. The general standards of learning outcomes for programs that lead to awards such as bachelor, master or doctor are defined in the *National Qualifications Framework* and must be met in all programs leading to these awards, regardless of the type of institution offering the program. In addition to meeting the requirements of the Framework a program must meet the standards set out in “Standards for Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Higher Education Programs”, and in a professional program must provide the particular knowledge and skill required for practice in the field concerned.

Provisional Accreditation

Accreditation granted on a provisional or temporary basis for a new institution or program after assessment of plans for development.

For a new institution or program provisional accreditation may be given on the basis of detailed plans. This allows the institution to start operating, or to teach the program, with reasonable confidence that if the plans are implemented as proposed accreditation is likely to be granted. This process means that students can rely on the quality of the institution and of the provisionally accredited program when it is first introduced. The actions of the institution during this preliminary stage are monitored and reports on progress must be provided. Full accreditation must be applied for when the first group of students have completed their programs. If the plans are not implemented at an acceptable level of quality within the time specified the provisional accreditation will lapse and the license to operate or offer the program will be revoked.

Qualifications Framework

A document setting out the nature, amount, and levels or standards of learning required for academic or technical awards.

Qualifications frameworks specify increasing levels of mastery of knowledge and skill that are required for academic, vocational or technical awards.

Learning expectations are described in broad areas or domains, such as knowledge and the ability to recall information, cognitive skills such as the mastery of concepts, principles and theories and ability to apply them in problem solving and critical thinking, skills in communication and information technology, capacity for self directed learning, and ability to work effectively and constructively in group situations. Qualifications frameworks may also incorporate student attributes relating to values and cultural awareness that reflect national culture and educational policy.

In many cases the broadly defined frameworks are associated with more detailed specification of the particular knowledge and skill required for specific professional fields or disciplines of knowledge. These may be used as basic reference points for programs leading to professional accreditation and for the registration or licensing of graduates to practice in professional fields such as medicine, engineering, accounting, law, or education.

Quality

The value, worth, or standard of an institution or program in relation to generally accepted standards for an institution or program of its type.

Assessments of quality are generally based on performance in relation to accepted standards of good practice, but also “fitness for purpose” which recognizes that there are differing requirements for different types of institution or program, and important differences in mission that are relevant to consideration of an institutions quality. Consideration is also given to “fitness of purpose” to take account of the appropriateness of the mission of an institution for the environment within which it operates.

The term “quality” is a relative one comparable to “value”, “worth” or “standard” in other contexts. To be of use in planning and evaluation in post secondary education the term should be related to some defined characteristics, and to some levels or benchmarks of performance.

When used as a general term without specification of any particular characteristics of the system (*for example as in “the quality of higher education” or “the quality of an institution”*) it will be taken to refer to a range of elements including but not limited to the level of student achievement, the ability and qualifications of faculty, the standard of facilities and equipment, the effectiveness of teaching, planning and administrative processes, and the relevance of programs. In the system of quality assurance and accreditation in Saudi Arabia reference in assessing quality should be made to the standards identified by the NCAAA in eleven areas of activity.

In any specific situation some aspects of performance may be of relatively high quality and others of relatively low quality, and the balance may depend on the mission and priorities of an institution. Consequently an overall assessment must take account of value judgements about the selection and relative importance of characteristics for consideration, and understanding of what should be regarded as good practice in relation to each of them.

“Quality” is sometimes defined by quality agencies as meaning the single dimension of “fitness for purpose”, an approach that gives particular prominence to the importance of diversity between institutions in mission and objectives. Under this definition the standard of performance is meant to be subsumed within the concept of fitness for the purposes (or mission and objectives) defined by institutions. This definition is sometimes criticised by others who believe it gives inadequate consideration to standards of performance.

Because of potential confusion arising from differing interpretations and a need for clear guidance for institutions about criteria for evaluations of quality, most quality agencies make specific reference to “general criteria of good practice” in defining criteria for evaluation, and provide guidelines or reference documents that spell out matters for consideration and descriptions of what is regarded as good practice.

Quality Assurance

Processes of assessment, evaluation and follow-up relating to quality of performance, which serve two distinct purposes:

- (a) To ensure that desired levels of quality are maintained and improved; and*
- (b) To assure stakeholders that quality is being maintained at levels comparable to good practice in highly regarded institutions elsewhere in the world.*

Stakeholders in this context include students, the government and the wider community, including parents, professional associations and industry.

Quality assurance normally involves both internal and external processes. Mechanisms for quality assurance are expected within each institution on a continuing basis as part of normal program provision and usually involve some external input. However the public credibility of claims of quality requires periodic external validation by an independent authority, and the independent external advice is also an important element in strategies for improvement.

Quality Improvement

Changes in inputs, processes and outcomes that improve the quality of performance, usually across the whole range of an institution's activities. The term may be used to describe the strategies used by an institution or other organization to bring about these changes and verify their results.

While principal responsibility for quality improvement necessarily rests with an institution delivering programmes, actions taken by an outside authority through support services, incentives, or regulations may assist in a number of ways, and may also be described as quality improvement strategies. The term “quality enhancement” used in some quality assurance systems is considered to have the same meaning as “quality Improvement”.

Responsible Ministry

The Ministry responsible for the establishment, regulation, or supervision of a higher education institution.

A number of different Ministries have responsibility for postsecondary institutions in their field of activity, and have established regulations for their activities. They may provide funding support, assist with quality improvement, and normally have systems for accountability including annual reporting arrangements. In its assessments of quality for purposes of accreditation and quality assurance, the Commission considers both the activities of the institutions and the results of their interactions with the responsible Ministry with which they are involved.

Substantial Equivalence

A judgement that a unit, subject or other component of a program is equal in quality and equivalent in scope to one offered elsewhere.

This concept is particularly important when consideration is being given to allocation of credit for studies done at another institution, either within the country or elsewhere. The details of what is taught and the approach taken in teaching should vary according to the needs and background of different groups of students and the environment in which they live. Adaptations to meet these needs should not become a barrier to recognition for credit provided essential skills and understandings are developed and standards maintained.

Student Attributes

Special characteristics of students developed as a result of the particular policies and teaching strategies of an institution.

The development of particular student attributes is often an important part of the mission of an institution. For example an institution may adopt procedures to ensure students are particularly self-reliant, more creative and entrepreneurial, or more effective than would normally be the case in group situations. The term is normally reserved for attitudes, skills, habits of behaviour or personality characteristics that are exhibited in students' behaviour in outside situations rather than for purely academic learning outcomes which may refer to abilities rather than actual behaviour.

Teaching Strategies

The strategies used by an instructor to develop student learning.

Teaching strategies are the specific techniques used to develop student learning in various domains to develop student learning. Strategies may include, for example, question sequences to develop or apply concepts to new situations, value clarification, use of advance organizers to assist with memorization and recall of information, case studies, group problem solving tasks, simulations, role playing and so on. The term should not be confused with “modes of instruction”, a term used to describe the form of organization for teaching or the delivery of training, such as lecture, tutorial, or laboratory.

Value-Adding

The process of adding value (normally applied to the value of students knowledge and skill) as a result of the teaching and learning activities of an institution or program.

The general level of knowledge and skill of students entering programs can vary widely between institutions. Consequently the concept of “value-adding” is important in considering the contribution an institution makes to students’ learning. While an important concept in considering the quality of an institution’s activities, it is difficult to apply objectively since documenting the extent of “value-added” depends on accurate measures of incoming knowledge and skill and valid attribution of causes of growth.