

Constructing and Developing Higher Studies Programs (Quality Assurance)

Introduction

Guidelines for Constructing and Developing Higher Studies Programs

Preface

The consistency of higher studies programs with what is internationally accredited and what suits the requirements of the community and business market is an important issue. Having criteria for preparing and developing higher studies programs consistent with the standards of the National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Assessment (NCAAA) is a significant matter. These programs may benefit from international institutions in the field of study in order to apply what is known and internationally used.

These standards will develop higher studies programs, contribute in the organization of the staff's tasks and specialized councils in developing, modifying and accrediting the programs. Moreover, these clear procedures help in the programs assessment process in and outside the institution. Hence, the committee established major outlines of comprehensive procedures for developing higher studies programs to help those departments that intend to propose new programs or modify old ones. This makes these two documents a guide and reference for developing , accrediting and evaluating programs.

Nevertheless each program has its privacy imposed by the major and the experiences of the department which presented this program. These criteria and instructions point out the significance of higher studies committees in the department and college. These committees are to coordinate and follow up the affairs of the programs, and provide the main requirements of faculty, administrative and technical staff that provide the program as well as the students who are targeted by these programs.

May God Guide Us

Standards

Guiding Standards for Constructing, Developing, and Establishing Higher Studies Programs

Standard 1: Vision, Mission and Objectives

The vision and mission of the program must be consistent with that for the university. And this should be the basis on which the objectives of the program must be defined and achieved.

1.1. Appropriateness of the Mission:

- The vision and mission of the program should be consistent with that of the institution.
- The vision and mission should be flexible and achievable according to the resources of the program (department).
- The vision and mission of the program should achieve the community needs, and be consistent with the cultural and economic requirements of the Kingdom.

1.2. Significance of the Vision and Mission:

The vision and mission statement must be

- specific and useful in decision-making covering all program activities.
- sufficiently clear to provide criteria for evaluation of level of achievement.
- formally approved by the institution, and periodically reviewed according to changing circumstances.

1.3. Application of Mission:

- The mission must be used as a basis for the program's strategic plans over specific period of time.
- The mission must be known and supported by department staff (program staff).
- The mission must be used to provide clear criteria for construction of program plans.

1.4. Objectives Significance, and their Relation to Vision and Mission:

- The objectives must be consistent with the development of the program, and support the vision and mission.
- The objectives must be clearly stated and contribute in effective planning consistent with the program mission.
- The objectives must be reviewed periodically and modified if necessary in response to change in the program.

Standard 2: Management and Planning:

Program management should reflect clearly the balance between the program executants and the institution higher management to give complete flexibility for the needs of the market. Planning for the construction of the program and achieving its objectives must include students, faculty, representatives of private sectors, and specialists.

2.1. Management:

- The program manger (Head of department or other) should be assigned by the department. His/her responsibility should be clear and within the limit of authority given to the department.
- Program managers should have sufficient authority to ensure the staff's appliance of required procedures.
- Opportunity should be provided to all faculty to present their opinion and contribute in the construction of the program.

2.2. Planning:

- Planning should be strategic, taking into consideration demands of the market. Planning process should involve faculty, higher studies students and government or private stakeholders.
- Program planning should clarify program and course specifications that clearly identify the contribution of each course to the total program.
- Program plans should be clear to all concerned, with impacts and requirements for different contributors made clear. This provides the program with sufficient flexibility for modification according to community requirements.

2.3. Internal Policies and Regulations:

- There should be terms of reference and operating procedures for specialized committees and councils of higher studies.
- Procedures, policies and regulations should be readily accessible to all who need them and are affected by them, including new members of faculty and staff.
- Decisions made by committee members on academic matters should be recorded and referred to as a guide for future decisions.

- There should be evidence or regulations governing the construction of higher studies programs.

Standard 3: Quality Assurance and Improvement:

This standard aims at the necessity of the commitment of the teaching faculty for self improvement in accordance with the quality assurance of the program.

3.1. Commitment to Quality Improvement in the Programs

- Self evaluation should be taken as a basic step in quality assurance.
- Self evaluation should be based on evidence, linked to appropriate standards, with predetermined indicators.
- All faculty and staff should participate in program self-assessment and improvement within a framework to encourage innovation and creativity.
- Management should encourage learning from mistakes to improve performance in all levels.

3.2. Scope of Quality Assurance Processes:

- Principle of quality assurance should be applied on all aspects of the program, including services provided, faculty and staff, and resources from in and outside the institution.
- There should be consistent quality evaluation, and reports on the program's level of performance and its components, like courses, should be provided.
- Quality assessment should not be limited to outcomes and processes, but should give more attention to students' scientific performance.
- Quality assessment should cover both routine activities and strategic objectives.
- Assessment should include achievement of quality standards and continuing improvement in performance.

3.3. Management of Quality Assurance Processes:

- Quality assurance processes should be fully integrated into routine planning of the program and its outcomes.
- Quality assurance processes should make use of standard basic form and other survey instruments, as well as gathering any special information required for the program.
- Responsibility should be assigned to a member of the faculty, participating in the program, for the management of quality assurance processes.

3.4. Use of Indicators and Benchmarks:

- Performance indicators should be provided regularly by the institution.

- Benchmarks for comparing quality with previous performance and for comparisons with similar programs elsewhere should be used in evaluations.
- The format for indicators should be consistent with those used across the institution.
- Self-evaluation of quality assurance should be based on several sources of evidence including feedback through user surveys and opinions of stakeholders such as faculty, higher studies students and staff.

Standard 4: Learning and Teaching:

Students learning outcomes must be clearly specified, and consistent with the 'National Qualifications Framework' and requirements for employment.

4.1. Student Learning Outcomes:

- Relevant academic and professional advice should be considered when defining learning outcomes.
- Intended learning outcomes should be consistent with the 'National Qualifications Framework'.
- Programs leading to professional qualifications should develop learning outcomes that meet requirements for professional practice in and outside Saudi Arabia.
- Program evaluation and the extent to which the learning outcomes are achieved must be provided through graduating students' surveys, employers' feedback, and employment outcomes data.

4.2. Program Development Process:

- In all professional programs advisory panels with membership that includes leading practitioners from the relevant professions should be established to monitor and advise on content and quality of programs.
- New or modified programs should be assessed and approved or rejected by a senior academic committee specialized in higher studies, using criteria established for the purpose.
- Courses plan should include complete course specifications determining the contribution of each course in achieving the program's learning outcomes in a coordinated way.
- Standards for teaching strategies, assessment and evaluation should be planned for each course to contribute in achieving and developing the learning outcomes. This requires a thorough planning, preparation and training of the faculty to develop their skills in teaching and assessment.

4.3. Program Evaluation and Review Processes:

- Courses and programs should be reviewed, evaluated and reported on annually with details of changes made in programs and the reasons for such changes.
- Quality indicators should be established for all courses and programs.

- A comprehensive and detailed assessment of each program should be conducted at least once every five years.
- Programs should be reviewed by experts from relevant professions, and experienced faculty from other institutions.
- Program reviews should include information obtained from students and graduates through surveys and interviews, and discussions with faculty and other stakeholders.
- Teaching thinking and self study strategies should be focused on to enhance students' ability for continuous learning.
- Practice in professional programs should be emphasized.

4.4. Student Assessment:

- Student assessment mechanisms should be appropriate for the different forms of learning sought.
- There should be reliable mechanisms for verifying standards of students achievement in relation to relevant internal and external benchmarks.(such as comparisons of samples of student works and exams with others within the institution).
- Effective procedures should be established in the program to ensure student sincerity in academic works submitted.
- A mechanism for distinguishing crafted and distinctive students should be established in the program.
- Short periods of scholarship should be provided for students to be professionally trained in and out side the kingdom.
- Policies and procedures include action to be taken to deal with situations where standards of student achievement are inadequate.

4.5. Academic Advising and Supervision:

- Applicants for the program should be informed of the programs terms and principles after their acceptance in the program.
- The period for obtaining the academic degree is to be determined and continuously reviewed, to ensure the student's acquisition of information.
- Appropriate preparatory and orientation mechanisms should be provided to prepare students for study in a new and a higher education environment. Particular attention should be given to preparation for the language of instruction, self directed learning, use of library and websites, and bridging program if necessary for students transferring to the institution with credit for previous studies.

- A comprehensive orientation program is provided for new students to ensure their understanding of means of registration, various services and facilities provided, and their responsibility towards the institution.
- Systems should be established for monitoring and coordinating student workload in each program.
- Faculty should be available at sufficient scheduled time for consultation and advice to students.
- Progress of each student should be monitored, and assistance and counseling provided to those facing difficulties.
- Year to year progression rates and program completion rates should be monitored, and analyzed to identify and provide assistance to any categories of students who may be having difficulty.
- Result of students' assessment and performance should be immediately presented to the specialized affiliation with provision of mechanism of assistance for those in need.
- Reference material assisting students in private study should be available.
- Adequate facilities should be available for private study with access to computer terminals and other necessary equipment.
- Available substitutions should be determined for the students when in capable of completing graduation requirements of the program.

4.6. Quality of Teaching:

- Strategies of teaching should be planned for the different kinds or domains of learning outcomes and included in program specifications.
- Course specifications should be prepared to include content, teaching strategies and student activities that cumulatively develop the knowledge and skill sought in the total program.
- Students should be fully informed about course requirements in advance through course descriptions that include knowledge and skills to be developed, work requirements and assessment processes.
- The conduct of courses should be consistent with the outlines provided to students and available in the course portfolio.
- Textbooks and reference material should be up to date and incorporate the latest international developments in the field of study.
- Textbooks and other required materials should be available in sufficient quantities before classes commence.

4.7. Skills to be Obtained by Graduates:

- The ability to conduct a research in the field of study, and to write a thesis or scientific papers, or a case study.
- The ability to communicate with others orally as well as written at a level that suites the student's academic degree and specialization. The student should have the ability to reveal his/ her knowledge independently, and the program should provide this chance for the student to reveal the acquired skills.

4.8. Partnership Arrangement with other Institutions:

- Higher studies programs in the institution should be encouraged towards international and scientific partnerships to provide cooperative programs, and to evaluate and develop the provided programs.
- The respective responsibilities of the local institution and the partner should be specified in formal agreements enforceable under the laws of Saudi Arabia.
- The effectiveness of the partnership arrangements should be regularly reviewed.
- Consultations on course and program requirements should be adequate, and effective mechanisms should be available for ongoing consultation on emerging issues.
- Faculty from the partner institution familiar with the content of courses offered under the partnership arrangement should visit the local institution regularly for consultation about course details and standards of assessments.
- Procedures should be established to ensure that final assessments of students by the local and partner institutions are completed promptly within the time specified under the regulations of Saudi Arabian institutions.
- Programs and courses should be consistent with the laws regulating higher students in the institution.
- Conferences and symposiums should be accredited as learning strategies, and opportunities for attendance should be given for faculty and students.

Standard 5: Student Admissions:

Admission processes must be efficient, fair, and responsive to the needs of students entering the program.

5.1. Student Admissions:

- Information about the institution, program, courses, requirements, costs (if available), and services should be publicly available prior to applications for admission.
- The program should have special conditions in addition to the general ones to achieve difference and distinction from similar programs.
- Terms of admission should be consistent with program objectives.
- Students admission in the program should be continuous, or according to program facilities.

- Terms of admission in the program should be responsive to students desires in choosing the suitable fields of study.

Standard 6: Learning Resources and Suitable Services:

Learning resource materials and supporting services must be available for the program and the courses offered within it, and to be accessible for students when required.

6.1. Planning and Education:

- Teaching faculty should regularly and early provide the program managers with learning materials required by courses to support teaching and learning.
- Books and learning materials held in reserve should be reviewed to ensure easy access by higher studies students and faculty.

6.2. Organization:

- Books and heavy – demand resources should be held in special places to ensure access when required by students and faculty.
- Provision should be made for access to data – bases and scientific periodicals relevant to the program.
- Cooperative agreement with local and international libraries and other learning centers should be available for knowledge exchange and sharing in resources and services.
- Orientation and training programs should be provided for new students and other users to assist them to benefit from the facilities and library services.
- A reference service should be provided through which in – depth questions can be answered by qualified librarians.
- Electronic systems with search facilities should be available to assist the student and researcher to obtain information.
- Suitable procedures should be available to inform library users of library developments such as acquisition of new materials, training programs, working hours, and others.

6.3. Learning Resources Requirements:

- Adequate books, journals and other reference material including on line resources should be available to meet program requirements.
- Up to date computer technology should be available on a sufficient scale to meet program requirements to support electronic access to resources. Mechanism allowing usage of portable computers should be available.
- Books and other materials should be available in Arabic and English as required for the program and associated research.
- Level of availability of resources such as books, seats, and illustrating strategies should be consistent with standard indicators of comparable institutions.

Standard 7: Equipments:

Adequate facilities and equipment must be available for the teaching and learning requirements and the scientific research of the program. Use of the facilities and equipment should be monitored and assessments of adequacy made through consultations with faculty and technical staff.

7.1. Policy and Planning:

- Equipment acquisitions should meet program requirements and also be consistent with institutional policies to provide such equipments.
- Faculty should be consulted before any equipment acquisition to ensure that the expected needs of the program are taken into consideration.
- A prepared plan should be followed to determine the major equipment requirements, acquisition, servicing and replacement according to a planned schedule.

7.2. Quality and Adequacy of Facilities:

- Facilities should meet health and safety requirements.
- Quality assessment processes of these equipments should count on reports of users.
- Standards of provision of teaching, laboratory and research facilities should be adequate for the program and should be benchmarked through comparisons with other comparable institutions within Saudi Arabia and internationally.
- Adequate provision should be made for students with physical disabilities or other special needs.

7.3. Management of Facilities:

- A complete inventory should be maintained of equipment used in the program for teaching and research.
- Current condition assessments should be carried out and provision made for preventative and corrective maintenance and replacement when required.
- Effective strategy should be provided for keeping specialized facilities and equipments related to faculty and used in teaching and scientific research.
- Effective systems should be provided to ensure the personal security of faculty, staff and students, with appropriate provisions for the security of their personal property.
- Scheduling use of equipments with provision of mechanism for security of equipments.

- Scheduling use of general facilities mechanically, and reports on efficiency of use should be provided to the higher management.
- Orientation program and high qualification technical support should be available for students when using program equipments to secure their safety.
- Services such as cleaning, waste disposal, minor maintenance, safety, and environmental management should be efficiently and effectively carried out within the program framework.
- Cooperative arrangements should be made when appropriate with other agencies for shared ownership or use of major research equipment.

7.4. Information Technology:

- Adequate computer equipment should be available and accessible for faculty and students in the program. Its adequacy should be regularly assessed.
- Institutional policies governing the use of personal computers by students should be complied with, and applications of suitable procedures on violators.
- Technical support should be available for faculty and students using information and communications technology.
- Opportunities should be available for faculty input into plans for acquisition and replacement of IT equipment for use in the program.
- Security systems should be in place to protect privacy of personal and institutional information, and to protect against externally introduced viruses.
- Training programs should be available for faculty and students to ensure effective use of computing equipment and appropriate software for teaching, student assessment, and administration.

Standard 8: Management and Financial Planning:

Financial resources must be sufficient for the effective delivery of the program. Program requirements must be considered in institutional budgeting. Program budgetary process should allow for long term planning over at least a three year period with sufficient flexibility for responses to unexpected requirements.

8.1. Management:

- Necessary management and career support should be provided for the program.

- Program manager/coordinator is specified to monitor the program execution in the department.
- Program periodical reports should be submitted to the responsible affiliation in the institution.
- Specific delegations should be given to the program manager / coordinator for effective provision of the financial and management requirements necessary for program execution.

8.2. Financial Planning:

- Program supportive resources should be available from in and outside the institution.
- Procedures for obtaining program research support should be known and publicly announced.
- Clear procedures to help students financially from within and outside the institution should be available in the program.
- A clear vision of planning procedures and financial assessment should support the program.

Standard 9: Faculty and Staff Employment Processes:

Recruitment process must be designed to ensure that capable and appropriately qualified faculty and staff (administrative and technical) are available for the execution of the program and the achievement of the objectives.

9.1. Recruitment Policy:

- Faculty employment criteria in the department should be specified in the program.
- Employment in the department should be according to qualifications, experiences and personal skills.
- Employment conditions should be publicly announced and applied on all applicants.
- A mechanism for announcement of available positions should be provided. The mission and objectives of the program should be clear in the announcement.

9.2. Personal and Career Development:

- Criteria for performance evaluation of faculty and staff should be clearly announced.
- Clear and specific policy for improvement of performance should be according to the assessment of those working in the program.
- A policy for distinguishing and rewarding outstanding career performance should be available in the program.
- Criteria for the participation of all faculty to develop the objectives of the program should be provided. New faculty are to have an effective role in that.

- A specific training and development program in the department should be available and suitable to all participants.
- Academic and teaching load of faculty in the program should be coordinating with other research academic activities, and participation in committees, attendance of symposiums, conferences, and workshops, and community service.

Standard 10: Scientific Research:

An outstanding role is played by the program to encourage faculty and postgraduate students to conduct researches in the field of study and to publish their outcomes in specialized scientific periodicals.

- The policy of research in the program should be consistent with the nature and the mission of the institution, and community requirements.
- A scientific research should maintain originality, independent refereeing, and publication in refereed periodicals consistent with international standards.
- Annual reports about faculty research activity should be provided. The researches include those of postgraduate students in particular, and those of departments and colleges in general.
- Cooperation with large local and external institutions to present joint researches is encouraged.
- Mechanism supporting cooperation in research field with international institutions and other scientific research nets should be provided.
- A highly qualified committee is established to monitor application of moral standards in the provision and publication of graduate students' researches.
- Practical and community related researches are to be focused on.
- A mechanism for delivering results of students' researches should be available.

Standard 11: Program Relationship with the Community:

The most important objective of higher studies programs is to make use of the skills and experiences of faculty and higher studies students to achieve community requirements.

- The service commitment of the program should be defined in a way that reflects the significance of the community or communities within which the program operates.
- Continuous contributions by faculty should be included in promotion criteria and faculty assessment.
- Program contributions in community service should be coordinated with specialized community service units in the institution to avoid duplication.
- Strategies to develop community realization of the higher studies programs in the institution should be adopted.

Suggested Guidelines and Steps for Constructing and Modifying Higher Studies Programs

Description	Standard
1. Institution (Department – College)	
2. Program title and level: Choice of program title is according to its objectives and content.	-----
3. Introduction: It includes the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significance of program to the university and community • Ways followed in specifying program title, Mission, Vision, and Objectives. • Specification of sectors that contributed in construction of the program to emphasize its importance. • Interests of Department and teaching staff. • The ability to conduct researches consistent with the expectations of teaching staff as well as community. • Working fields for program graduates. • Program related committees within the Department. • Naming of programs considered for benchmarking or made use of. • Efforts spent in construction of the program, and names of external parties being consulted and contributed in construction. 	1,2,4, 10,11
4. Vision:	1
5. Mission:	1
6. Objectives:	1
7. Justifications for provision of the program:	4
8. Admission in the program:	5
8.1. Application for the program:	
8.2. Terms for Admission: Pre-requisite courses, experiences, English efficiency, GPA, exams, interview.	

9. Studying Program:	4
9.1. Compulsory courses: course title, credit hours, objectives of study.	4
9.2. Specialized courses: course title, credit hours, objectives of study.	4
9.3. Elective courses: course title, credit hours, objectives of study.	4
9.4. Thesis or research project (if required): credit hours, objectives, preparation , discussion	4
9.5. Academic supervision: Description, ways of choosing a supervisor, procedures for academic supervision in the program	4
10. Comprehensive exams: (if required)	-----
11. Graduation requirements:	4
12. Facilities and Requirements:	7,8
12.1. Facilities include:	7
12.1.1. Classrooms:	6,7
12.1.2. Laboratories:	7
12.1.3. Libraries and data base:	6,7
12.1.4. Computer and electronic learning:	7
12.1.5. Other facilities (e.g. hospitals, pharmacies, statistical services, etc.	8,9
12.2. Staff Requirements:	8,9
12.2.1. Teaching staff (in the form of a schedule including the following): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Names • Scientific degree • Specialization • Nationality • Number of teaching hours • Research interests 	8,9
12.2.2. Technical Staff: In the form of a schedule including the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Numbers • Levels • Qualification • Specialization 	8,9
12.2.3. Administrative and secretary staff: In the form of a schedule including the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Numbers • Levels • Qualification 	8
12.3. Program Funding: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal support • External support 	8

13. Study plan and courses specification:	-----
13.1. Illustrative plan specifying route of study for semesters:	4
13.2. Program sub specializations: Sub specializations in a program are to be stated with a detailed description of the courses according to study semesters and number of hours:	4
13.3. Courses specification includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course title • Course code • Credit hours • Department offering the course • College offering the course • pre-requisites for the course • Semester at which the course is offered • Study level • Course description • Aims of the course • Course content • Expected learning outcomes • Teaching strategies • Methods of assessment • Resources 	4

Consultant Form for Postgraduate Program

Program Name:.....

Degree:.....

Department:.....

College:.....

I: Consultant Personal Information

Name:

Academic Post:

Specialization:

Affiliation:

Address: Telephone: Fax: E-mail:

(Please attach a CV)

II: Program Evaluation:

N	Topic	Rating			Comments / Proposed Amendments
		Excellent	Adequate	Needs Improvement	
1	Program Name				
٢	Introduction:				
	2/1 Significance of program to the University and community				
	2/2 Ways followed in Specifying Program Name, Mission, Vision and Objectives				
	2/3 Department and Faculty Research Fields and Interests				
	2/4 Working Fields for Program Graduates				
	2/5 Naming of Programs Considered for Benchmarking or made use of				
٣	Vision				
٤	Mission				
٥	Objectives of the program				
	5/1 Formulation of Objectives 5/2 Measurability				
٦	Justifications for Provision of the Program				
٧	Admission Criteria				
٨	Program Structure				
	8/1 Compulsory Courses				
	8/2 Specialized Courses				
	8/3 Elective Courses				
	8/4 Thesis or Research Project				
٩	Graduation Requirements				
	9/1 Courses				
	9/2 Thesis /Research Project 9/3 Comprehensive Exam (if applicable)				
١٠	Facilities (Classes - Labs - libraries and Information Resources - Technology)				
١١	Faculty (their numbers, qualifications)				

IV : Consultant Overall Opinion:

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V: Consultant Recommendation:

- Approval
- Approval upon minor modification proposed in (II&III).
- Non- Approval unless major modifications are implemented
- Non- Approval for stated reasons

Consultant Name:

Signature:

Date: