

2015

Accreditation
and Quality
Assurance
Commission

LICENSURE AND
ACCREDITATION
MANUAL

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1. SCOPE AND CONTEXT

Licensure and accreditation processes recognize higher education institutions (HEIs) for their performance, integrity and quality that entitle them to the confidence of the educational community and the public. *The Licensure and Accreditation Manual* by the Accreditation and Quality Assurance Commission (AQAC) is a comprehensive reference that guides and supports HEIs to achieve their mission and operate effectively and professionally.

This manual presents to HEIs, reviewers, students, their families, and other interested parties and agencies the standards, policies and procedures that govern the licensure and accreditation processes necessary to establish and operate HEIs in Palestine. The standards, policies and procedures are designed to promote high quality institutions and assure prospective students, their families, employers and other interested parties that licensed institutions and their accredited educational programs meet standards of quality in line with international best practices and standards.

This manual is consistent with current international standards in order to ensure that the national system of institutional licensure and program accreditation is robust with embedded characteristics of excellence. The *Manual* also assures the educational community, the general public and other organizations that Palestinian higher education institutions have clearly defined appropriate educational objectives and established conditions under which their achievement can reasonably be expected and substantially accomplished, and that these HEIs are organized, staffed, and equipped to continue offering and delivering effective higher education.

The Licensure and Accreditation Manual has four sections. The first section presents an overall view of AQAC as an institution, its mission, vision, goals and objectives introduces its values and responsibilities, and highlights the roles of its reviewers and board in the processes of evaluation and decision making.

The second part introduces the main stakeholder, namely the higher education institutions, and clarifies their responsibilities and duties in observing the conditions of their licensure and accreditation through AQAC. It also explains the relevant policies and procedures regarding their evolution, expansion and performance at the institutional level as well as for their educational programs.

The third section presents a comprehensive set of standards for licensure and accreditation, and sets out the minimum stipulations for their fulfillment with additional information that guides their implementation within the Palestinian educational context.

The final section of the manual provides detailed processes and procedural guidelines for licensing and re-licensing of HEIs and accrediting and re-accrediting of their educational programs. It also includes required forms and formats for the applications and the timeline for their processing.

The *Manual* concludes with administrative requirements for these processes including financial charges for licensure and accreditation with appendices in support of the manual content and its intended purpose.

The Licensure and Accreditation Manual is consistent with AQAC's Law and By-laws, dynamic in nature to respond to the conditions of a diverse and evolving global higher education. The manual is reviewed, amended and/or updated periodically as deemed necessary to ensure effectiveness, adherence and usefulness in providing overall direction, and is disseminated to all stakeholders, including the general public. All amendments and/or changes come into effect six months after their final approval by the AQAC board and their wide dissemination through appropriate channels.

2. ABOUT AQAC

2.1 Background

The Accreditation and Quality Assurance Commission was established in 2002 as a semi-autonomous body under the Ministry of Higher Education by Ministerial Decree No (2). The decree entrusted the commission with all the Ministry's powers and privileges granted by Higher Education Law (11) of 1998 regarding the quality of Palestinian higher education institutions and their academic programs.

On 28/8/ 2012, the Cabinet of Ministers issued a decree re-establishing the Commission and granting it financial and administrative independence. This decree appointed a temporary board chaired by the Minister of Higher Education, and mandated this board to formulate a law for AQAC to regulate its operations.

Since its establishment, AQAC is the only body authorized to license HEIs and accredit their educational programs in Palestine. The Commission observes a number of important steps in the institutionalizing licensure and accreditation, including networking with similar Commissions, developing manuals and instructions for licensure and accreditation, and taking the initiative in spreading the culture of quality in higher education institutions.

The Head of AQAC is responsible for managing, planning, developing, implementing and coordinating all operational activities and related resources of AQAC, and has a Commission Council formed upon the endorsement of the Council of Ministers. AQAC's Council is composed of up to fifteen members of academics, professionals and representatives of the

public sector with the experienced and knowledgeable in evaluation processes in order to ensure quality in all disciplines of higher education.

This comprehensive *Manual* presents AQAC's policies, procedures and standards for developing higher education and improving the quality of its output. The *Manual* is designed to fit with the current and future functions of AQAC in a harmonized and streamlined manner, making it function smoothly and effectively, and to strengthen the capacity of higher education institutions to improve and develop higher education inputs and outputs.

2.2 Vision and Mission

Vision

To become a pioneer national commission entrusted with enhancing the quality and promoting innovative learning in higher education institutions to enable students to receive an education in line with best standards of quality and performance.

Mission

AQAC seeks continuously to serve the public by advancing the quality of higher education in Palestine by developing a comprehensive system of high-quality, internationally recognized standards, supporting and enhancing continuous self-assessment and improvement of HEIs, increasing citizens' access to information and promoting culture of quality while adhering to the principles of independence, equity, transparency and accountability.

2.3 Goal

AQAC's ultimate goal is ensuring that higher education institutions are effectively positioned to provide quality education aligned with best practices and international standards in line with the socio-economic developmental needs of the Palestinian society.

2.4 Objectives

To achieve its goal, AQAC works to achieve the following four main objectives:

- i. HEIs are functioning based on international standards.
- ii. HEIs' capacity to monitor and control quality is enhanced and improved.
- iii. HEIs in Palestine offer academic programs in line with national development priorities.
- iv. Citizens, students and public have increased access to updated information on HEIs programs and quality.

Objective i: HEIs are functioning based on international standards.

1. Set policies, standards and criteria in line with international standards for licensing HEIs and accrediting their educational programs and modify and develop them according to the internationally accepted standards for HE.
2. Undertake institutional licensure and program accreditation according to internationally recognized standards.

Objective ii : HEIs' capacity to monitor and control quality is enhanced and improved.

1. Undertake institutional licensure, program accreditation and their assessments on a regular basis by granting, refusing, confirming or revoking program accreditation or HEI's licensure based on program or institution quality audits and reviews.
2. Follow up with HEIs operations to ensure achievement of pre-set goals by developing processes using appropriate measurement tools to evaluate their educational programs and their performance.
3. Develop and publish guidelines on the procedures for applying for and conducting licensure, accreditation and evaluation/assessment processes, including time schedules, deadlines and other conditions.

4. Enhance HEIs internal capacities to deliver quality education through promoting culture of quality and dissemination of related information.
5. Stimulate mutual exchange of information on quality assurance between HEIs and encourage cooperation between them.
6. Build networks with regional and international accreditation and quality assurance institutions to access information on best practices and make it available to the Palestinian HEIs.
7. Encourage HE providers in Palestine to use appropriate quality assurance measures as a means of improving the quality of teaching and learning in higher education.
8. Promote culture of quality within HEIs and the Palestinian society through publications, dissemination of HEIs assessment reports, workshops, seminars and conferences

Objective iii : HEIs in Palestine offer academic programs in line with national development priorities.

1. Align the educational programs submitted by HEIs with the National Development Plan and the strategic plans by coordinating and consulting with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education and other relevant official entities.
2. Safeguard the quality of higher education within the economic, social and cultural context of Palestine, taking into account the wider international dimension of further and higher education.
3. Ensure the maximum possible balance between supply and demand for higher education and relevance.

v. ***Objective iv : Citizens, students and public have increases access to updated information on HEIs programs and quality.***

1. Serve as an honest broker between seekers and providers of higher education by ensuring access to information on the quality of higher education (inputs, processes, outputs and outcomes).
2. Develop a set of indicators (including databases, questionnaires and surveys) on the overall performance of HEIs, their educational programs, their situations and levels, classify them based on this data, and publish the results regularly.
3. Act as a knowledge and information hub on quality assurance and accreditation in higher education to inform students and society on the status and quality of HEIs and their programs.

2.5 Responsibilities

The key role of AQAC is to regulate and create an enabling environment for HEIs in Palestine in order to provide quality higher education. To achieve the above goal and objectives, AQAC is mandated to:

1. Set policies, procedures and standards related to quality assurance in higher education institutions, modify and update them on a regular basis, and follow-up with HEIs to ensure compliance.
2. Undertake HEIs' licensure and re-licensure according to AQAC's standards on a regular basis by granting, refusing, confirming or revoking an institution's licensure based on program and/or an institution's quality audits and reviews, and restricting the institutional absorptive capacity.
3. Undertake periodic, regular program accreditation and re-accreditation by granting, refusing, confirming or revoking program accreditation according to AQAC's criteria.

4. Assess higher education institutions' performance and educational programs, and their intended learning outcomes by using appropriate assessment tools to ensure that HEIs achieve their stated goals.
5. Identify and develop indicator standards for the quality of higher education, update and develop databases questionnaires and surveys to evaluate the performance of higher education institutions and their educational programs, and categorize them based on the analyzed data
6. Develop the necessary regulations to implement AQAC's law and submit them to the Council of Ministers for approval and issuance, and issue the necessary instructions to implement the legal provisions and regulations enacted thereunder.
7. Determine the conditions under which allows for national and foreign higher education institutions may open branches in Palestine under the instructions issued by the Commission, and grant the licenses necessary for the conduct of such operations.
8. Determine the degrees granted by existing higher education institutions in Palestine, in coordination and consultation with the ministry, according to instructions and standards issued by the Commission.
9. Establish a network with regional and international accreditation and quality assurance organizations.
10. Promote a culture of quality in higher education institutions by collaborating with the quality assurance units of these institutions.
11. Disseminate information to the public about the performance and quality of the accredited programs offered by licensed HEIs in Palestine.

2.6 Guiding Principles

To achieve AQAC's objectives and goal to advance higher education and the continuous improvement of its quality through licensure and accreditation procedures, and the periodic evaluation of higher education institutions and their educational programs, AQAC has adopted the following core values and guiding principles as the basis for its work:

1. Accountability:

AQAC is obligated and responsible to the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, higher education institutions, students and relevant bodies at large to demonstrate that all tasks, activities and decisions are performed in accordance with adopted policies, standards and procedures. It is committed to submit a transparent report justifying performance results based on audit and evaluation, and publishes those results, which explicitly allows access to concerned stakeholders according to their positions and scope of work without prejudice against confidentiality and professionalism.

2. Integrity

AQAC is committed to the established policies, procedures and standards in all its activities. Its decisions are based on credibility, impartiality and objectivity, and it maintains the privacy of its stakeholders and the confidentiality of their files when publishing reports. It strives for stakeholders' confidence in its output by abandoning discrimination and contradictions in dealing with its stakeholders.

3. Independence

AQAC is an independent organization administratively and financially, and is not subject to external influence in its relationships and decision making, such as political influence and

councils of public policy. It serves as an executive entity to follow-up and implement policies through clear, published procedures in decision-making, establishing relationships, and disseminating relevant information without bias or discrimination.

4. Professionalism

AQAC communicates with all stakeholders through effective, appropriate and documented channels to ensure sustainability and continuous improvement. It employs various means to disseminate clear information about its policies, procedures and standards, and any applicable amendments, and utilizes a scientific methodology in assessing, evaluating and recruiting highly qualified specialists while taking into account any possible conflicts of interest.

5. Transparency

AQAC's processes and procedures are characterized by transparency and are carried out clearly and impartially. AQAC employs effective systems which can be easily tracked and evaluated and its decisions are taken collectively through its independent board which includes highly qualified and experienced members from the higher education community.

2.7 AQAC's Board

Appointed by the Council of Ministers, the AQAC Board consists of up to fifteen members, including the head, with adequate representation of women, appointed by the Council of Ministers. The members represent different fields of knowledge with a minimum qualification of the PhD degree; two-thirds are associate professors, and the last third are full professors. Board members shall hold any managerial position in a higher education institution.

The term of membership on the Board is four years with a maximum of two consecutive terms, except AQAC's head, whose membership continues as long as he/she serves as head of the Commission.

The Board convenes its meetings at least once every three months or whenever the need arises, as long as the minimum number of meetings is four during a year. The Board's decisions are based on members' voting and the majority votes of the attendees. In case of equal votes, the head's vote is doubled for the side with which he/she voted.

The Board's several tasks and responsibilities are stated in AQAC's law, including the adoption of regulations, policies and organizational structure, budgets and plans for carrying out the Commission's activities, issuing regulation and procedures for the Commission, deciding to grant or refusing to grant licensure for higher education institutions, granting or refusing to grant accreditation for their educational programs, and applying penalties to violating higher education institutions, according to the provisions of AQAC's law.

2.8 AQAC's Evaluators

The evaluation process is the most important element to ensure the quality of higher education and enhance its performance; this process is integrated into the licensure and licensure procedures of the higher education institutions and within the accreditation and re-accreditation of their educational programs.

AQAC always seeks professional academics with high qualifications, skills and experience to volunteer their time and knowledge to serve as evaluators. AQAC's evaluators contribute effectively to the performance of higher education institutions and ensure that the educational programs in Palestine are consistent with best practice and international standards in terms of their structure, content and intended learning outcomes.

AQAC is keen to expand participation in the evaluation process by reaching for professional academics from local, regional and international universities to take advantage of the diverse quality assurance systems in enhancing the performance of the higher education institutions and their educational programs, and achieving applicable international standards.

The evaluators are assigned to conduct on-site visits and/or review relevant documents submitted by higher education institution in order to obtain licensure, re-licensure, program accreditation, re-accreditation, audit, substantive changes to the licensure, and/or accreditation conditions requested by the institution, and any other special follow-up visits as deemed necessary to enhance and develop the overall performance of the higher education institutions.

AQAC aims to adhere to licensure and accreditation processes in which standards, policies and procedures are interpreted and applied consistently, and actions are fair, impartial and appropriate. Therefore, AQAC has adopted licensure and accreditation criteria standards and documented policies and procedures in conjunction with guidelines and regulations regarding the selection of evaluators, their assignments, and following up with their submitted reports. This process reflects AQAC's guiding principles of integrity, professionalism, transparency, accountability and no conflict of interest.

The evaluators are responsible for the following:

- Behaving in a professional, impartial and ethical manner while studying and evaluating the files, and declaring any real or perceived conflicts of interest that may affect the evaluation process and influence the decision.
- Treat with confidentiality all information, communications and reports provided by the institution for review purposes and all correspondence and reports exchanged between AQAC and HEIs.

- Being familiar with AQAC's adopted standards, policies and procedures related to the evaluators' roles in the evaluation process.
- Directing all communications with HEIs through AQAC and not communicating directly with HEI in question under any circumstances.
- Reading all the documents and reports, and examining all submitted evidence by the institution in detail.
- Coordinating for the on-site visits with AQAC, conducting the visits for host institutions, and communicating with their employees in a professional manner.
- Rooting feedback in AQAC's standards, complying with its policies and procedures, preserving the anonymity of its evaluators, and completing assignments fully and promptly.

3. HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

3.1 Definitions

Higher education institution: a licensured and accredited institution in accordance with the law that offers one or more accredited higher education program.

Educational program: an academic or professionally accredited program offered by a licensured higher education institution for a duration of at least one academic year or two academic semesters after the successful completion of the General Certificate of Secondary Education (Tawjihi) or its equivalent.

Higher Education Institution can be defined according to their establishment as stated in Article (10) of Law No. (11) for the year 1998 as follows:

- Governmental higher education institutions: established by a decree from the council of ministers and follows the ministry of education and higher education financially, managerially and lawfully.
- Public higher education institutions: non-profit or charity institutions that are registered in the ministry of interior.
- Private higher education institutions: are registered in the ministry of economics.

Institutions of higher education can be classified in Palestine as follows:

- University: licensured higher education institution that offers accredited educational programs awarding the first university degree (bachelor) or graduate programs awarding the higher diploma or master or doctorate degree, and may

offer educational programs, awarding the diploma degree according to the adopted regulations.

- University College: licensured higher education institution that offers accredited educational or professional programs awarding the bachelor's degree, and that may offer educational and/or professional and/or technical programs for two or three years, awarding the diploma degree according to the adopted regulations.
- Polytechnic: licensured higher education institution that offers accredited professional and/or technical programs, awarding the diploma degree according to their adopted regulations, and may offer technical or professional programs, awarding the bachelor's degree, and/or graduate programs awarding master or doctorate degree in technical, and/or professional specializations.
- Community College: licensured higher education institution that offers accredited educational and/or professional, and/or technical programs awarding the associate or professional degree for the duration of at least one academic year, according to the adopted regulations.

3.2 Responsibilities

Higher education institutions are mandated to the following:

- HEI must abide by policies, procedures and academic standards for higher education as set forth in AQAC's manuals and publications.
- HEI shall abide by all conditions of operations set forth in the licensure and accreditation decision letters issued by the AQAC Board and shall work to meet all requirements inherent in the award of such licensure/accreditation.
- HEI shall communicate any proposed changes to institutional licensure and/or educational program accreditation conditions in writing to seek AQAC's advice

support its request with sufficient documentation and evidence, and shall not implement any changes without the prior formal approval of AQAC.

- HEI shall not offer educational programs that have not been accredited by AQAC and shall not admit any students in programs under accreditation.
- HEI shall cooperate in full with AQAC in evaluating the institution and its educational programs in a candid and transparent manner to maximize the institution's gain from any exercise of evaluation and assessment.
- HEI shall inform AQAC of inactivating any of its accredited educational programs and provide AQAC with any related information and required documentation, clearly indicating the reason(s) and the intended duration of the inactivation.
- HEI shall pay an annual fee to AQAC (as mandated by the financial laws) to be eligible for the services offered by AQAC, including the recognition of the institution through licensure and the educational programs through accreditation.
- HEI shall pay within the required time any assessed penalties and imposed fines (as mandated by AQAC's law) incurred due to violations of AQAC's regulations.
- HEI shall offer its educational programs in its licensured campus and/or educational sites.
- HEI shall commit to AQAC's principles of impartiality, professionalism, credibility, transparency and accountability in communicating with AQAC and shall adopt these guiding principles in any submitted documents.

3.3 Additional locations outside the geographical region of the higher

education institution

HEIs are restricted to offering their accredited educational programs within their licensured campuses. Interested HEIs may extend their educational and supporting services to sites other than the main location of the institution according to the specified policies and defined regulations as outlined below:

Branch

Licensed universities may establish a branch campus outside Palestine to offer accredited education programs leading to a degree or other recognized educational credentials. To do so, the university must meet AQAC's adopted stipulations and regulations for the branch to be established as new higher education institution and must fulfill all the requirements for initial licensure and educational program accreditation as stipulated in the licensure and accreditation manual, as outlined below, prior to its operation:

- The branch must be fully independent from the main institution in terms of its organizational structure, administrative and financial resources.
- The university must obtain necessary permissions and approvals, and register the branch with the official legal authorities in the host country.
- The university is committed to any additional requirements or criteria imposed by the relevant responsible authorities in the host country.
- Licensure for a branch is conditional upon the licensure of the main institution and applies all the requirements and conditions set forth for the licensure.

Educational site

Licensed universities/university colleges may open one educational site or more outside the geographical regions of their main licensured locations as specified in the licensure certificate

issued by AQAC in order to offer one accredited educational program or more. Such a change is considered a major change in the institution's licensure. Therefore, it requires re-licensure to ensure that the institution is capable of offering accredited educational programs commensurate with its mission and objectives outside the geographical region of its main location, within the following criteria:

- The educational site is subjected to the organizational structure, administrative management and financial regulation of the main institution.
- Determine the capacity of the educational site and the number and nature of educational programs offered at the site either individually or in parallel with those offered at the main institution.
- Availability of adequate resources and appropriate support services to serve the needs of educational programs at the educational site to ensure that students attending any site receive an equivalent educational experience and achieve the same learning outcomes.
- Availability of sufficient qualified faculty members, administrative management and technical support necessary to provide an appropriate environment to deliver the educational programs.
- Availability of systematic clear mechanisms and feedback channels to monitor the site's operations, and to ensure the quality of the education and the continuous enhancement of its educational programs.

Training site

Licensed higher education institutions may employ one training site or more outside the geographical regions of their main licensured location as specified in the licensure certificate issued by AQAC to provide appropriate practical or specialized training for one or more courses within an existing accredited educational program. The training site may be owned

by the institution or belong to professional organizations that have established contractual agreements with the higher education institution. The nature of the collaboration shall be clearly illustrated according to the following criteria:

- The educational program accreditation application includes details about the training site with a maximum of 50% of the total credits of the educational program offered at the site, taking into account the nature of the program and the area of specialization.
- The institution informs the commission and provides details prior to any changes or additions to the training sites.
- The institution determines the capacity of the site, nature of training, number of credit hours, supervision and evaluation in line with the intended learning outcomes
- Availability of adequate, appropriate and accessible learning resources, equipment and support services, and HEI facilitates their use by the students, supervisors and trainers.
- Availability of sufficient qualified faculty members and technical support necessary to provide an appropriate environment to facilitate and stimulate teaching and learning

3.4 Changes to higher education institution licensure

Higher education institutions must comply with all the conditions based on which licensure was granted and may not make any changes to these conditions without securing prior official approval from AQAC. Prior to making any changes, the institution must submit a request supported with documents, evidence and information necessary for AQAC to decide whether these changes require a decision by AQAC's director general or by its Board in case of minor changes, or submission for re-licensure in case of significant changes as explained below:

Minor changes

Changes that are limited in nature and scope which do not affect the nature of the HEI work will be approved with minimal review by AQAC's head and will be presented to AQAC's Board for verification and decision-making. These changes include:

- Changes to the name of the HEI if not tied to other major changes within the institution.
- Changes to the mission, goals or objectives of the HEI.
- Changes to the format of instruction and assessment, e.g., use of blended learning, semester structures, changes in academic instructions, grade structure, certificates, and academic transcripts.
- Changes to the organizational structure of the institution, e.g., merging faculties, and relocating departments or educational programs within faculties.

Major changes that require re-licensure

More significant changes are those that directly contradict the licensure status of the HEI granted by AQAC and affect the nature of its work. These changes require the submission of a completed re-licensure application form that specifies the requested changes and meeting all the applicable requirements and standards adopted at AQAC, including the payment of prescribed fees to process the application, which may require evaluation or conducting an on-site visit or both by AQAC's recruited external reviewers.

- Legal status or governance of the institution, e.g., ownership or merging with another institution.
- Changes to the disciplines set forth in the licensure certificate.
- Change of the classification of the HEI to offer higher qualification educational programs, such as upgrading from community university college or from university college to a university.

- Physical location of the campus or establishing a new branch or educational sites, or closing down a branch or an educational site location.
- Significant changes to the nature of the provided educational services such as establishing collaborations and co operations with other organizations to provide educational services, or adoption of new teaching systems such as starting open learning in the traditional higher education institutions or traditional learning in open learning higher education institutions.

3.5 Changes to educational program accreditation

Higher education institution must comply with all the conditions based on which its educational programs were granted accreditation and may not make any changes to these conditions without securing prior official approval from AQAC. Prior to making any changes, the institution must submit a request supported with documents, evidence and information necessary for AQAC to decide whether these changes require a decision by AQAC's director general or by its Board in case of minor changes, or submission for re-accreditation in case of significant changes as explained below:

Minor changes

Changes to educational programs are expected during their life cycle to enhance their effectiveness in terms of content and delivery. Such changes that are limited in nature and do not significantly modify the program's goals, intended learning outcomes, or its basic structure do not require the prior notification or approval of AQAC as long as they are consistent with the educational program content and level of qualification. These changes must be clearly documented and made available for the upcoming re-accreditation. These changes are limited to:

- Replacing courses with new ones, or changing courses' names and descriptions, provided these changes are limited to 10% of the overall educational program.
- Introduction of emphasis tracks within an educational program.
- Changes to the admission criteria in the educational program.
- Changes requested by AQAC as part of upgrading academic requirements to meet national or international trends.

Major changes that require re-accreditation

Certain changes are substantive and have an impact on educational program mission, objectives, intended learning outcomes and the program structure. These changes require the submission of a completed re-accreditation application form specifying the requested changes and meeting all the applicable requirements and standards at AQAC, including the payment of fees prescribed in AQAC's financial system for review and evaluation. In addition, the HEI will adhere to the same procedure for accreditation, and when this is granted, the HEI is expected to phase out the original educational program. Once all enrolled students have graduated, any new changes will apply only to new students who will join in the education program after re-accreditation, while the rest of the current students at various levels will follow the prior rules before the re-accreditation. These changes include:

- Changes to the title of the program.
- Changes to program structure by removing courses, replacing courses with new ones, or changing courses' names and description, provided these changes are in excess of 10 % of the overall program.
- Changes to the total number of credit hours allocated to the educational program.
- Introduction of new components to the educational program structure, such as non-credit courses.

- Suspension of students' admission or enrollment in an educational program for any reason for more than two years for the associate diploma programs, four years for the bachelor programs and three years for the graduate programs.

4. LICENSURE AND ACCREDITATION STANDARDS

Licensure and Accreditation Standards (The Standards) set out the expectations that HEIs in Palestine shall meet *a priori* to function in full capacity as a higher education institution to assure the quality of learning they provide. They ensure that the national system of institutional licensure and program accreditation is robust with embedded characteristics of excellence, and meets the international standards for licensure and accreditation processes.

The Standards shall be read in conjunction with the policies and procedures associated with licensure and accreditation, and the application processes and their requirements, as outlined in this *Manual*.

The Standards are periodically reviewed and amended and/or updated as deemed necessary to ensure their relevance to higher education in Palestine and their compliance with international standards and best practices. All amendments and updates are approved by AQAC's Board prior to their declaration.

The Standards specify the threshold requirements that an institution must meet for institutional licensure, re-licensure, educational program accreditation and re-accreditation, and provide examples of stipulations for their fulfillment. Although the licensure and accreditation standards incorporate eleven individual standards, these standards should be viewed as an interrelated whole. The order is not intended to suggest relative importance or priority. They target both the institution and its educational programs, as listed below:

- Standard 1: Mission, organization, and governance
- Standard 2: Planning and effectiveness
- Standard 3: Fiscal resources
- Standard 4: Transparency and integrity
- Standard 5: Faculty and staff
- Standard 6: Quality assurance

- Standard 7: Student affairs and support services
- Standard 8: Learning resources and facilities
- Standard 9: Educational programs
- Standard 10: Scientific research and related activities
- Standard 11: Community engagement

In addition to the standards and their stipulations, supplementary guidelines and additional information related to the requirements of the standards and the contents of those requirements are provided in the appendices section of this manual.

Standard 1: Mission, organization and governance

The institution recognizes the importance of the mission statement in defining the institution, delineating its characteristics and explaining its ethos. It understands the significance of good governance to realize the full potential of the institution, as stated in its mission and goals, and to achieve these in the most effective and efficient manner that benefits the institution and its stakeholders.

The institution has a distinct and clear mission and vision that define its purpose within the context of higher education and focus on the institution's identity, its goals and the community it serves.

The institution's goals are consistent with its mission, can be realized within the local, regional and international contexts, and are sufficiently flexible to accommodate opportunities and changes.

The institution's organization is extensive and efficient and can deliver on the good governance principles adopted by the institution and its educational activities.

To achieve the above, the institution shall demonstrate the following:

1. The institutional mission is appropriate for its classification, distinguishes it from other HEIs, focuses on its educational activities and the community it serves, and is periodically reviewed by the institution.
2. The institutional vision is consistent with the mission and is articulated for long-term aspirations.
3. The institutional short-term and the long-term goals and their associated objectives are appropriate to the institution's mission and vision, and are achievable within its context.
4. The governance structure includes active governing bodies with sufficient independence and knowledge to assure institutional reliability and effectiveness to fulfill their responsibilities of policy development, decision-making and resources' management.
5. The governing board operates under clear by-laws setting the basis for the board members' selection criteria, roles, functions, term of office and responsibilities.
6. The organizational structure is appropriate to the institution's classification, type and size, covers all aspects and services offered by the institution, outlines the hierarchical and lateral relationships between the different departments in an efficient and transparent manner, and describes the roles, qualifications and responsibilities for each position in the institution.
7. Stakeholders are actively engaged in decision-making processes at institutional and departmental levels through their membership in councils, boards and committees related to both academic and non-academic matters.
8. The policies and procedures governing the institution operations are periodically reviewed and updated for effectiveness and currency and well-disseminated to the institution's community.

9. All operations, activities and decisions are documented and archived for easy reference with access granted to all those concerned within the institution.

Standard 2: Planning and effectiveness

The institution recognizes planning and periodic evaluation as critical to the continuous improvement of the institution and facilitates their implementation in a manner that is broad-based, systematic and appropriate to the institution's mission and vision, involving stakeholders from within and outside the institution.

The institution has in place feedback channels that evaluate its educational operations and other related services and effectively uses this feedback to enhance of the quality within the institution.

The institution has procedures and effective channels to the disseminate its findings and actions throughout the institution.

To achieve the above, the institution shall demonstrate the following:

1. The institution engages all stakeholders in systematic and periodic institutional assessment to evaluate its performance and relevance for compliance with best practices and international standards
2. Strategic planning is exercised on a regular basis, involving all stakeholders in a manner that encourages participation and ownership of its outcomes.
3. Detailed action plan guides implementating and evaluating the institutional strategy and is clearly communicated at every level within the institution for its communal execution.
4. Key performance indicators are used in the systematic and explicit measurement of institutional effectiveness in achieving the institution's mission and enacting counter measures as deemed necessary.

5. Rigorous system of annual and *ad hoc* evaluations and surveys is implemented at every level of the institution to evaluate performance and satisfaction of stakeholders in the operation of the institution, and findings are systematically incorporated in the performance enhancement of the institution.
6. Policies, procedures and processes covering the full-spectrum of the institutional operations are comprehensive, well documented, periodically reviewed and disseminated to stakeholders.

Standard 3: Fiscal resources

The institution recognizes the significance of adequate, sufficient and accessible physical and financial resources in order to successfully implement its operations and accomplish its goals.

The institution understands that acquiring using and managing resources are essential to the institutional sustainability and contribute significantly to the enhancement of its performance.

The institution aims to diversify its financial resources to cover its operational cost and developmental plans through lobbying, fundraising, consultancies, partnerships with other organizations and entrepreneurship activities.

To achieve the above, the institution shall provide the following:

1. The physical facilities are appropriate and sufficient to the classification and size of the institution and well equipped for the delivery of its operations.
2. Financial planning and budgeting processes are aligned with the institution's goals and take into consideration proposed changes and expected demand on its operations and available resources
3. Institutional policies and procedures clearly delineate roles and responsibilities on the management and use of resources at every level of the institution and set out a rigorous

system of evaluation of their adequacy and sufficiency in carrying out the operations of the institution

4. Detailed inventory of available resources on campus and off-campus is updated regularly and is disseminated to the departments/persons in charge within the institution.
5. Development plans are available for the maintenance and expansion of existing resources to meet projected activities in line with the institutional strategy.
6. Fundraising and resources development activities are designated to specific units within the institution that work in collaboration and participation with other related bodies within and outside the institution.

Standard 4: Transparency and integrity

The institution recognizes academic and intellectual freedom as the defining hallmark of higher education and acknowledges transparency and integrity as the necessary vehicles to deliver on its mission and goals as a higher education institution.

The institution aims to disseminate accurate and concise information regarding all aspects of its operations that directly influence its standing in the community through means accessible to all stakeholders.

The institution demonstrates commitment to adhere to its own policies and procedures and to comply with requirements regulating its function as a higher education institution in the country of its operation.

To achieve the above, the institution shall demonstrate the following:

1. The institution has in place an equity plan for promoting equal opportunity and non-discriminatory measures affecting all decisions regarding students, employees and

external relations. The plan is integrated into the policies and procedures of the institution and is periodically reviewed and evaluated.

2. The institution has effective mechanisms for disseminating and communicating up-to-date institutional information, statistics and performance indicators, achievements, modifications or announcements, decisions and decrees to all stakeholders in a candid and open manner. Mechanisms include but are not limited to regular *ad hoc* publications, circulars and newsletters in print and/or digital format as well as an active website with an extensive site map with open access.
3. The institution carries out regular internal and external audits of all its administrative and financial operations in line with best practices and publishes this information to relevant governing bodies.
4. The institution publishes regularly an audited budget outlining all sources of income and expenditure items in a manner that is accessible to its stakeholders and boosts confidence in the institution's operation and management.
5. The institution and its community engage in a code of ethics embedded in all aspects of its educational activities and operations with clear directives regarding its implementation and validation.
6. The institution has a fair and transparent system for handling grievances and complaints accessible to members of its community and their associates with a clear mandate for follow-up and resolution without prejudice.
7. The institution observes a strict privacy protection policy for the release of any records or information regarding its students and employees.

Standard 5: Faculty and staff

The institution recognizes that its faculty and professional staff are the backbone of its educational operations and that their qualifications and performance contribute directly to its academic excellence and successful growth.

The institution strives to maintain and attract qualified faculty and professional staff in sufficient numbers and of diverse backgrounds, and contributes to their further development and advancement to achieve its institutional goals and fulfill its mission.

Faculty and professional staff are fully engaged in the administration and management of the institution and contribute to its governance, planning, evaluation and development.

The institution facilitates and supports faculty members' endeavors to foster the development of educational activities within the institution and to contribute positively to its scholarly environment.

The institution encourages and commends faculty members' engagement in scholarly activities involving the community, professional and academic bodies both locally and internationally to inform their activities within the institution with state-of-the-art knowledge in their field of study.

To achieve the above, the institution shall demonstrate the following:

1. The institution has clear policies on recruitment of new faculty members and career advancement of existing faculty and is committed to their implementation by allocating of financial resources and pursuing cooperation agreements and sponsorships with external agents to fund and support study leaves, scholarships, fellowships and exchanges.
2. Faculty members are actively involved in designing, evaluating and updating educational curricula and advancing the scholarship of teaching and learning.

3. Employees have access to clear documentation of policies and procedures outlining their privileges and responsibilities towards the institution and the community, and are provided with detailed job descriptions with regular evaluation and feedback.
4. Employees are engaged in continuous education to expand their knowledge and improve their skills vis-à-vis their work duties with special orientation activities for new recruits.
5. The institution has a responsible body for handling human resources and following up on all issues regarding recruitment, welfare, career advancement, financial earnings, and records keeping and updating.
6. The institution provides faculty members with reasonable resources and facilitates external collaborations to support and advance their research activities and the disseminations of their findings to the larger academic community.
7. The institution takes utmost care in matching between faculty members' qualifications and credentials and their assignment to course offerings; similar care is observed in recruiting part-time faculty members to cover a limited proportion of course offerings and only with reasonable justification.
8. Numbers:
 - Full time faculty member to student ratio:1:30
 - Full time administrative staff to student ratio: 1:50
 - Full time technicians/teaching assistants to student ratio: 1:100
 - Part-time faculty member to full time faculty member ratio: 1:5
 - Load hours for part-time faculty to load hours for full time faculty ratio: 1:5

Standard 6: Quality assurance

The institution recognizes the significance of effective academic quality assurance mechanisms in enhancing its academic performance and the quality of its graduates. Thus,

the institution implements quality assurance processes that are impartial and independent of the institution's management with sufficient autonomy and access to information for effective and candid judgment.

The institution engages all stakeholders in systematic and periodic assessment processes to evaluate its educational programs and their output for compliance with best practices and international standards.

The institution has in place specific guidelines to utilize feedback from quality assurance assessments in informing strategic leadership on vital policy changes and reforms necessary to respond to deficiencies and enhance performance within the institution.

The institution strives continuously to enhance the effectiveness of its quality assurance mechanisms and encourages its community to engage in promoting and disseminating quality culture within and outside the institution

To achieve the above, the institution shall demonstrate the following:

1. The institution has in place a *Manual for Quality Assurance* outlining the role and responsibilities of the quality assurance unit/officer and incorporating all policies and procedures pertaining to periodic assessment of educational programs and enacting measures for improvement.
2. Quality assurance unit/officer is recognized within the hierarchal structure of the institution and is mandated to implement and enhance quality assurance mechanisms and processes at educational program level through qualified personnel.
3. Assessment mechanisms are in line with accreditation criteria and international standards and utilize appropriate quantitative and qualitative tools for their validation in relation to key performance indicators for cumulative and comparative studies.

4. Faculty members responsible for delivering the educational programs lead the processes for an annual audit and periodic self-assessment, seeking feedback and recommendation from stakeholders, and follow-up on measures for their enhancement.
5. For each academic program, assessment results and action plans are documented and disseminated internally to students, faculty members and the institutional community in order to foster quality culture and boost confidence in the internal processes of the institution.

Standard 7: Student affairs and support services

The institution recognizes that students are the core beneficiaries of the institution and that their welfare and overall development are of paramount importance to the success of the institution and the fulfillment of its mission. Therefore, the institution strives to endow its campus with the physical and intellectual environment conducive to students' learning and that contribute to their personal growth and academic achievement.

The institution has in place policies and procedures that are clear, fair and in line with the institutional equity plan and that seek to match students' interests and aptitudes to the rigorous demands of the institution and its educational programs.

The institution encourages students to partake actively in curricular and extracurricular activities and to contribute positively to develop their educational program and the institution as a whole.

The institution follows closely students' academic progress and achievement and provides sufficient support activities and services to counsel students and enhance their performance.

The institution publishes academic requirements, regulations and a code of ethics through effective channels and disseminates their content and any amendments to the student population.

The institution reviews and updates their policies and strategies related to students' admission, progression and achievement regularly to ensure their relevance and fairness in light of institutional growth and the changing local and international context.

To achieve the above, the institution shall demonstrate the following:

1. Orientation is provided for new students to familiarize them with the academic requirements, regulations, academic integrity and the code of ethics enacted by the institution.
2. Students have access to comprehensive information regarding educational programs, academic requirements, regulations, code of ethics and other related matters either in print or digital format.
3. Policies, procedures, regulations, code of ethics and other related matters related to students are reviewed and updated regularly with their active participation.
4. Students are assigned to personal/academic advisors who follow their progress and well-being and provide support and guidance, as deemed necessary.
5. The institution has a unit dedicated to students' affairs, staffed with specialists and coordinators responsible for student counseling, organizing workshops and extra-curricular activities to support student assimilation into their new environment, and enrich their experience.
6. Student committees and societies are encouraged and supported, and their activities are regulated by published policies and procedures developed and approved by the institution.
7. Students representatives serve on institutional committees and contribute to the decision-making process on issues that affect students' experience and expectations.

8. The institution provides students with additional services that are both affordable and high quality that include health, career, counseling, dining, residence, transport, and other available services, as deemed necessary.
9. The institution offers financial support schemes, partial and full scholarships for students with hardship in order to alleviate the financial burdens of fees and living costs.

Standard 8: Learning resources and facilities

The institution recognizes the role of learning resources in facilitating academic program delivery and improving classroom interaction in order to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

The institution ensures that the available learning resources are comprehensive and sufficient in quantity, quality and diversity to meet the demands of the curricula and its related coursework.

The institution strives to keep library acquisitions of books, circulars, and journals in print and digital formats current and diverse to meet the needs of academic programs and research activities and to ensure that library services are digitized and accessible to the academic community at large.

The institution encourages faculty members to use learning resources in their courses and provide guidelines and procedures to ensure their appropriate and fair use within the institution.

To achieve the above, the institution shall demonstrate the following:

1. Financial allocations for maintaining and upgrading learning resources are included in the annual budget for institutional development.
2. Classrooms, laboratories and other facilities are well-equipped with learning resources to meet students' needs and are accessible for teaching.

3. Library resources are accessible, current and upgraded annually and include subscriptions to digitized international databases that cover the full range of educational offerings and research needs in the institution.
4. The library runs regular briefings of its new acquisitions through its website and circulars and offers additional services that include, but are not limited to, tools for detecting plagiarized students work.
5. Comprehensive and updated library policies, regulations and procedures are in place, including library access, circulation policy, acquisition and collection reduction, role and responsibility of the librarian, policy and procedure on material selection, operational matters and services, code of conduct for the use of library recourses, and image reproduction and copyright law.
6. The institution maintains a website with a logical organization that spans the full spectrum of its operations and activities, and has a secure portal for students' and employees' services.
7. The institution has a Learning Management System that supports delivery of academic programs and facilitates teacher-learner and learner-learner interaction.
8. The institution maintains and develops policies and procedures for the fair and proper use of its technology resources and entrusts them to the relevant departments for following up and enforcement:
 - Computers and software upgrade/replacement policy
 - Laboratory and instruments' policy
 - Use of technology resources and data security policies
 - Guidelines on available IT services and their proper use
 - IT support and helpdesk

- Guidelines on confidentiality and integrity of the academic and administrative systems and the institutional network
- Health and safety policies
- Special consideration for persons with disabilities
- Security and emergency policies

Standard 9: Educational programs

The institution recognizes that graduates are the ultimate output of its function as a higher education institution and offers educational programs that are current and rigorous in academic content, relevant to the labor market and academic pursuits, and are in line with its mission and goals.

The institution offers educational programs that have specific intended learning outcomes that span knowledge, understanding and core competencies appropriate to the field of study that are regularly reviewed and updated to ensure their relevance to the educational program mission, goals and the degree level.

The institution scrutinizes the developmental needs within the local and international context for skilled graduates and reflects on its financial, fiscal and human resources in their expansion into new educational programs while seeking collaborations with other institutions, employers and society at large in facilitating and guiding its development and implementation.

The institution ensures that the degree levels it offers reflect in content, delivery and assessment the level descriptors at different levels of attainment in line with the national qualification framework (when ratified) or an internationally recognized system for qualifications (UNESCO-ISCED 2013).

The institution develops and implements diverse and appropriate teaching, learning resources and methodologies, and assessment strategies to measure students' progression and achievement of the intended learning outcomes.

The institution maintains educational program specifications that include program design details, goals, intended learning outcomes, structure, content, teaching and learning techniques, and assessment methods.

The institution strives to provide educational programs with qualified teaching staff and state-of-the-art physical resources to realize the full potential of its educational programs and maximize the learning environment for its students.

The institution has a rigorous evaluation system for educational program revision and updating in terms of curricula content and available physical and human resources with participation of all stakeholders, including students and graduates, and continually demonstrates their content currency, efficient delivery and measurable students' learning outcomes.

To achieve the above, the institution shall demonstrate the following:

Educational program rationale

1. The educational program is subjected to an evidence-based feasibility study that includes statistical information and surveys as deemed necessary to demonstrate current market and projected needs for graduates of the educational program and their opportunities for employment or otherwise within the local and international context.
2. The educational program has references to well-recognized benchmarks, developed by academic or professional entities, that demonstrate the educational programs' consistency with the level of the qualification and the effectiveness of its specifications in achieving identified core competencies.

3. The educational program has a mission statement that is consistent with the ultimate mission of the institution, clear and appropriate at the level of the degree, and encourages scientific research and collaboration at the national and the international levels.
4. The educational program's goals are well-articulated, appropriate at the level of the qualification, consistent with its mission, contain clear intended learning outcomes that span knowledge and understanding, core skills, attitudes and ethics appropriate to the field of specialization, and advance personal development in the form of intellectual, professional and practical skills.
5. The educational program has well-articulated intended learning outcomes (ILOs) that are consistent with the program's mission, appropriate at the level of the qualification and derived from the program goals.

Program structure

1. The educational program is in line with the degree specifications as outlined in this standard.
2. The educational program has a clear curriculum that outlines the full range of courses, their content workload, and learning resources and assessment strategies to ensure the fulfillment of the program's intended learning outcomes and students' progression from one level to the next.
3. The educational program's courses are of such breadth and depth to meet the intended learning outcomes at course level and contribute to attaining the overall intended learning outcomes of the program.
4. The educational program's courses have comprehensive detailed syllabi that cover content, workload, a detailed plan for course delivery, assessment and learning resources.

5. The educational program has an academic plan for the duration of the program that facilitates students' gradual transition and achievement without compromising the quality of delivery and learning.
6. The educational program has practical and/or training components, of sufficient weight in the academic plan that are appropriate in depth to the level of the qualification and ensure the delivery of the core competences.
7. The educational program encourages, supports and facilitates scientific research and related activities in a manner that is consistent with the level of the qualification and the delivery of its intended learning outcomes.

Human and physical resources

1. The educational program has a qualified and sufficient number of faculty members to develop, supervise and deliver its content and assess its effectiveness in achieving its mission and goals.
2. The educational program is supported by sufficient and qualified teaching and research assistants and technicians in delivering its mission.
3. The education program has sufficient and well-equipped facilities to cover the full spectrum of its courses and to facilitate student-centered learning.
4. The educational program is supported by library resources that are current, comprehensive, accessible and of sufficient quantity and quality, including textbooks, reference books, manuscripts, periodic journal and multi-media that cover the full breadth and depth of disciplines within the specialization.
5. The educational program has identified training sites and facilities, as appropriate, that accommodate the needs of students and supervising staff, and contribute positively to the student learning, progression and achievement.

Quality assurance processes and procedures

1. Policies and procedures governing educational programs' structure, curricula, delivery, assessment, student progression and achievement are impartial, well documented and communicated to all stakeholders, consistently implemented and periodically reviewed and updated.
2. The educational program implements quality assurance procedures at program and course levels for the evaluation of the program's effectiveness in achieving its intended learning outcomes in relation to specific performance indicators that are continuously monitored, evaluated and updated.
3. Feedback on program effectiveness is sought from all stakeholders, including current students, graduates, faculty members, employers and professional bodies, as relevant; findings are systematically implemented in program development and enhancement.

Degree specification

The following academic degrees can be offered by higher education institutions and are accredited by AQAC:

- Associate Diploma or its equivalent;
- Bachelor Degree or its equivalent;
- Education Diploma
- Higher Diploma or its equivalent;
- Master Degree or its equivalent;
- Doctoral Degree (or Doctor of Philosophy)

AQAC also accredits the following non-academic degree in recognition of the contribution of higher education institutions to continuing education:

- Professional Diploma

Additional requirements for each degree are summarized in the table below:

Degree Specifications – Additional Requirements		
Degrees	Program structure	Human resources
Associate Diploma	Total credit hours 66-72 cr. hrs.* or its equivalent after successful completion of Tawjihi. Degree duration Deliverable within four academic semesters** (or two academic years excluding any summer sessions) and limited to a maximum student load of 18 cr. hrs./semester. General education requirements Limited to 15-16 cr.hrs. to consolidate student transition to higher education and	Full-time teaching staff <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Minimum of 3 faculty members holding PhD or master's degree with appropriate work and teaching experience in the discipline.- Maximum teaching load of 15 cr. hrs. or its equivalent during a regular semester and a maximum teaching load of

	<p>reinforce basic skills and competences vital for student progression and achievement.</p> <p>Specialization requirements</p> <p>50-57 cr. hrs. with a minimum of 10% elective courses.</p> <p>Practical/training requirements</p> <p>For vocational specialization, practical courses shall constitute a minimum of 50% of specialization requirements, implemented on or off- campus as deemed necessary.</p> <p>Other</p> <p>The program academic plan shall be approved by the General Directorate for Technical and Vocational Education at the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, where relevant.</p>	<p>6 cr. hrs. or its equivalent during a summer session.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maximum student to-full-time faculty members ratio of 20:1. - For vocational degrees 2 qualified technicians covering main topics within the discipline. <p>Part-time teaching staff</p> <p>Academic load of part-time faculty members shall be limited to 20% of the total academic load in the program in any semester.</p>
<p>Bachelor (4-year program)</p> <p>See Appendix ..</p>	<p>Total credit hours</p> <p>120-148 cr. hrs. or its equivalent after successful completion of Tawjihi</p> <p>Degree types</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Single specialization – hybrid (major <i>X</i> /minor <i>Y</i>) awarded as a single degree <p>Degree duration</p> <p>Deliverable within eight academic semesters (or four academic years excluding any summer sessions) and a maximum student load of 18 cr. hrs. per semester.</p> <p>General education requirements</p> <p>Limited to 42 cr. hrs. to consolidate student transition to higher education and reinforce basic skills and competences vital for student progression and achievement.</p>	<p>Full-time teaching staff</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Minimum of 4 PhD holders covering different disciplines in the specialization. – Master’s degree holders shall not exceed 20% of the total full-time faculty members. – Maximum teaching load of 15 cr. hrs. or its equivalent during a regular semester and a maximum teaching load of 6 cr. hrs. or its equivalent during a summer session. – Maximum student-to-full-

	<p>Free electives Maximum of 6 cr. hrs.</p> <p>Specialization requirements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Single specialization: minimum of 72 cr. hrs. – Hybrid programs (Major X/Minor Y): minimum of 65 cr. hrs. for the major and 27 credit hours for the minor (see minor specifications below) – Electives constitute a maximum of 35% of specialization courses. – For applied/professional specializations, practical courses shall constitute a minimum of 30% of specialization credit hours delivered on or off-campus as deemed necessary. – Additional professional requirements/standards shall be considered in curricula design where applicable 	<p>time faculty members' ratio of 30:1</p> <p>Support staff</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Program maintains a students-to- teaching assistants' ratio of 70:1 – Maximum load for teaching assistant of 48 contact hours per week – No teaching load is assigned for teaching assistants and contact with students is supervised by teaching staff <p>Part-time teaching staff Academic load of part-time faculty members in any semester shall be limited to 20% of the total academic load in the program.</p>
Bachelor (5-year program)	<p>Total credit hours Minimum of 152 cr. hrs. or its equivalent after successful completion of Tawjihi</p> <p>Degree types</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Single specialization – Double specialization (Major X /Major Y) awarded as two separate degrees <p>Degree duration Deliverable within ten academic semesters (or five academic years excluding any summer sessions) and a maximum student load of 18 cr.hrs. per semester</p> <p>General education requirements</p>	<p>Full-time teaching staff</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Minimum of 5 PhD holders covering different disciplines in the specialization. – Master's degree holders shall not exceed 20% of the total full-time faculty members. – Maximum teaching load of 15 cr. hrs. or its equivalent during a regular semester and a maximum teaching

	<p>Limited to 42 cr. hrs to consolidate student transition to higher education and reinforce basic skills and competences vital for student progression and achievement.</p> <p>Free electives: Maximum of 6 cr. hrs.</p> <p>Specialization requirements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – For single specialization: minimum of 104 cr. hrs. – For double specialization: minimum of 90 cr. hrs. or its equivalent per specialization without double counting. – Electives constitute a maximum of 35% of specialization courses. – For applied specializations, practical courses (laboratory, training or clinical) shall constitute a minimum of 30% of specialization credit hours delivered on or off-campus as deemed necessary. – Additional professional requirements/standards shall be considered in curricula design where applicable 	<p>load of 6 cr. hrs. or its equivalent during a summer session.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Maximum student-to-full-time faculty members ratio of 30:1 <p>Support staff</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Program maintains a students-to- teaching assistants’ ratio of 70:1 – Maximum load for teaching assistant of 48 contact hours per week – No teaching load is assigned for teaching assistants and contact with students is supervised by teaching staff <p>Part-time teaching staff Academic load of part-time faculty members in any semester shall be limited to 20% of the total academic load in the program.</p>
Bachelor (6-year program)	<p>Total credit hours Minimum of 200 cr. hrs. or its equivalent after successful completion of Tawjihi.</p> <p>Degree duration Deliverable within twelve academic semesters (or six academic years excluding any summer sessions) and a maximum student load of 18 cr. hrs. per semester</p> <p>General education requirements Limited to 42 cr. hrs. that consolidate student</p>	<p>Full-time teaching staff</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Minimum of 6 PhD holders covering different disciplines in the specialization. – Master’s degree holders shall not exceed 20% of the total full-time faculty members. – Maximum teaching load of

	<p>transition to higher education and reinforce basic skills and competences vital for student progression and achievement.</p> <p>Free electives</p> <p>Maximum of 6 cr. hrs.</p> <p>Specialization requirements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – For single specialization: Minimum of 152 cr. hrs. or its equivalent – Electives constitute a maximum of 35% of specialization courses. – For applied/professional specializations, practical courses (laboratory, training or clinical) shall constitute a minimum of 30% of specialization credit hours delivered on or off-campus as deemed necessary. – Additional professional requirements/standards shall be considered in curricula design where applicable 	<p>15 cr. hrs. or its equivalent during a regular semester and a maximum teaching load of 6 cr. hrs. or its equivalent during a summer session.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Maximum student-to-full-time faculty members ratio of 30:1 <p>Support staff</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Program maintains a students-to-teaching assistants' ratio of 70:1 – Maximum load for teaching assistant of 48 contact hours per week – No teaching load is assigned for teaching assistants and contact with students is supervised by teaching staff <p>Part-time teaching staff</p> <p>Academic load of part-time faculty members in any semester shall be limited to 20% of the total academic load in the program.</p>
Minor	<p>Total credit hours</p> <p>27 cr. hrs. or its equivalent distributed as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 9 cr. hrs. at second year level; ○ 9 cr. hrs. at the third year level; and ○ 9 cr. hrs. at the fourth year level <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Minor requires accreditation by AQAC 	

	<p>unless the specialization is already accredited and offered by the institution as a single specialization bachelor degree or part of a hybrid bachelor degree</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Minor completed successfully may appear on the degree awarded and is acknowledged on the student's final transcript. 	
Education Diploma	<p>Total credit hours</p> <p>30 cr. hrs. or its equivalent after successful completion of bachelor degree or concurrent enrollment with a bachelor program.</p> <p>Degree names</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Upper basic level: teaching a specific subject or field X – Secondary level: teaching a specific subject – Higher or adult education <p>Other</p> <p>Additional professional requirements/standards shall be considered in curricula design.</p>	<p>Full-time teaching staff</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Minimum of 2 PhD holders in education in addition to 1 PhD holder in teaching each discipline for which accreditation is sought. – Master's degree holders shall not exceed 20% of the total full-time faculty members. – Maximum teaching load of 15 cr. hrs. or its equivalent during a regular semester and a maximum teaching load of 6 cr. hrs. or its equivalent during a summer session. – Maximum student-to-full-time faculty members' ratio of 30:1 <p>Part-time teaching staff</p> <p>Academic load of part-time faculty members in any semester shall be limited to 20% of the total academic load</p>

		in the program.
Higher Diploma	<p>Total credit hours 30 cr. hrs. or its equivalent after successful completion of bachelor degree of which 18-21 cr. hrs. or its equivalent in core courses.</p> <p>Degree duration Deliverable within four academic semesters (or two academic years excluding any summer sessions) and a maximum student load of 9 cr.hrs. per semester.</p> <p>Other</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Higher diploma may be part of an existing accredited Master degree program offered by the institution excluding any thesis, seminar, or remedial courses. – Professional disciplines may combine theory and practice where practical courses (laboratory, training or clinical) shall constitute a minimum of 30% of total credit hours delivered on or off-campus as deemed necessary. 	<p>Full-time teaching staff</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Minimum of 4 PhD holders in the same specialization of the program, two of them are at associate professor level. – Maximum teaching load of 15 cr. hrs. or its equivalent during a regular semester and a maximum teaching load of 6 cr. hrs. or its equivalent during a summer session. – Maximum students-to-full time faculty members' ratio of 12:1 <p>Part-time teaching staff</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Academic load of part-time faculty members in any semester shall be limited to 20% of the total academic load in the program.
Master (see Appendix)	<p>Total credit hours</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Minimum of 36 cr. hrs. or its equivalent whether as thesis track or non-thesis track after successful completion of bachelor degree – 12-18 cr. hrs. or its equivalent compulsory courses. – Thesis track: minimum of 6 cr. hrs. allocated for thesis preparation and dissertation completion. 	<p>Full-time teaching staff</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Minimum of 4 PhD holders in the same specialization of the program, two of them are at associate professor level. – Maximum teaching load of 15 cr. hrs. or its equivalent during a regular semester and a maximum teaching

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Non-thesis track in professional disciplines may combine theory and practice where practical courses (laboratory, training or clinical) shall constitute a minimum of 30% of total credit hours delivered on or off-campus as deemed necessary. <p>Degree duration</p> <p>Deliverable within four academic semesters (or two academic years excluding any summer sessions) and a maximum student load of 9 cr. hrs. per semester</p>	<p>load of 6 cr. hrs. or its equivalent during a summer session.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Maximum students-to-full time faculty members' ratio of 12:1 <p>Part-time teaching staff</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Academic load of part-time faculty members in any semester shall be limited to 20% of the total academic load in the program. <p>Thesis supervision</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Research advisor shall be a full time PhD holder with at least two publications in the specialization. – Examination committee shall include a minimum of three members (the research advisor, internal examiner from the institution and external examiner) so that each member meets the criteria for the research advisor as stated above
<p>Doctorate of Philosophy (PhD) see Appendix</p>	<p>Total credit hours</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Minimum of 48 cr. hrs. or its equivalent after successful completion of Master degree. – Minimum of 30 cr. hrs. or its equivalent in courses – Maximum of 18 cr. hrs. or its equivalent 	<p>Full-time teaching staff</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Minimum of two PhD holders at full professor level, and two at associate level in the same specialization of the program

	<p>in original research allocated for thesis preparation and dissertation completion.</p> <p>Degree duration</p> <p>Deliverable within 6 academic semesters (or three academic years excluding any summer sessions) and a maximum student load of 9 cr.hrs. per semester</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Maximum teaching load of 15 cr. hrs. or its equivalent during a regular semester and a maximum teaching load of 6 cr. hrs. or its equivalent during a summer session. – Maximum students-to-full-time faculty members' ratio of 6:1 <p>Thesis supervision</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Research advisor is full time PhD holder at associate professor level in the specialization. – Dissertation committee with a minimum of five committee members (the research advisor, one member from the same institution and three external members) with solid publication records. – Part time teaching staff Academic load of part-time faculty members in any semester shall be limited to 20% of the total academic load in the program.
Professional Diploma	<p>Total credit hours</p> <p>32 units/modules equivalent to 320 contact hours of which 70% of the program is delivered as practical independent</p>	<p>Teaching staff</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Qualified academic/professional staff

	<p>experiential learning</p> <p>Degree duration</p> <p>Minimum duration of 9 calendar months.</p>	
<p>*credit hour (cr. hr.) is equal to one hour of classroom or two hours or more in the laboratory per week during the necessary period of time for delivering a course.</p> <p>**academic semester is a period between 15-17 weeks, during which an institution offers courses.</p>		

Standard 10: Scientific research and related activities

The institution recognizes the importance of scientific research and related activities in generating and expanding knowledge and seeks to reflect them on the delivery of its educational programs to advance student learning and achievement.

The institution supports and promotes scientific research activities in all its operations: strategic planning, budget allocation, and physical and human resources acquisition and development.

The institution is actively engaged in pursuing high-profile collaborations with centers of knowledge and excellence nationally and internationally to advance its exposure and participation in cutting-edge research and innovation.

The institution encourages and rewards faculty members' research and scholarly activities and promotes their collaborations with other local and international organizations engaged in similar activities.

The institution fosters research methodologies in the delivery of its educational programs at the level of the qualification and encourages students' active participation in such activities through projects, seminars or direct collaborations.

To achieve the above, the institution shall demonstrate the following:

1. Within its hierarchy the institution assigns departments mandates to encourage and support quality scientific research and external collaborations appropriate to its size and classification and directed by qualified active researchers and administrators.
2. Research strategies, policies and procedures are comprehensive and consistent with the institution's mission, and are periodically updated and disseminated to the institution's community.

3. Research ethics constitute a core element of institutional regulations of scientific research, and researchers' compliance is continuously monitored, evaluated and reported.
4. Annual financial budget contains reasonable allocation of fiscal resources to support scientific research activities within the institution with clear directives for research support for faculty members and student.
5. Academic and intellectual freedom is observed at every level in the institution and documented in a clear manner.
6. Regulations regarding intellectual property rights of researchers, collaborators and the institution are in place that delineate rights and responsibilities for all parties.
7. Research collaborations and affiliations with partners nationally and internationally are effective in advancing research activities within the institution and have distinctive outcomes, e.g., conferences and events, exchanges, and fellowships annually, and contribute to the research profile of the institution.
8. The institution clearly defines its expectations for faculty members and students involved in research and scholarly activities and regularly evaluates their research outputs.
9. Research centers and laboratories are established at the institutions that are engaged in theoretical, applied and community-based research with direct links and collaborations with the civil society institutions.

Standard 11: Community engagement

The institution recognizes the community as a partner in developing and enhancing the institution's educational programs, research and services and its role in improving its output and performance.

The institution's community engagement activities are consistent with its mission and aim to facilitate and strengthen collaborations, exchanges and sharing of resources between the institution and the community to maximize benefits to both.

The institution promotes broad community engagement at every level of its operation and encourages its faculty members, staff and students' participation in community-based activities with the public and the private sectors and the civil society at large.

The institution integrates community activities in the faculty and staff members' periodic evaluations and incorporates employers' advice, suggestions and comments related to enhancement of program development and enhancement

To achieve the above, the institution shall demonstrate the following:

1. Community engagement policies, procedures and plans are systematically developed, implemented, and periodically assessed and reviewed to consolidate the roles of the institution and its partners in a meaningful collaboration and output.
2. The institution has within its hierarchy unit/units designated for advancing community engagement at different levels of the institution with clear responsibility and guidelines for planning and implementing general and specific activities to fulfill the institution's mission in this regards.
3. Community partners provide training and placements of students during their study to enhance their learning and competences in direct cooperation with the relevant departments.
4. Faculty members' and staff participation in national committees and expert bodies is supported by the institution and recognized in their evaluation and promotion.
5. Potential employers and professional bodies are actively involved in evaluating and developing educational programs through their formal participation in advisory committees and relevant councils.
6. Students are involved in community-based learning and activities that contribute to their awareness of their surroundings and their good citizenship.

5. LICENSING HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

5.1 Initial licensure

Definition

Initial licensure qualifies the legal entity/personality to commence establishing a governmental or private higher education institution after obtaining the necessary permissions, approvals and registration with the legal authorities, and is effective for maximum period of three years.

Conditions and requirements

The legal entity/personality submits to AQAC a summarized biographical description of the sought institution, justifying its establishment and stating its mission, objectives, plans and educational policies and development.

The applicant is a legal entity/personality and has registered the establishment with the official authorities according to the classification of the institution, as follow:

- Private institution: shall be registered with the Ministry of National Economy as a private limited company or as a public company.
- Governmental institution: shall be granted a decree by the Council of Ministers.

Applications' submission

The Commission accepts applications for initial licensure on a rolling basis and will process the application during the forthcoming session. Currently, AQAC has the following sessions every year:

- First session: 15 May until 15 July
- Second session: 15 November until 15 January

Standards

The applicant must comply with all standards required for the initial licensure as stipulated in *The Licensure and Accreditation Manual* as adopted by the AQAC.

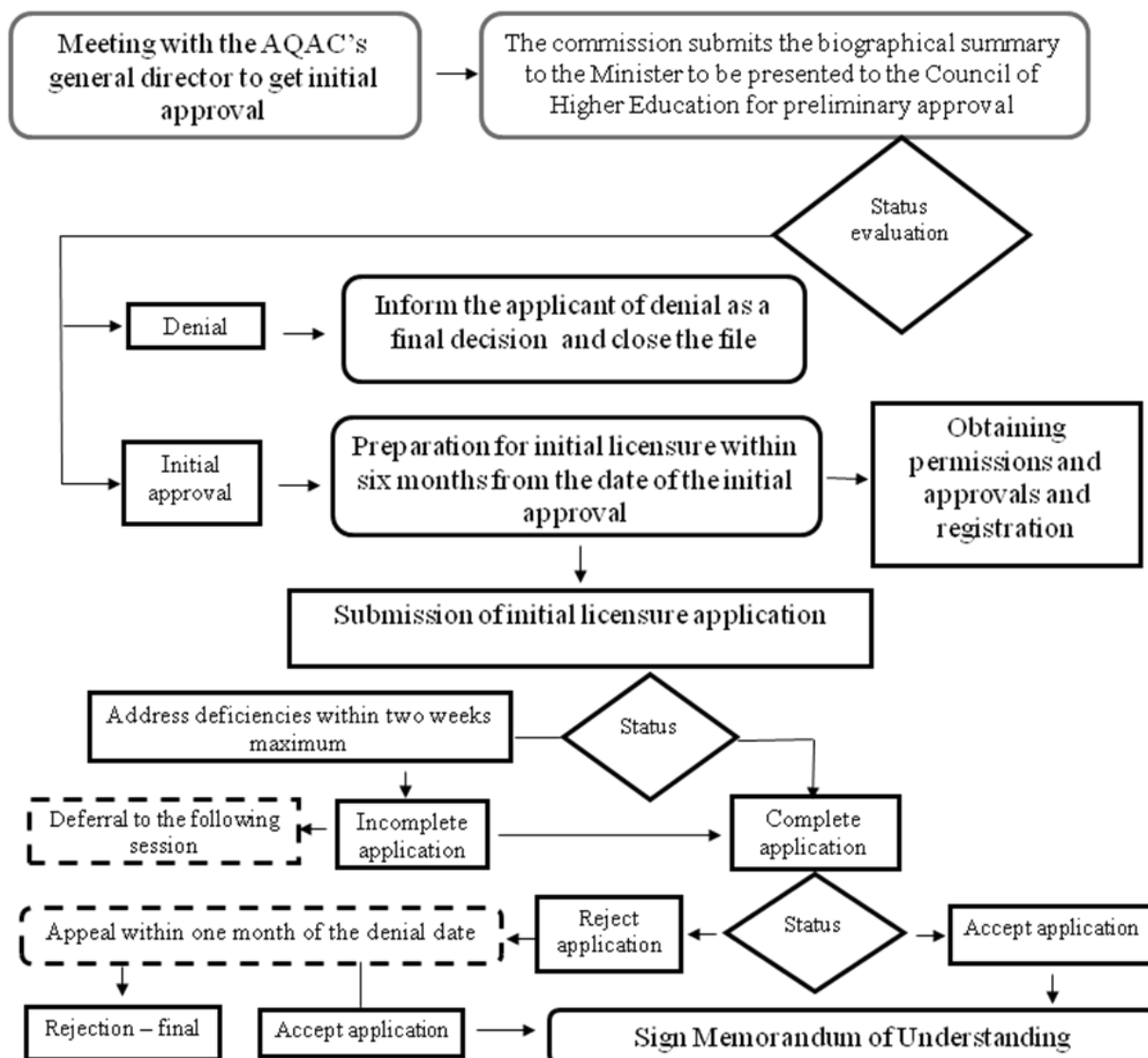
Procedures

The procedures for initial licensure are summarized in four successive sequential stages as follow:

Procedure	Responsible personnel	Forms and instructions	Duration
(1) Initial approval			3 months
The legal entity/personality meets with the Commission's director and submits biographical summary about the sought institution	Commission Head	Form (1): Summary for higher education institution biography	1 month
The Commission submits the file to the Minister of Education and Higher Education for submission to the Council of Ministers for preliminary approval according to public policies for higher education	Commission Head		1 month
In case of obtaining initial approval, the applicant entity submits initial licensure application during a period not exceeding six months from the date of issuance of the initial approval. In case of rejection, the decision is final and the file is closed.	Commission Head		1 month
(2) Application submission			6 months
The applicant obtains permissions and approvals and registers with the required legal authorities according to the classification of the institution.	Applicant		
The completed initial licensure application is submitted to the Commission, including payment of the prescribed fees, and conforms to all requirements as soft and hard copies.	Applicant	Form (2): Application for initial licensure for higher education institution. Commission financial by-laws.	
The file must contain the documents in Microsoft Word or PDF format, and any scanned documents should be according to the following criteria: Color Sel.(Send/Store): Grayscale Scan Resolution: 200x100dpi File Format: PDF Image Quality (File Format): Low High Compression PDF Image: Low	Applicant		

The soft copy of the application is submitted as a Microsoft Word or PDF format, and any scanned documents is restricted to the following specifications: Color Sel.(Send/Store): Grayscale Scan Resolution: 200x100dpi File Format: PDF Image Quality (File Format): Low High Compression PDF Image: Low	Assigned Staff member		
(3) Evaluation			4 months
The Commission forms a team of academics and professionals with expertise and competence supervised by a coordinator from the Commission to study and evaluate the application, perform site visits, and conduct interviews where needed, and then provides a comprehensive assessment report to the Commission.	Commission Head		3 months
The Commission sends the evaluation report to the applicant for consideration to address weaknesses and deficiencies, make the necessary changes, and send its reply to the Commission in a period not exceeding two weeks from the date of receiving the report.	Assigned Staff member		2 weeks
An assigned Commission staff member sends the applicant's response to the evaluation team to assess the amendments and submits a final report to the Commission, including recommendations and suggestions in a period not exceeding two weeks.	Assigned Staff member		2 weeks
(4) Decision making			2 months
The Commission presents the file after completing the evaluation process to the Board to take appropriate decision	Commission Head		1 month
If the Board approves the initial licensure, a Memorandum of Understanding is signed between the Commission and the applicant institution describing the requirements that must be met by the applicant institution within a maximum duration of three years, or the initial licensure is revoked, unless the duration is officially extended based on legitimate justifications	Commission's Board	Form (3): Memorandum of Understanding	1 month
In case of rejection of the application, the applicant institution may appeal the decision according to the appeal process	Applicant	Appeal instructions	1 month

Flow chart



5.2 Licensure

Definition

Licensure is granting the approval for the applicant higher education institution that has completed all the requirements and conditions for licensure to commence work as a higher education institution, qualifies it to apply for educational programs' accreditation, and is effective for a maximum period of five years.

Conditions and requirements

The applicant institution has valid initial licensure when it has completed all conditions and requirements set forth in the Memorandum of Understanding as signed between the applicant institution and the Commission.

Application submission

The Commission accepts applications for licensure on a rolling basis and will process the application during the forthcoming session. Currently, AQAC has the following sessions every year:

- First session: 15 May until 15 July
- Second session: 15 November to 15 January

Standards

The applicant must comply with all standards required for the initial licensure as stipulated in *The Licensure and Accreditation Manual* as adopted by the Commission.

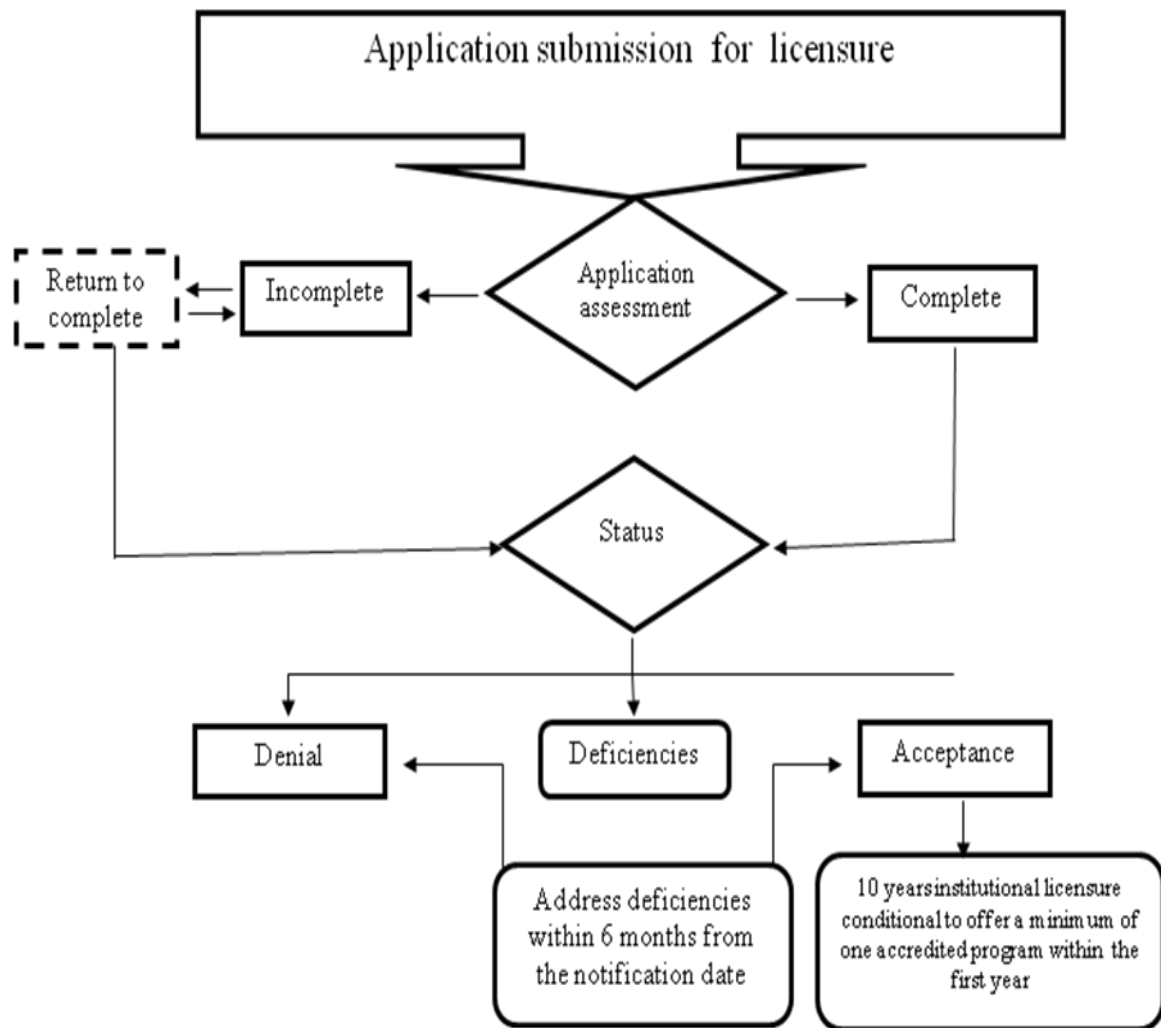
Procedures

The procedures for licensing higher education institution are summarized in three successive sequential stages, as follow:

Procedures	Responsible personnel	Forms and instructions	Duration
(1) Application submission			
The licensure application is submitted electronically and in hard copy to the Commission during the specified period for applying, conforming to all the requirements and academic standards, including the prescribed fees.	Applicant	Form (4): Application for licensing higher education institution. <i>Licensure and Accreditation Manual.</i> Commission financial by-laws.	
The file must contain the documents in Microsoft Word or PDF format, and any scanned documents should be according to the following criteria: Color Sel.(Send/Store): Grayscale Scan Resolution: 200x100dpi File Format: PDF Image Quality (File Format): Low High Compression PDF Image: Low	Applicant		
The Commission informs the applicant of any deficiencies that must be addressed and completed within a maximum of two weeks, or the application is deferred to the following period.	Assigned staff member		1 month
(2) Evaluation			4 months
The Commission forms a team of academics and professionals with expertise and competence supervised by a coordinator from the Commission to study and evaluate the application, perform site visits, and conduct interviews where needed, and then provides a comprehensive assessment report to the Commission, clarifying the strengths and weaknesses, and providing recommendations and suggestions for development	Commission Head		3 months
The Commission sends the evaluation report to the applicant for consideration to address weaknesses and deficiencies, make the necessary changes, and send its reply to the Commission in a period	Assigned Staff member		2 weeks

not exceeding two weeks from the date of receiving the report.			
An assigned Commission staff member sends the applicant's response to the evaluation team to assess the amendments adopted by the institution. The team submits a final report, including the recommendations and suggestions, to the Commission about the extent of institution's effectiveness and its readiness to commence as a higher education institution and begin offering educational programs in a period not exceeding two weeks.	Assigned Staff member		2 weeks
(3) Decision making			2 months
The Commission presents the file after completing the evaluation process to the Board to take appropriate decision	Commission Head		
If the Board approves the application, licensure is granted for 10 years, and the institution shall start applying for educational program accreditation of which one must be accredited within the first year of granting the licensure or the licensure is revoked, unless an extension is officially submitted based on legitimate justifications and approved by the Board.	Commission Board		1 month
If the institution does not proceed to meet the required conditions adequately, the institution is given a maximum period of six months to comply with the criteria, after which the Commission re-evaluates the institution's application.	Commission		6 months
In case of rejection, the file is closed and the decision is final. The institution may re-apply for new licensure after two years of closing the file and completing a new licensure application conforming to all the requirements.	Applicant		2 years

Flow chart



5.3 Re-licensure

Definition

Re-licensure is renewing the licensure for a higher education institution to ensure the continuity of its operations with professionalism and transparency according to its adopted mission and goals and in line with the commission's standards. Re-licensure is effective for a maximum period of ten years.

Conditions which require applying for re-licensure

A licensured institution is required to submit for re-licensure during the last year of its effective licensure. In addition, the institution must apply for re-licensure in case it desires to perform any of the major changes or amendments listed in this *Manual*, and must modify the terms of its licensure prior to implementing any changes.

Application submission

Licensured higher education institutions that meet the above criteria must apply for re-licensure within one year prior to implementing any changes. Applications for re-licensure are accepted on a rolling basis.

Standards

The higher education institution applying for re-licensure must comply with all academic standards as stipulated in the *AQAC Licensure and Accreditation Manual*.

Procedures

The procedures for re-licensing higher education institutions are summarized in five successive sequential stages, as follow:

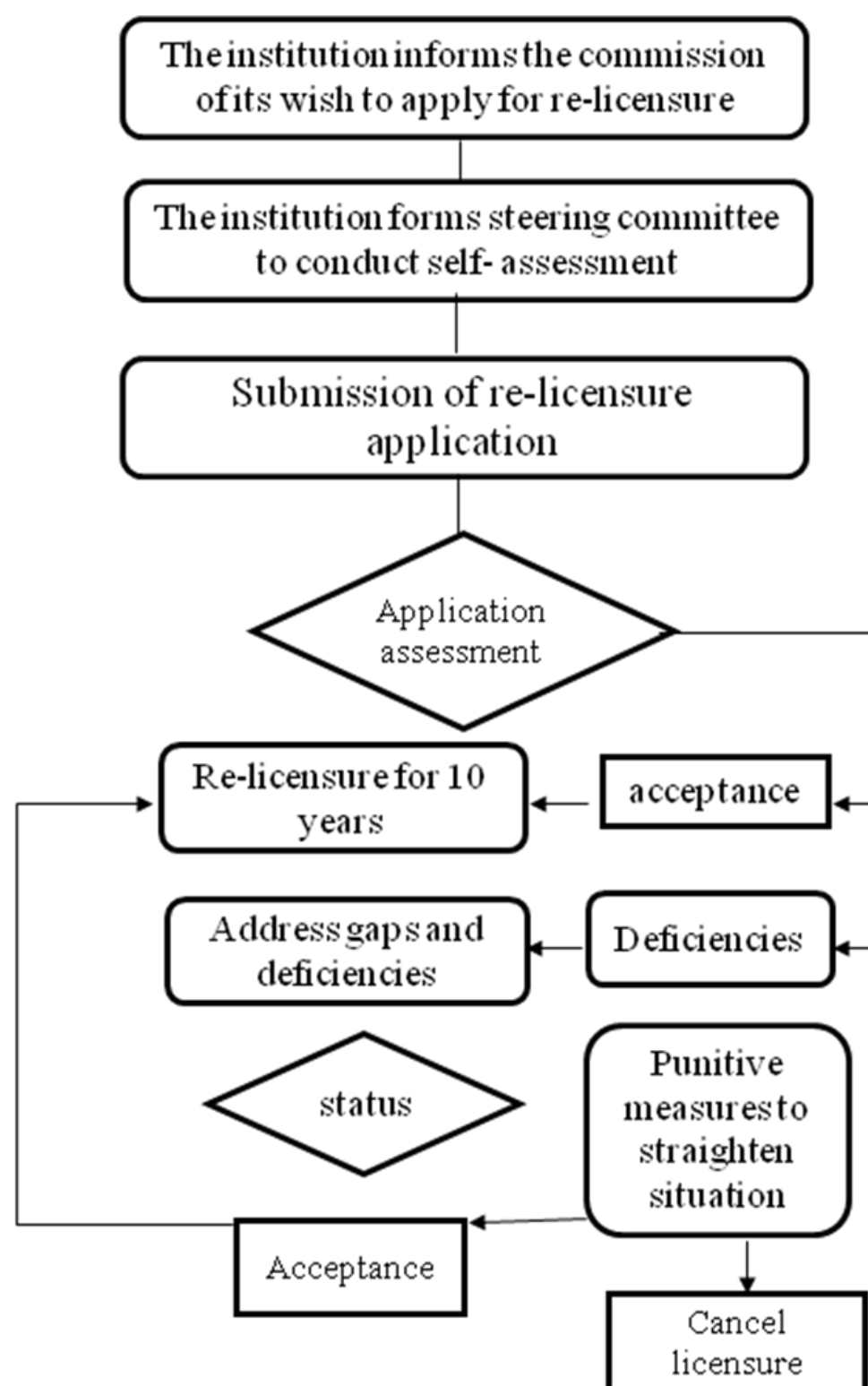
Procedures	Responsible personnel	Forms and instructions	Duration
(1) Commission notification			
The HEI informs the commission officially in writing of its intention to apply for re-licensure, stating the reason(s) for the application.	HEI		
The head of the Commission evaluates the need for immediate re-licensure and notifies the applicant HEI to start the self-assessment procedures.	Commission Head		
(2) Self-assessment			6 months
<p>The applicant HEI forms a steering committee of specialists and experts (administrators, faculty members, students and alumni) representing the institution as a whole and supervised by a well-qualified assigned coordinator to perform the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Determine the timetable for the stages of the self-assessment – Form sub-committees and working groups participating in the self-assessment – Involve all academic departments and the teaching staff of the institution in the self-assessment process – Collect data and documents related to the self-assessment process and analyzing it. – Write the minor and sub- reports and submit them to the authorized committee to draft the final report. 	HEI	Form (5): Application for re-licensure of higher education institution. <i>Licensure and Accreditation Manual</i>	
<p>The authorized committee is mandated to write the self-assessment report, which must be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Critical and reflecting the academic standards and their items as adopted by the Commission – Reflective of the institution's image as a whole in terms of achievements, challenges, and future plans for further development and improvement, and providing an in-depth analysis of the strengths and 			

<p>the weaknesses of the institution's performance while reflecting the awareness of what should be done for improvements.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Supported with relevant appendices, including documents, files and statistics available for review by an external evaluation team. – Final draft of the report is circulated to faculty members and administrative to review and scrutinize before adoption, and then send it to the Commission to commence the external evaluation procedures 			
(3) Submission of the application to the commission			
The institution submits its re-licensure application to the Commission electronically and in hard copy indicating the reasons for re-licensure, and conforming to all the requirements, conditions and standards, including prescribed fees. The re-licensure application should include the self-assessment report and supporting documents where needed.	HEI	Commission financial by-laws	
<p>The submitted file includes documents in Microsoft Word or PDF formats, and any scanned documents should meet the following criteria:</p> <p>Color Sel. (Send/Store): Grayscale</p> <p>Scan Resolution: 200x100dpi</p> <p>File Format: PDF</p> <p>Image Quality (File Format): Low</p> <p>High Compression PDF Image: Low.</p>			
The institution is informed of any deficiencies in the application that must be addressed and completed within a maximum of two weeks.	Commission staff member		2 weeks
(4) External evaluation			4 months
The Commission forms a team of academics and professionals with experience and specialty, supervised by a coordinator, and informs the institution to ensure there is no conflict of interest	Commission Head		2 weeks
<p>The external evaluation team is tasked with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Reviewing the self-assessment report accurately and studying all the 	Commission's external evaluation team	Form (6): External evaluation report for existing	2 months

<p>supporting documents relevant to the institution's evaluation in order to verify the accuracy and objectivity of the submitted report.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Conducting an on-site visit to the institution for at least two days arranged by the Commission and accompanied by one of its staff members. The visit includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Meetings with senior management of the institution, quality assurance unit employees, supportive and administrative departments, full-time and part-time teaching staff, technical staff, students and graduates as necessary. ○ Visits to the educational facilities, including teaching halls, laboratories and libraries, and assessing the equipment used to support the educational process and extra-curricular activities. ○ Review of the documented evidence and the required documents such as minutes of meetings for various boards, educational programs and courses files, educational program reports, quality assurance unit reports and other relevant documents. ○ Meeting with the senior management of the institution to provide a summary of the results of the visit including suggestions and recommendations in this regard. – Writing a comprehensive evaluation report following the Commission's guidelines, according to its adopted standards. The report must be explicit and clear, especially with respect to amendments requested by the institution, and must be approved by the team members prior to its submission to the Commission's general director. 		higher education institution	
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The Commission sends a copy of the report to the institution to study, address the weaknesses and inadequacies, and make the necessary changes and adjustments in line with recommendations and suggestions in a period of one month at the most from of the date of receiving the report.	Assigned staff member		1 month
The Commission sends the institution's reply to the evaluation team to review, assess the amendments, and make recommendations in a final report which shall be submitted to the commission within two weeks.	Commissions Head		2 weeks
(5) Decision making			1 month
The Commission presents the entire file after commencing the evaluation process to the Commission's Board to take the appropriate decision	Commission Head		1 month
If approved by the Board, the institution is granted re-licensure for another ten years according to the Board's amendments.	Commission Board		
In case of disapproval due to incomplete modifications, the institution is given a warning period of six months maximum to complete the requirements; otherwise the Board may adopt incremental punitive actions against the institution in given periods of time, which might result in denying the re-licensure.	Commission Board		

Flow chart



5.4 LICENSING NEW COLLEGE WITHIN AN EXISTING UNIVERSITY

Definition

Is granting the approval for a higher education institution that has fulfilled all the requirements and the conditions to establish an integrated educational administrative body and offer a number of educational programs under its umbrella leading to academic degrees.

Conditions and requirements

The college offers at least one accredited educational program or is in the process of accreditation.

Application submission

The Commission accepts applications for licensure on a rolling basis and will process the application during the forthcoming session. Currently, AQAC has the following sessions every year:

- First session: 15 May until 15 July
- Second session: 1 November to 15 January

Standards

The applicant must comply with all related standards in *The Licensure and Accreditation Manual* adopted by the Commission

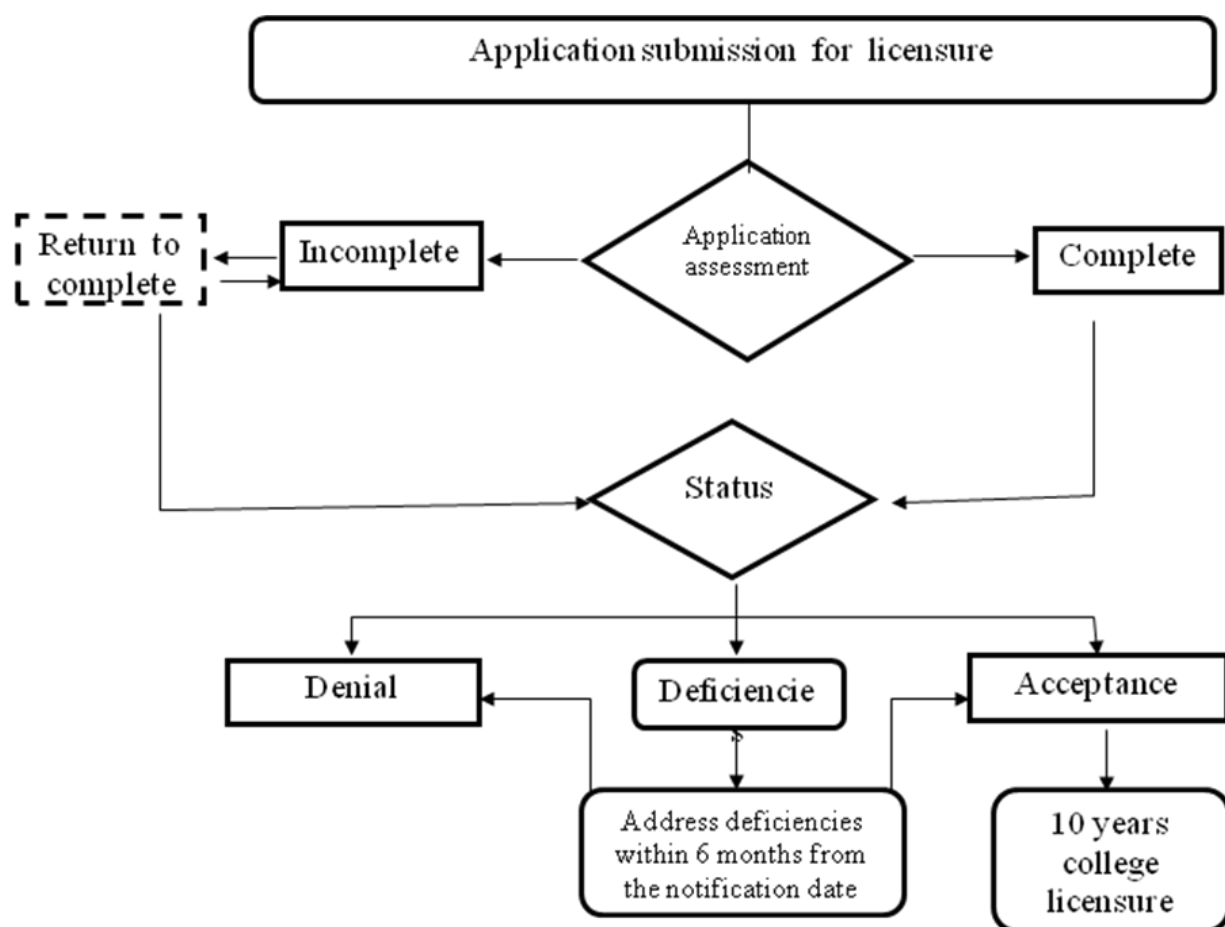
Procedures

The procedures for licensing new college within an established university can be summarized in three consecutive sequential stages:

Procedures	Responsible personnel	Forms and instructions	Duration
(1) Application submission			
The application for licensure is submitted to the Commission electronically and in hard copy, conforming to all requirements and standards, including payment of applicable fees	Applicant	Form (12): Application for licensing a new college within an established university. <i>Licensure and Accreditation Manual.</i> Commission financial by-laws.	
The submitted file includes documents in Microsoft Word or PFD formats, and any scanned documents should meet the following criteria: Color Sel. (Send/Store): Grayscale Scan Resolution: 200x100dpi File Format: PDF Image Quality (File Format): Low High Compression PDF Image: Low.	Applicant		
The Commission informs the applicant of any deficiencies that must be addressed and completed within a maximum of two weeks, or the application is deferred to the following period.	Appointed staff member		2 weeks
(2) Evaluation			4 months
The Commission forms a team of academics and professionals with expertise and competence, supervised by a coordinator from the Commission, to study and evaluate the application, perform site visits and conduct interviews where needed, and then provide a comprehensive assessment report to the Commission clearly indicating the strengths and weaknesses, and make recommendations and suggestions accordingly.	Commission Head		3 months
The Commission sends the evaluation report to the applicant for consideration to address weaknesses and deficiencies, make the necessary changes, and send	Appointed Staff member		2 weeks

its reply to the Commission in a period not exceeding two weeks from the date of receiving the report.			
The Commission sends the applicant's response to the evaluation team to assess the amendments and its efficiency, and submits a final report to the Commission, including recommendations regarding licensing the college and suggestions in a period not exceeding two weeks.	Appointed Staff member		2 weeks
(3) Decision making			2 months
The Commission presents the complete file after the evaluation process to the Board to take appropriate decision	Commission Head		

Flow chart



6. ACCREDITING HIGHER EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

6.1 Accrediting educational program

Definition

Is the approval granted to licensured higher education institution to offer an educational program after fulfilling the requirements and achieving the related conditions according to the standards adopted by the institution with the condition to commence delivering the program within one year from the accreditation date; otherwise the accreditation is revoked.

Conditions and requirements

- The applicant higher education institution has valid licensure.
- The proposed educational program is compatible with the Commissions' strategies in terms of its level of qualification and educational field.
- If the applicant higher education institution is governmental, it must obtain prior approval from the Minister of Education and Higher Education in order to apply for accreditation.

Application submission

The Commission accepts applications for accreditation on a rolling basis and will process the application during the forthcoming session. Currently, AQAC has the following sessions every year:

- First session: 15 May until 15 June
- Second session: 15 November to 15 December

Standards

The applicant must comply with all related standards in *The Licensure and Accreditation Manual* adopted by the Commission.

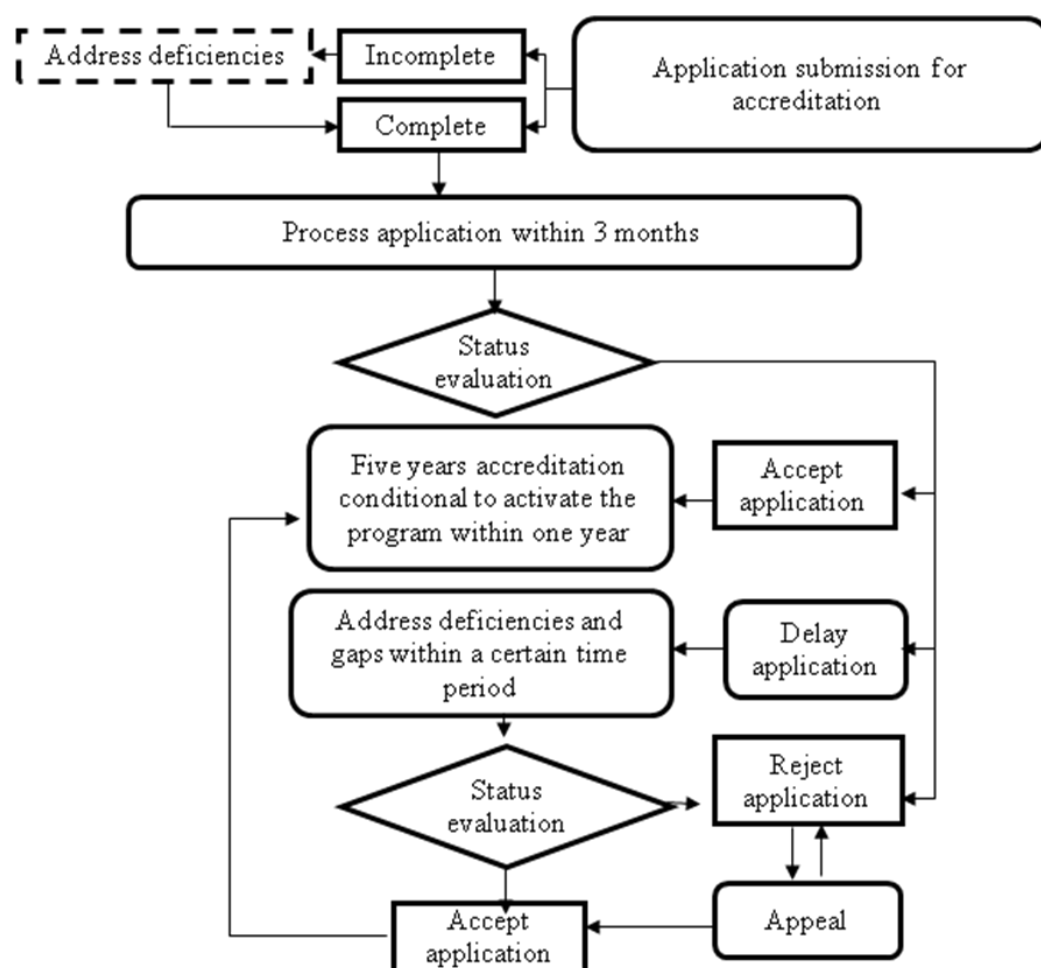
Procedures

The procedures for accrediting new educational programs can be summarized in three consecutive sequential stages:

Procedures	Responsible party	Forms and instructions	Duration
(1) Application submission			
The application for accreditation is submitted to the Commission electronically and in hard copy in English and Arabic for graduate programs and bachelor programs in scientific disciplines, and shall conform to all requirements and standards, including payment of applicable fees.	Applicant	Form(7): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application for accrediting new educational program. • <i>Licensure and Accreditation Manual</i>. • Commission financial by-laws. 	
The submitted file includes documents in Microsoft Word or PFD formats, and any scanned documents should meet the following criteria: Color Sel. (Send/Store): Grayscale Scan Resolution: 200x100dpi File Format: PDF Image Quality (File Format): Low High Compression PDF Image: Low.	Applicant		
The Commission informs the applicant of any deficiencies that must be addressed and completed within a maximum of two weeks, or the application is deferred to the following period.	Appointed staff member		2 weeks
(2) Evaluation			4 months
The Commission selects academic and professionals evaluators with expertise and knowledge to study the application and conduct site visits, where needed, and finally provides a comprehensive assessment report to the Commission.	Commission Head	Instructions and guidelines for evaluating educational programs according to the level of qualification Form (8): Evaluation report for educational program Form (9): On-site visit report	3 months

The Commission sends the evaluation report to the applicant for consideration to address weaknesses and deficiencies, make the necessary changes and to send its reply to the Commission in a period not exceeding two weeks from the date of receiving the report.			2 weeks
The Commission sends the applicant's response to the evaluators to assess the amendments and its efficiency and submits a final report to the Commission, including recommendations and suggestions within maximum of two weeks.	Appointed Staff member		2 weeks
(3) Decision making			2 months
The Commission presents the complete file after the evaluation process to the Board to take appropriate decision.	Commission Head		1 month
If the Board approves the application, the educational program is granted 5 years under the condition that the educational program is activated within one year from the date of the accreditation, or the accreditation is revoked, unless an extension is officially submitted based on legitimate justifications and approved by the Board.	Commission Board		
If the Board decides that the institution needs to complete some required conditions prior to granting the accreditation, the institution is given a maximum period of six months to fulfill the requirements, after which the Board re-evaluates the accreditation application and takes the appropriate decision.	Commission Board		
In case the Board denies the accreditation, the institution has the right to appeal the decision according to the adopted appeal instructions and procedures at the Commission.	Institution	Appeal instructions	1 month

Flow chart



6.2 Re-accreditation

Definition

Is the renewal of accreditation of an active existing educational program after reviewing its intended learning outcomes and goals, and following up with its delivery to further develop the program's academic plan and ensure the adequacy of its human and learning resources. The re-accreditation aims to enhance the effectiveness of the educational program by monitoring its quality assurance mechanisms and procedures in order to achieve the academic standards adopted by the AQAC. Re-accreditation is effective for five to seven years from the date of its renewal.

Conditions which require applying for re-accreditation

A licensured institution is required to submit for re-accrediting an existing active educational program during the last year of its effective accreditation. In addition, the institution must apply for re-accreditation in case it desires to perform any of the major changes or amendments listed in this *Manual* on the education program, and must modify the terms of its accreditation prior to implementing any changes.

Application submission

Applications for re-accreditation are accepted on a rolling basis. Licensured higher education institutions that meet any of the above cases must apply for re-accreditation within one year before the expiration of the program accreditation or prior to the proposed date of implementing any changes

Standards

The higher education institution applying for re-licensure must comply with all standards as stipulated in *The Licensure and Accreditation Manual*.

Procedures

The higher education institution applying for re-accreditation must comply with all standards as stipulated in *The Licensure and Accreditation Manual*, as follow:

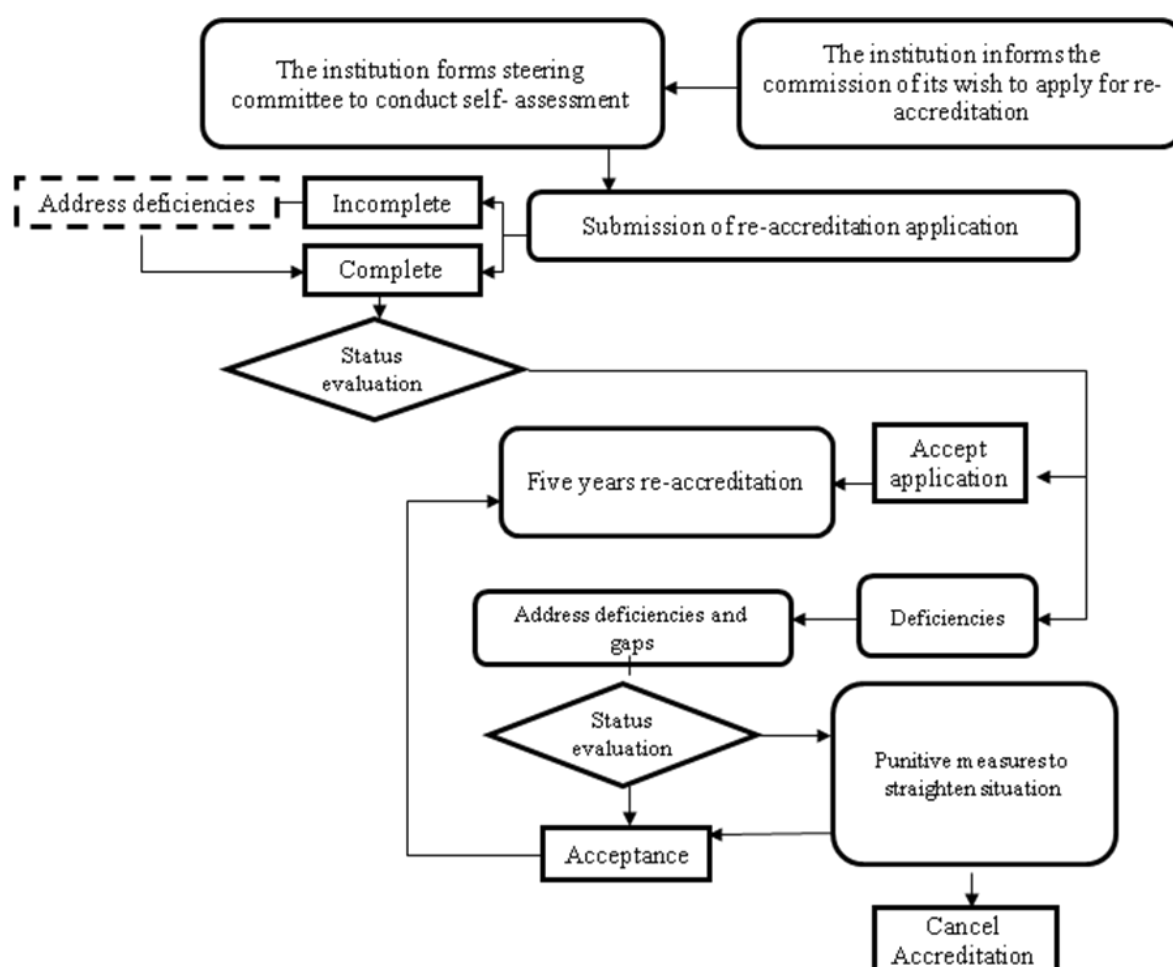
Procedures	Responsible personnel	Forms and instructions	Duration
(1) Commission notification			
The HEI informs the Commission officially in writing of its intention in applying to re-accredit an educational program and states the reason(s) for the application.	HEI		
The head of the Commission evaluates the need for immediate re-accreditation and notifies the applicant HEI to start the educational self-assessment procedures.	Commission Head		
(2) Self-assessment			6months
<p>The applicant HEI forms a steering committee of specialists and experts (administrators, faculty members, students and alumni) representing the educational program, supervised by a well-qualified assigned coordinator, to perform the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Determine the timetable for the stages of the self-assessment – Form sub-committees and working groups participating in the self-assessment – Involve faculty members, technicians, students and graduates in the self-assessment process. – Collect data and documents related to the self-assessment process and analyze it. – Write the minor and sub-reports and submit them to the authorized committee to draft the final report. 	HEI	Form (10): Application for educational program re-accreditation. <i>Licensure and Accreditation Manual.</i>	
<p>The authorized committee is mandated to write the self-assessment report, which must be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Critical and reflecting the standards and their items as adopted by the Commission. – Reflective OF the educational program's image as a whole in terms of achievements, challenges, and future plans for further development and improvement, and providing an in-depth analysis of the strengths and the 	HEI		

weaknesses of the program's performance. – Supported with relevant appendices, including documents, files and statistics available for review by an external evaluation team.			
– Final draft of the report is circulated to faculty members and administration to review and scrutinize before finalizing and sending it to the Commission to commence the external evaluation procedures.	HEI		
(3) Application submission			
The institution submits re-accreditation application to the Commission electronically and in hard copy indicating the reasons for re-accreditation while conforming to all the requirements, conditions and standards, including prescribed fees. The re-accreditation application must include self-assessment report and supporting documents where needed.	HEI	Commission financial by-laws	
The submitted file includes documents in Microsoft Word or PDF formats, and any scanned documents should meet the following criteria: Color Sel. (Send/Store): Grayscale Scan Resolution: 200x100dpi File Format: PDF Image Quality (File Format): Low High Compression PDF Image: Low.			
The institution is informed of any deficiencies in the application that must be addressed and completed within a maximum of two weeks, or the application is deferred to the following session	Appointed staff member		2 weeks
(4) External evaluation			4 months
The Commission forms a team of academics and professionals with experience and specialty, supervised by a team coordinator and informs the institution of the team to ensure there is no conflict of interest.	Commission Head		2 weeks

<p>The external evaluation team is mandated to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Review the self-assessment report accurately and study all the supporting documents relevant to the educational program evaluation in order to verify the accuracy and objectivity of the submitted report. – Conduct an on-site visit for at least two days to the institution, arranged by the Commission and accompanied by one of its staff members. The visit includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Meetings with senior management of the institution, quality assurance unit employees, supportive and administrative departments, full-time and part-time teaching staff, technical staff, students and graduates as necessary. ○ Visits to the educational facilities, including teaching halls, laboratories, and libraries, and assessing the equipment used to support the educational process and extracurricular activities. ○ Review of the documented evidence and the required documents, such as minutes of meetings for various boards, educational program and course files, educational program reports, quality assurance unit reports and other relevant documents. ○ Meeting with the senior management of the institution to provide a summary of the results of the visit including suggestions and recommendations in this regard. – Writing comprehensive evaluation report following the Commission's guidelines, according to its adopted standards. The report must be explicit and clear especially with respect to amendments requested by the institution and must be approved by the team members prior to its submission to the Commission's general director. 	<p>Commission-appointed external evaluation Team</p>	<p>Form (11): External evaluation report for educational program</p>	<p>2 months</p>
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The Commission sends copy of the evaluation report to the institution to study, address the weaknesses and inadequacies and make the necessary changes and adjustments in a period of one month at the most from the date of receiving the report.	Appointed staff member		1 month
The Commission sends the institution's reply to the evaluation team to review, assess the amendments, and make recommendations in a final report, which shall be submitted to the Commission within two weeks.	Appointed staff member		2 weeks
(5) Decision making			2 months
The Commission presents the entire file after completing the evaluation process to the Commission's Board to take the appropriate decision	Commission Head		1 month
If approved by the Board, the institution is granted re-accreditation for another five years.	Commission Board		
In case of disapproval due to incomplete modifications, the institution is given a warning period of three months maximum to complete the requirements and adjust its status; otherwise the Board may apply incremental punitive actions against the institution in given periods of time, which might result in denying the re-accreditation. In this case, the Commission is granted full authority to prepare an operational plan to graduate the students enrolled in the program and suspend new admission in it.	Commission Board		

Flow chart



Acknowledgment

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