



THE OMAN QUALITY NETWORK

1. GUIDELINES (v10)

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Abbreviations used in these guidelines:

AGM..... Annual General Meeting

OAC Oman Accreditation Council

HEI Higher Education Institution

OQN..... Oman Quality Network

MoHE Ministry of Higher Education

1 MISSION, PURPOSE & PRINCIPLES

1.1 Mission

- The Oman Quality Network (OQN) is a collegial and independent, not-for-profit network of Omani Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), focused on quality enhancement in higher education.
- It is concerned with developing a strong and vibrant higher education sector by improving quality in higher education within the Sultanate of Oman.
- It aims to build a quality-conscious and knowledge-rich higher education sector through the sharing of ideas, strategies, research, and practices that ensures the pursuit of quality enhancement.
- The Members will collaborate to build on their collective strengths for the benefit of the higher education sector in the Sultanate of Oman.

1.2 Statements of Purpose

- (a) To raise the capability and professional skills of the sector in quality enhancement and quality assurance.
- (b) To share good practices, strategies, research and development in relation to the assurance and enhancement of quality in higher education.
- (c) To provide feedback to the MoHE, the OAC and other agencies, as appropriate, on standards, policies and processes for the higher education sector proposed by stakeholders.
- (d) To conduct regular meetings for the purposes of discussing priority topics.
- (e) To identify and prioritise professional development training needs for the sector.
- (f) To commission the development and provision of training modules on topics related to quality assurance and quality enhancement.
- (g) To conduct regular forums, seminars or workshops and a biennial conference.
- (h) To establish and participate regularly in online communications and discussions on issues of quality assurance and enhancement.
- (i) To establish working parties on various priority topics as the need arises.
- (j) To establish a database of Member details and expertise for the purpose of sharing capability across the sector.
- (k) To encourage Members to document their good practice, and experiences about successes, failures and lessons learned through systemic inquiry and reflection.
- (l) To conduct or commission research into quality enhancement and improvement on priority topics.
- (m) To publish a regular newsletter with contributions from the whole higher education sector.
- (n) To annually review its performance against these Guidelines.

1.3 Principles

- (a) All Members have a desire to advance the quality of higher education in Oman.
- (b) The OQN is a network of and for the whole higher education sector, including private and public institutions. It is not an instrument of the Government nor a mechanism for conducting campaigns outside of the quality agenda by the HEIs.
- (c) The OQN is a network of equal peers. All leadership roles in the network will be shared.
- (d) The OQN will share, in good faith, information about successes, failures and lessons learned in quality assurance.
- (e) All materials and information shared will be referenced to their source in the expected manner.
- (f) Nothing shared in the OQN will be used in a manner detrimental to any OQN member.
- (g) Although HEIs may compete on a number of levels, the OQN recognises that the sector can achieve things together that it could not achieve individually.
- (h) The OQN will periodically review its activities and progress in relation to raising the capacity of the sector in quality enhancement and quality assurance.

2 MEMBERSHIP

2.1 The Members

- (a) A Member of the OQN is an *eligible institution* or *Government entity* (defined in b and c below) which has paid its annual sponsorship fee; the MoHE and OAC are *ex officio* Members.
- (b) The eligible institutions are any institution or agency, public or private, that provides higher education diploma or degree programmes in the Sultanate of Oman (known as higher education institutions, or HEIs).
- (c) The eligible Government entities (other than the MoHE and OAC) are those that supervise HEIs. They include the Ministry of Manpower, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Defence, the Royal Oman Police and the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs. They also include the Ministry of Education.
- (d) HEI Members are expected to contribute an annual sponsorship fee; the amount to be determined at each AGM. This amount should be paid before the end of January.
- (e) MoHE & OAC do not pay the sponsorship fee but instead provide a range of support services such as secretarial support and hosting of the OQN website.

2.2 The Members' Representatives

- (a) Each Member shall designate up to two persons to be its Representatives in the OQN.
- (b) A Member may change its Representatives at any time by writing to the Executive Committee Secretary.

- (c) The role of the Representatives is to liaise between their Member and the other Member's Representatives on matters related to the activities of the OQN, and to speak and vote on behalf of their Member for the Executive Committee and other matters that may arise.
- (d) The HEI Representatives should hold senior positions and have quality assurance responsibilities, e.g. Associate Deans (Academic), Managers (Quality).
- (e) In the interest of furthering the Omanisation policy, it is recommended that at least one of a Member's two Representatives be Omani.
- (f) Representatives shall provide their name, job position, institution and contact details to the Administrative Assistant, who shall ensure that they are posted on the OQN website to facilitate effective communication in the network.

3 THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

3.1 Executive Committee Constitution

- (a) An Executive Committee will attend to the day-to-day activities of the OQN.
- (b) The Executive Committee shall include seven persons elected by the Representatives: the Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer and four other members.

Traits of Executive Committee Members;

1. They must be representatives of the OQN
 2. They should have experience in dealing with quality assurance matters and express their commitment to enhance quality in the higher education sector.
 3. They should engender trust amongst their peers, having demonstrated their competency and integrity in their field or area of responsibility.
- (c) The Executive Committee members serve a two-yearly term.
 - (d) A Representative may be elected to the Executive Committee no more than two consecutive terms.
 - (e) The Executive Committee may co-opt up to three non-voting members at its sole discretion, to serve for terms decided upon by the Exec Com.

3.2 Election of Executive Committee Members

- (a) The Executive Committee shall be elected by the Representatives using confidential ballot during a quorate AGM (see 4.1.1(b)).
- (b) The Administrative Assistant (see section 3.7) shall be the Returning Officer for the elections. The Returning Officer shall not stand for election.
- (c) Nominations must be received one week prior to the AGM and will be posted on the OQN website. A standard template, prepared by the Returning Officer, shall be used for the nominations, which will include résumé information for posting on the web site. Nominations must include the signature of the nominee (self-nominations are acceptable).
- (d) Nominations are accepted only if the HEI of that representative has paid the yearly subscription fee.

- (e) Only Representatives directly employed by HEIs are eligible for nomination (Government Officials are not eligible).
- (f) There may only be one Representative from an HEI on the Executive Committee at the same time.
- (g) There shall be one vote per Representative, and that vote shall be for seven of the nominated people. In order to cast a vote, the Representative must either be present at the AGM during the ballot, or must submit a proxy vote to the Returning Officer (in person, by fax or by email), using the form provided by the Returning Officer for this purpose, by no later than 2.30pm of the working day prior to the AGM.
- (h) The Returning Officer shall count the votes and issue the results. The vote counting may occur in confidence, but with two Representatives who are not nominees, as witnesses. The nominees shall be listed in order from the person with the highest number of votes to the person with the lowest number of votes. The seven nominees with the most votes shall be declared the Executive Committee for the following year, commencing with the conclusion of that AGM, provided that:
 - at least three are Omani citizens (if that is not the case, then the four expatriates with the highest number of votes and the three Omani citizens with the highest number of votes shall be declared the Executive Committee); and
 - there is only one Representative from an HEI (if that is not the case, then the HEI Representative with the lower number of votes will be discounted);

3.3 Officers

3.3.1 Positions of Office

- (a) Chairperson.
- (b) Secretary.
- (c) Treasurer.

3.3.2 Appointment of Officers

- (a) The Officers are appointed by the Executive Committee at the first quorate meeting post AGM, by way of a resolution passed by a simple majority of the Executive Committee
- (b) The term of appointment for an Officer shall be for two years, unless terminated earlier.
- (c) Appointment of Officers may be reviewed and changed at any time by the Executive Committee by way of a resolution passed by a simple majority of the Executive Committee.

3.4 Responsibilities

3.4.1 Chairperson's Responsibilities

- (a) Call, set the agenda for and chair meetings of the Executive Committee.

- (b) Call, set the agenda for and chair the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the OQN.
- (c) Represent the OQN when and as appropriate.

3.4.2 Secretary's Responsibilities

- (a) Be the official rapporteur, including responsibility for the minutes of meetings of the Executive Committee and the AGM.
- (b) Maintain the official records of the OQN.
- (c) The Secretary acts as the standing Deputy Chairperson.
- (d) Be the official correspondent for incoming and outgoing mail pertaining to the OQN's activities.
- (e) Be the Corporate Registrar responsible for filing the legal documents of registration for the OQN when and as required on behalf of the OQN.

3.4.3 Treasurer's Responsibilities

- (a) Prepare the annual budget.
- (b) Prepare the annual financial statement and submit to the AGM for approval.
- (c) Arrange the financial auditors (if required).
- (d) Advise the Executive Committee on the financial implications of proposed goals and activities.
- (e) Advise and recommend to the AGM on the annual sponsorship fees.
- (f) Collect and bank revenues.
- (g) Manage the financial affairs of the OQN.

3.4.4 Elected Committee Members' Responsibilities

- (a) Attend meetings of the Executive Committee and provide advice and input to the deliberations of the Executive Committee
- (b) Vote on issues for which a vote is required.
- (c) Three members (including the Treasurer) will be signatories for the OQN bank account.

3.4.5 Co-opted Committee Members' Responsibilities

- (a) Attend meetings of the Executive Committee and provide advice and input to the deliberations of the Executive Committee.

3.5 Vacancies

- (a) A position on the Executive Committee will become vacant if the incumbent submits resignation in writing to the Administrative Assistant.
- (b) A position on the Executive Committee will become vacant if the incumbent misses three consecutive meetings.

- (c) A position on the Executive Committee will become vacant if the incumbent is no longer the designated Representative for their HEI (in such an event, the newly designated Representative for that HEI does not automatically become an Executive Committee Member).
- (d) Executive Committee members may fill by appointment any vacancy on the Executive Committee that arises by co-opting an OQN member for the duration of that term.

3.6 Executive Committee Procedures

- (a) The Executive Committee shall meet at least 6 times per year.
- (b) A meeting of the Executive Committee shall be quorate if and while a simple majority of elected Executive Committee Members is present.
- (c) It is expected that the Executive Committee shall conduct its meetings in a manner befitting the mission and principles of a collegial network. Consensus should be sought, and voting should be avoided unless absolutely necessary, and the Chairman does not have a casting vote.
- (d) All substantive financial and policy decisions should be made at a general meeting of the OQN; the Executive Committee may not over-ride or act in a manner inconsistent with a decision made at a general meeting. However, if it is necessary for the continuity of business, then the Executive Committee may make a significant financial or policy decision approved by a vote of the majority of members present at a quorate meeting, and any such decision must subsequently be submitted to the next general meeting of the OQN for ratification.
- (e) Executive Committee meetings will be held at Member locations on a rotational basis.
- (f) The Executive Committee will establish a Code of Conduct to guide its activities.

3.7 Administrative Assistant and Support

- (a) The OAC shall provide the part time services of a person to be Administrative Assistant for the OQN.
- (b) The Administrative Assistant shall securely hold the chequebook for the OQN.
- (c) The Administrative Assistant shall take minutes of meetings and present them in draft form to the Secretary.
- (d) The Administrative Assistant shall manage the OQN web site.
- (e) The OQN will receive administrative support through the OAC and the Directorate General Private Universities and Colleges, MoHE.
- (f) The MoHE and the OAC will from time to time make available professional and expert advice to the OQN.

4 FINANCIAL & OPERATIONAL MATTERS

4.1 General Meetings

4.1.1 Annual General Meeting

- (a) The OQN shall conduct an Annual General Meeting (AGM).
- (b) An AGM shall be quorate if and while a simple majority of Representatives is present.
- (c) At the 2009 AGM, all Representatives shall have the power to vote. At subsequent AGMs, only Representatives who have settled their subscription fees shall have the power to vote.

4.1.2 AGM Agenda

- (a) Confirmation of Minutes of the previous AGM shall be sought.
- (b) The Chairperson shall deliver a report summarising the activities of the previous year.
- (c) The Treasurer shall deliver the Annual Financial Statement for approval.
- (d) The Auditor (if applicable) shall deliver the Audit Report for noting.
- (e) The Returning Officer shall conduct the election of the Executive Committee for the following year.
- (f) The Member's Sponsorship Fee shall be confirmed for the next financial year.
- (g) Amendments to these Guidelines may be considered and voted upon, provided that they had been posted on the OAC web site at least five working days prior to the AGM, and that Representatives had been notified of this posting.
- (h) General Business shall be called for and dealt with.

4.1.3 Other General Meetings

- (a) The Executive Committee may convene General Meetings at any time to further the interests of the OQN.
- (b) These General Meetings will be conducted informally and in keeping with the mission, purpose and principles of the OQN.
- (c) A Special General Meeting may be called, if necessary, to deal with matters that were not finalised at an Annual General Meeting. A Special General Meeting has all the powers of an AGM.

4.2 Financial Affairs

- (a) The Executive Committee will establish a joint account under the name of "Oman Quality Network" in one of the authorised banks in the Sultanate of Oman.
- (b) The OQN will deposit its funds in its bank account.

- (c) The account shall require at least 2 signatories. The Executive Committee shall designate, by way of a resolution passed by a simple majority at a quorate meeting, three or four members to be signatories for the account (one of whom shall be the Treasurer).
- (d) The OQN will inform the MoHE in writing regarding any changes that might occur regarding the status of the bank account and its signatories.
- (e) The OQN will have an Annual Budget and Final Account prepared according to proper accounting procedures.
- (f) If the annual budget of the OQN reaches 25,000 OMR, a chartered auditor should be assigned to review & audit the final account of the network. Auditors will be provided *gratis* by Members.
- (g) The Executive Committee will prepare at the beginning of each year a planned budget which includes the items that should be spent for administrative affairs and other activities.
- (h) The Treasurer will be responsible for the daily account management issues related to finances of the OQN including ensuring that all members are invoiced correctly and maintain their paid up status.
- (i) The OQN has the right to invest the surplus from its financial resources in earned-return activities approved by the Executive Committee to ensure a permanent financial resource without affecting its activities.
- (j) The OQN is allowed to accept donations & gifts.
- (k) The OQN is not allowed to enter into financial debt.
- (l) The Treasurer will ensure that the balance sheet is properly maintained and updated for the OQN account.
- (m) The income and property of the OQN shall be used and applied solely in promotion of its purposes and the exercise of its powers as set out in these Guidelines.
- (n) No income or property of the OQN is to be distributed, paid or transferred directly or indirectly as a dividend, bonus or profit to any member.
- (o) In the event that the OQN is dissolved / wound up, any remaining assets and liabilities shall be liquidated and the net sum or debt distributed evenly between the Members fully paid up at that time.