

# ACADEMIC PROGRAMME REVIEW HANDBOOK

2020

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## Acknowledgment

In Afghanistan, the higher education sector has proliferated after the establishment of the new government in 2002 before which, there were only six public higher education institutions while there has been no private higher education institution.

Presently, there are 39 public higher education institutions and since 2004 to date, there are 128 private higher education institutions offering higher education.

services at various degree programs levels across the country. Though the quality of higher education has always been a matter of concern to the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) and for the employers at the job market, the MoHE has recently developed distinctive strategic approaches in addressing and improving the quality of higher education; viz. revision and unification the academic curriculums, capacity building of the faculty members, research enrichment, reforming the MoHE administrative structure, legal document revision and development, quality assurance and accreditation process enhancement, infrastructure development and e-learning embedment.

However, notwithstanding, the program review is one of the essential parts of the stated priorities of the MoHE, it builds a direct link with the quality assurance processes.

The program review process has a vital role in the enhancement of quality, addressing, and improving the academic programs weaknesses as an integral of the academic administration at the higher education institutions. The academic program review handbook is a very useful tool for colleagues at the MoHE and the higher education institutions.

It provides information and guidance on the quality cycle, quality processes, new program approval, annual program monitoring, action planning, periodic program review, program level changes, and etc.

To embed and sustain the academic program review process as an integral act of academic administration, efforts are made to convert it into a legal document to make it a required practice for the higher education institutions in the country.

The development of the academic program review process has started in August 2017 under the title "PAL5 (Partners in Academic Learning)"; several workshops and virtual meetings were organized among the relevant stakeholders to complete this handbook.

It is worth thanking and appreciating the contributions of the National Committee of Program Review (NCPR), the National Training Team (NTT), Dr. Alex Moseley, Andrew Petersen and Prof. Jon Scott from the University of Leicester, Hank Williams independent consultant, Ms. Gulghutai Waizi, Higher Education Program Manager at the British Council office in Kabul, Prof. Haji Mohammad Naimi, former director of QAAD, Prof. Khwaja Zubair Sediqi former director of Academic Program Development, Prof. Dr. Mohammad Naim Azimi the director of QAAD, Prof. Sediqullah Barakzai the director of Academic Program Development, Prof. Ali Ahmad Kava, Prof. Abdul Ahad Zahed, and as whole the British Council Office in Kabul for facilitating and supporting this partnership opportunity to work together and produce this useful handbook for the improvement of the higher education system in Afghanistan.

Obediently,

Prof. Abdul Tawab Balakarzai

Deputy Minister for Academic Affairs, MoHE



## Section 1: Foreword

Higher Education is one of the key enablers for societies to progress. It produces our future leaders, thinkers, specialists in medicine, engineering, technology, urban planning, water resources, agriculture... the list is a long one and can go on and on. It is through these generations of young people that we can develop talent and people assets which allow us to progress and develop.

The wonderful work of the Quality Assurance Partnership between the Afghan Ministry of Higher Education and the University of Leicester is the result of a partnership and close collaboration between Afghanistan and the United Kingdom. I would particularly like to thank the National Committee for Programme Review (NCPR); the National Training Team (NTT); Prof Haji Mohammad Naimi, former Director of QAAD; Mr. Zubair Sediqi, former Director of Academic Programme Development; Hank Williams, independent consultant, Dr Alex Moseley, Andrew Petersen and Prof Jon Scott from the University of Leicester; and Gulghutai Waizi, Higher Education Manager at the British Council in Kabul. They have led us on this journey to explore the development and embedding of quality assurance in the Higher Education system in Afghanistan.

After years of conflict, many generations of young Afghans have forfeited their education and the HE institutions themselves have suffered closure, and worse. The Afghan Ministry of Higher Education has an ambitious programme to overhaul the sector to ensure it is fit for purpose as Afghanistan progresses towards peace and stability. A major part of this is having assurance that quality standards are monitored, and guidelines are in place to help those in the sector to aspire to agreed standards set by the MoHE.

I would encourage anyone interested in education development to read this handbook. It is written in a thoughtful way that allows the reader to either read it cover to cover or to dip into it and pull out specific areas of interest.

Eric Lawrie  
Director  
British Council Afghanistan

## Preface

Since 2009, “Quality Assurance and Accreditation” has become one of the main priorities and a significant pillar of the higher education system in Afghanistan and the Ministry of Higher Education (hereinafter referred to as “MoHE”) continuously progresses towards its advancement and institutionalization.

In 2011, the relevant bye-law was drafted, as a result of which the MoHE established the Directorate of Quality Assurance and Accreditation (QAAD) within the MoHE organizational structure to administer and oversee the quality assurance and accreditation processes.

In 2012, the first Accreditation Framework was drafted and approved by MoHE to foster the practice of its standards at higher education institutions in Afghanistan.

As a result of the empirical application of the recent accreditation framework and based on feedback from the pilot studies, the framework was revised in 2017 to suit the dynamic circumstances of academics towards standardization in the country in which, one of the key criteria being that academic programmes should be consistent with the institution’s mission and should be regularly reviewed to ensure continuous improvement.

New Programme Approval (NPA), Annual Programme Monitoring (APM) and Periodic Programme Review (PPR) are the essential processes within higher education institutions’ internal quality assurance mechanisms that enable the academic administrative responsibilities to be exercised and form a fundamental part of the academic cycle. These processes ensure that education institutions have made, and continue to make, available to students appropriate learning opportunities which enable the intended learning outcomes of the programme to be achieved. They also evaluate the students’ attainment of academic standards and allow higher education institutions to confirm that their portfolio aligns with their mission and strategic priorities.

Programme monitoring and programme review enable the higher education institutions to reflect on the learning opportunities that the students have experienced, the academic standards that are achieved, and their continuing relevance. Ultimate responsibility for monitoring and review of programmes rests with the higher education institutions.

This handbook includes the processes and steps for implementation of approval, monitoring and review of academic programs. It is a guidebook for all the academic staff including, QA staff, lecturers, heads of departments, deans of faculties, vice-chancellors and chancellors of the Universities to use for better implementation of NPA, APM and PPR at their respective higher education institutions and focus on quality assurance and enhancement of academic programmes.

Directorate of Quality Assurance and Accreditation  
Ministry of Higher Education

## Introduction

This handbook has been written to provide guidance for all universities and higher education institutions to undertake the core quality assurance processes that are required by the *Academic Programme Review Policy* as set out by the Ministry of Higher Education.

The development and implementation of a national set of quality assurance processes, *New Programme Approval*, *Annual Programme Monitoring* and *Periodic Programme Review* are key to establishing a standard framework for quality across all universities. This framework will allow every university to ensure that its academic programmes remain aligned with the national and institutional strategic aims for higher education and will allow confirmation of the academic quality of those programmes. It will also allow the Ministry of Higher Education to monitor the quality and standards of the programmes at a national level.

An important element of the quality assurance processes is the identification of aspects of the programme that need improvement and the development of an action plan to address those issues. This underpins the link between quality assurance and quality enhancement. As we will discuss, the quality cycle is an ongoing process of monitoring, action planning and improvement. The overall intention therefore is not just to assure the quality of the programmes but to continually improve the quality of the learning experience of the students and to improve the value of the programmes in training the students for their future careers.

In this handbook we take an overview of the quality cycle and then provide detailed guidance for undertaking *New Programme Approval*, *Annual Programme Monitoring* and *Periodic Programme Review*. We also focus on the outcomes of these processes and the development of action plans as the key to improving the programmes.

The preparation of the handbook has been a collaborative exercise throughout and the drafts have been shared with colleagues from the National Training Team the National Committee for Programme Review and the Ministry of Higher Education who have reviewed the contents and provided very helpful feedback and guidance. We have also discussed its development through a series of workshops with these colleagues and are very grateful for their input. Particular thanks are due to Prof Naimi and Hank Williams for their support and advice throughout the writing of this handbook and for all their work in developing the Academic Programme Review scheme, and to four members of the National Training Team: Ahmad Reshad Jamalyar, Ali Ahmad Kaveh, Laila Nadir and Abdul Ahad Zahid for particular assistance in checking the chapters and providing case studies and examples.

Special thanks are also due to the British Council of Afghanistan and, in particular, Ms Gulghutai Waizi, who supported the development of the handbook and the associated workshops.

We hope that this handbook will be very useful to all the universities in developing their processes and also that it too will be improved over time in response to feedback from those users.

With our best wishes,

Dr Alex Moseley, Andrew Petersen and Prof Jon Scott, University of Leicester, UK.

## Section 2: Overview of the Quality Cycle

The *Academic Programme Review Policy* sets out clearly the four stages of the Quality Assurance Cycle for programmes of study. Within the MoHE, there are three main Directorates that have oversight of the different aspects of quality assurance. These are:

- *The Directorate of Quality Assurance and Accreditation (QAAD)*
- *The Directorate of Academic Programme Development (APDD).*
- *The Directorate of Monitoring and Evaluation of Academic Affairs (AM&ED)*

*The Directorate of Academic Programme Development of the Ministry of Higher Education* has set out its requirements regarding the processes of ongoing quality assurance within institutions in the *By-law: Establishing, Suspension, Merger and Closure Bill of Academic Programs of Higher Education Institutions*.

The word ‘cycle’ suggests that these stages are continuous and ongoing, and this idea is at the heart of the policy’s aims: that quality assurance and enhancement become part of our everyday activities in all Universities.

The broad principles and process for each of these four stages of the quality cycle are set out in the *Academic Programme Review Policy* and underpinned by more detailed procedures and supporting documentation. National responsibility for the implementation of these components is split between two directorates within the Ministry for Higher Education which are QAAD and APDD.

These are as follows:

1. New Programme Approval (NPA) - APDD
2. Annual Programme Monitoring (APM) - QAAD
3. Periodic Programme Review (PPR) - QAAD
4. Merger and Suspension (major programme revisions) and Closure (permanent removal) - APDD

All of the processes are linked to the life of the individual programme: NPA is the initial stage in the life of the programme; APM and PPR are on-going, regular stages throughout the life of the programme for its regular improvement and Merger/Suspension/Closure are the final events when the programme is no longer viable.

The main focus of the quality cycle is continuous improvement. This is based on the action planning that results from the APM and PPR processes. Normally, therefore, the quality processes for the programmes will remain within the cycle. Occasionally, however, PPR may identify significant issues that cannot be addressed in the short-term and so lead to a recommendation of suspension, merger or closure but these are rare outcomes (see Figure 1).

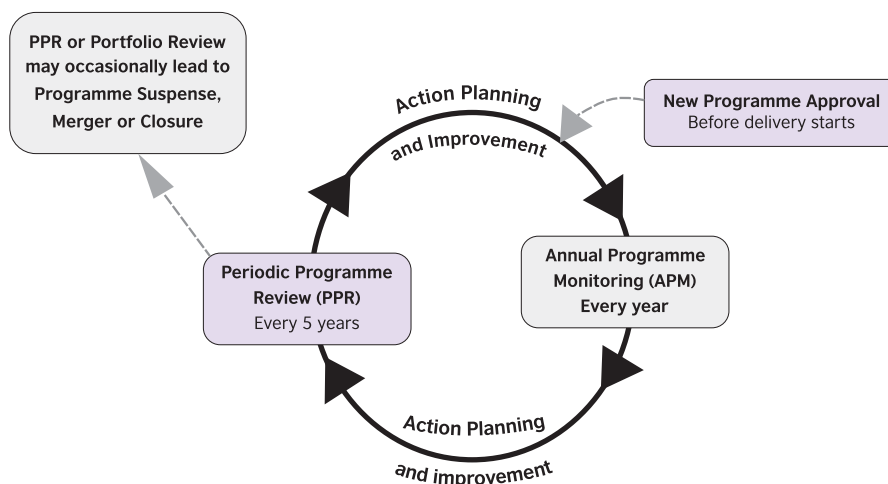


Figure 1: Quality Assurance cycle for a programme.

## 1. Development and Approval of new programmes

### A Focus on Programmes

All the processes and the quality assurance cycle (Figure 2.1) focus on the individual programme. A programme is a collection of elements that leads to a specific *award*. This may be delivered by a single department, or involve several departments and services within the institution – as shown in figure 2.2.

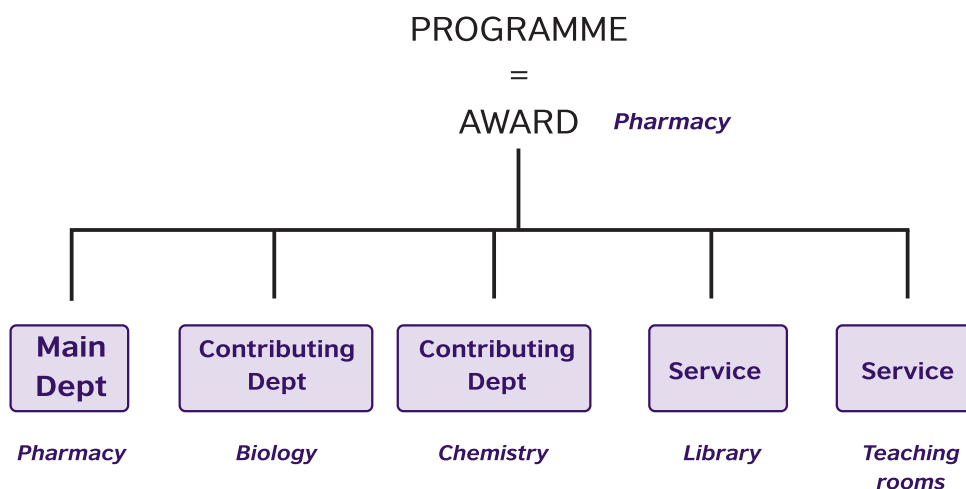


Figure 2: Elements that contribute to a programme/award.

Individual staff, departments and services might therefore have input to several New Programme Approvals and to several APM or PPR reports, to cover all of the programmes/awards they contribute to.

## New Programme Approval

Any proposal to develop a new programme of study should be tested against local and national strategic priorities, the needs of the market and University requirements for the quality of teaching and the student experience. A standardised programme development and approval process is designed to ensure that all of these factors are taken into account when developing a new programme, and that all aspects are rigorously scrutinised and evaluated according to the related by-laws and regulations before a new programme is launched.

First, the need for the programme must be established. This should be done through market research, engagement with relevant local and national authorities, employers and alumni. A programme will only be able to proceed through the approval process where there is clear evidence of the need for its introduction.

Second, the institution must review the proposed curriculum and intended learning outcomes of the new programme, and test these against established best practice. During this process the institution must demonstrate how it assesses whether the programme meets the required standards of academic scholarship, will deliver positive outcomes and will represent a high-quality learning experience for students.

Finally, the institution must demonstrate that it has an appropriate physical and learning environment to deliver a high-quality academic experience for students. This includes sufficient staffing to deliver the programme. An institution must demonstrate appropriate numbers of sufficiently qualified faculty members, as well as administrative and technical staff, where appropriate. There is also a requirement to demonstrate appropriate physical resources, such as Library resources, teaching space, including equipped laboratories where necessary, and IT resources.

The related by-law and *Academic Programme Review Policy, New Academic Programmes* process sets out these criteria for approval in further detail. The ability to establish new programmes requires institutions to have achieved stage 3 accreditation with the Ministry of Higher Education, otherwise in exceptional cases the Ministry may decide. Institutions must complete the *New Programme Approval* process and receive approval from the Ministry before any new programme can be launched.

Ministry oversight of the development of new programmes ensures that the new programmes which are created serve the identified strategic needs of the market, and also ensures a threshold level of academic quality and the student experience.

Once a programme has been approved it enters into the standard schedule of quality assurance processes which include APM and PPR as set out below. As part of New Programme Approval institutions may be required to produce an action plan, which would subsequently be monitored through APM.



## 2. Annual Programme Monitoring

Annual Programme Monitoring (APM) is undertaken by the department on an annual basis overseen by the faculty and university quality assurance committees. Within the APM process programme teams reflect on the output of various different data sources, including student recruitment, progression and employment, as well as feedback from staff, students, alumni and employers. Review of this information enables the programme teams to develop and implement action plans to improve the quality of the.

Undertaking an annual process to reflect upon the academic quality of programmes and the associated student experience is a central element of academic quality assurance. Annual Programme Monitoring allows programme teams to perform a 'health check' on their programmes and identify opportunities for improvement that can be implemented by the department. Detailed reflection by those members of staff closest to the degree programme, directly informed by feedback from students supports a process of enhancement and continuous improvement. Regular, small scale actions can often have the greatest impact upon student satisfaction and outcomes, and the annual review of core data, previous actions and student feedback supports this approach.

Annual Programme Monitoring focuses on actions that can be taken by the programme team in order to address issues which may have been identified with the day to day running of the programme, student outcomes and the student experience: these form a local *Action Plan* (see section 5 of this Handbook). Annual Programme Monitoring typically will not directly involve input from outside of the department(s) that are delivering the programme in question. If there are issues identified through an APM exercise which cannot be addressed locally, they should instead be fed into the more comprehensive Periodic Programme Review mechanisms set out below. Detailed guidance for managing the Annual Programme Monitoring (APM) process is set out in section 4 of this handbook.

## 3. Periodic Programme Review

Periodic Programme Review (PPR) allows institutions to undertake a more detailed and structured review of individual programmes and their place within the wider portfolio of programmes. The PPR is undertaken by the VCAA through appointing a panel at University level which is external to the department under review. Periodic Programme Review is undertaken on a rolling five-year basis for all programmes.

Periodic Programme Review is a high level, strategic review of a programme. It considers many of the same data sources as APM but over a longer timescale, and within a wider University perspective. PPR will consider the alignment of the individual programme with the University strategy and the needs of employers, alumni and wider national developments to ensure that it remains relevant. It will also look in detail at issues such as trends in student outcomes and satisfaction and the resourcing of the programme. As PPR is undertaken externally to the department, it may identify issues

which are outside of the department's power to resolve and raise these to the University for consideration.

Following this strategic, external review the University may require significant amendments to be made to a programme in order to ensure its ongoing validity. In some cases, there may be a recommendation to suspend, merge or ultimately close a programme if it is not found to be appropriate within the wider portfolio.

Periodic Programme Review therefore represents both a high-level strategic review of the viability of a programme from an external perspective, but also a detailed consideration of the performance of a programme over time in key measures such as student outcomes and experience. It builds upon the annual reflection undertaken through Annual Programme Monitoring but is a distinctly different process. Whereas APM is local and reflective, Periodic Review is less frequent but at institutional level with wider ranging scope and outcomes.

Periodic Programme Review is undertaken via the PPR process set out in section 6 of this Handbook.

#### **4. Merger, Suspension and Closure of Programmes**

There are some circumstances under which a University may decide that a programme is no longer viable in its current form. This may result from changes in the University strategy, staffing changes, poor recruitment of students or the output of a PPR which determines that a programme is not performing appropriately or is not appropriately aligned with the needs of students or employers. In these circumstances a University may elect to:

Merge programmes – this will usually be recommended where two or more programmes are covering large elements of the same academic content and may include merging two or more departments.

Suspend a programme – ceasing recruitment to a programme for a specified period, typically a year, to allow for a more detailed review or for significant revisions to be made to the programme.

Close a programme – permanently cease recruitment to a programme.

The final decision regarding whether to suspend, close or merge programmes rests with the Supreme Council of Higher Education at the Ministry of Higher Education.

#### **The Quality Assurance Cycle**

Each component of the Quality Assurance cycle is based directly on a section of the *Academic Programme Review Policy* and is supported by specific processes and documentation, as set out in Table 1 below.



**Table 1: Quality Assurance Lifecycle, with supporting documentation.**

<b>Quality Assurance Lifecycle</b>	<b>Context</b>	<b>Process(es)</b>	<b>Documentation</b>
Programme Development and Approval	Brings a new programme into the quality cycle.	Engagement with stakeholders Market research and business case Academic Case Ministry Approval	Related by-law and regulations APR Policy – Section 1 Programme Specification Template Programme Proposal Form
Annual Programme Monitoring	Checks on the quality of programmes within the departments which run the programme.	Annual Programme Monitoring Review of datasets Action planning and review	Related by-law and regulations APR Policy – Section 2 APM Form NTT Notes of Guidance Action Planning
Periodic Programme Review	Wider, institutional/national, review of programmes involving reviewers external to the departments who run the programme.	Periodic Programme Review Action Planning Interim and Final response Monitoring through APM	Related by-law and regulations APR Policy – Section 3 PPR Template NTT Notes of Guidance Action Planning
Merger, Suspension or Closure	Ministry-level decision based on recommendations from the institution.	Portfolio review Outcomes of APM / PPR	Related by-law and regulations APR Policy – Section 4 Programme Suspension, Merger and Closure

## Quality Assurance and Enhancement

*Quality Assurance* and *Quality Enhancement* are separate but fundamentally linked concepts, and both are vital to the establishment of an effective system.

### Quality Assurance

Is defined as: Processes required by the MoHE and implemented by Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to monitor, review and report on the quality of all aspects of the operation of the HEI.

### Quality Enhancement

Is defined as: Processes implemented by the HEI to ensure that the improvements recommended by quality assurance are implemented in order that the quality of the student learning experience is enhanced.

Effective Quality Assurance processes allow institutions to ensure that their programmes are operating effectively and meeting all required thresholds. Through undertaking these assurance processes it also identifies where there are opportunities to enhance programmes. Effective Quality Assurance therefore feeds Quality Enhancement

As an example, an Annual Programme Monitoring report may confirm that the levels of student achievement within a programme are appropriate and in line with institutional and national standards. This represents effective Quality Assurance as the relevant department is reflecting on the academic standards of its programmes. That reflection may also identify modules with particularly strong outcomes and evaluate what contributed to this. Where effective strategies are identified through this process the APM *Action Plan* would then include a commitment to deploying the relevant strategies more widely across other modules.

This is an example of a Quality Assurance process driving a Quality Enhancement process, through effective Action Planning.

## Section 3: Preparing for quality processes

The quality assurance cycle relies on everyone within the university knowing the role they play in a particular process, and that the processes are embedded into the day-to-day work of each department, faculty and central committee.

This will not be the case when the processes are first introduced. In order to prepare the university for the quality assurance cycle, roles will need to be allocated and defined, there will need to be a programme of briefing and training, and data auditing and collection will need to take place.

This chapter deals with each of these preparatory steps and provides a detailed guide for setting up the core quality processes.

### Defining roles

#### *The Quality Cycle*

The following roles are central to ensuring the quality cycle is implemented correctly and continually.

- The Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs (VCAA)  
*leads the institution's quality assurance and enhancement processes and has ultimate responsibility for them to the Ministry.*
- The Institution Quality Assurance Committee (IQAC)  
*is normally chaired by the VCAA, and is responsible for the set-up and continuous running of quality processes across the institution.*
- A Faculty Quality Assurance Committee (FQAC)  
*sits within each Faculty, chaired by the Dean. FQAC is responsible for the operation of quality processes within the Faculty, and report to the IQAC.*

### New Programme Approval

New programmes might be proposed by the Ministry, Vice Chancellor or Curriculum Committee as strategic developments; or might be proposed by Faculties or Departments based on expertise and interest in a particular area.

The approval of the new programme will involve:

- The Programme Lead  
*A programme lead (normally the Head of the awarding department) will be involved in preparing the new programme documentation according to the related by-law, and proposing the programme to the FQAC.*
- The FQAC  
*creates the Programme Approval Panel to consider the new programme. The panel will also include members from other Departments or Faculties.*
- The Head of Quality  
*The Head of Quality will review and advise on the documentation and oversee the process.*
- Academic Council of the Faculty  
*The ACF will review the new program documentation and either approve it or ask for further information*
- The IQAC  
*The IQAC will review the FQAC recommendations, consult with the Curriculum*

Committee, and after approval by the Academic Council of the University, send the proposal to the Ministry of Higher Education for final approval.

## Annual Programme Monitoring

The following roles are needed for APM:

- The Dean  
*The Dean decides the timescale of APMs within their Faculty.*
- Head of department  
*The Head of department leads the process for each programme awarded by their department. They produce the APM report (assisted by an FQAC member) and oversee the gathering of data.*
- The FQAC  
*The FQAC approves the APM report, produces implementation plans, and reports key issues to the IQAC.*
- The Head of Quality  
*The Head of Quality will review all the APMs that are conducted, monitor the operation of the APM cycle and maintain a record of the action plans.*
- Students  
*Current students on the programme will be surveyed as part of the APM investigation. Student panels will be convened specially for the APM.*
- Teaching staff  
*All staff who teach on the programme will be involved in data gathering, and who may be involved in the action plans resulting from the APM.*
- Administrative staff / services  
*Administrative staff will support the Head of Department with data collection and analysis.*

## Periodic Programme Review

PPR involves the same roles as the APM above, but additionally includes:

- The Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and/or Chancellor  
*The VCAA defines the timing and sequence of PPR within their institution, and will appoint a panel to conduct PPR for a programme. The VCAA will also Chair the majority of the PPR Panels.*
- A PPR Panel  
*Formed from:*
  - Dean of the Faculty in which the program sits
  - a member of the IQAC (who may Chair in the absence of the VCAA)
  - 3 senior academics from other Faculties
  - 1 representative from the University Curriculum Committee
  - 1 student studying on the program in the previous year.
- Alumni  
*Alumni of the programme will be surveyed and, if possible, some representatives may meet the Panel.*
- Employers  
*The Panel will meet with key employers of graduates from the programme, to review existing provision in line with the needs of the market and identify opportunities to enhance current provision.*
- The Head of Quality

*The Head of Quality will review all the PPRs that are conducted and maintain a record of the action plans.*

- The IQAC

*The IQAC approves the PPR report, produces implementation plans, and reports key issues to the Ministry of Higher Education.*

### *Suspension, Merger and Closure*

Recommendations for suspending, merging or closing (SMC) programmes can come out of PPR decisions, or can come from the University (Vice-Chancellor or Curriculum Committee) or direct from the Ministry. In all case the Ministry has to approve any change.

- The IQAC

*The IQAC identifies SMC as the result of a PPR, and recommends the decision to the Ministry of Higher Education for approval.*

- An investigation team

*A team will be assembled by the IQAC, led by the VCAA or the Dean of a different faculty to the one containing the programme, and containing academic peers from within the institution.*

*Alternatively, if the decision is from MoHE or contentious or sensitive, an independent team will be appointed by the Ministry. The team will normally be led by the Academic Monitoring & Evaluation Directorate.*

When the investigation team has made a decision, the resulting output will be dealt with internally and then reported to the Ministry. If the programmes are to be merged, a New Programme Approval will be needed for the combined programme.

## **Briefing and Training**

Each member of the department, whether student, teaching or administrative staff - and even graduated students (alumni) and employers who work with the department or its graduates - will need *briefing* or *training* to help them understand their role in the quality cycle processes. Overseeing the training is an important role for the Head of Quality of the University.

**Briefing** is to provide information about the **value** and **purpose** of the APM or PPR, and can be provided either in person or through documents, slides, web pages etc.

**Training** is focused on the **practice** of APM and PPR, with an understanding of their **value** and **purpose**. Training is usually provided by experts (such as the Head of Quality, National Training Team members, IQAC members, or others who have already experienced APM and/or PPR).

The needs of each role are different: students might only need a short *briefing* of their role in the process, yet a Head of Department will need thorough *training* in all aspects of the process. It is therefore useful to draw up a *briefing and training plan* for all roles, similar to that shown in Table 2.

Over time, more members of the Faculty will have received briefing or training and experienced an APM or PPR, and so requirements will change and the pool of potential trainers will grow.

**Table 2: A Briefing and Training Plan Template, with example plan**

<b>Role:</b>	<b>Briefing or training needed</b>	<b>In order to...</b>	<b>Outputs</b>
Students	<i>General briefing for all students (document, web page) Specific briefing for student panel members (FQAC)</i>	<i>Understand the quality process, and contribute effectively to the panel</i>	<i>Better student awareness and representation</i>
Teachers	<i>Briefing (Head of Department, Faculty staff meeting)</i>	<i>Ensure all staff know about the process, and the correct staff are contributing data and information</i>	<i>Efficient data collection, staff awareness of quality process</i>
Admin/services	<i>½ day training to help admin lead to understand the data needed (FQAC)</i>	<i>Help the admin lead to manage their team. organise student and staff questionnaires, etc.</i>	<i>Admin lead provides all the data for the form</i>
Head of Department/ QAC member	<i>Training, before APM/PPR starts (NTT member)</i>	<i>Lead the panel and process effectively</i>	<i>The quality process is implemented effectively</i>
Alumni	<i>Briefing (email, web page) Specific briefing for alumni panel members (FQAC)</i>	<i>Understand the quality process, and contribute effectively to the panel</i>	<i>Reputation of programme/ institution intact.</i>
Employers	<i>Briefing (personal email from Head of department, web page)</i>	<i>Involve employers in the panel process.</i>	<i>Useful input from employers for the panel.</i>

### *Briefing and Training methods*

There are many ways to approach briefing and training, some of which are indicated in Figure 3.1, and those chosen should reflect the local context and needs. Some common methods/suggestions are provided below:

#### **Face-to-face methods:**

- Information sessions (briefing or training): overview of the **value, purpose** and/or **practice** of APM/PPR.  
- eg. 1h talks/lectures or slides/document; individual meetings.
- Workshops: training, focusing on the **purpose** and **practice**.  
- eg. Group work, exploring documentation, working out data needed, how to complete sections. etc.
- Programme team training: to develop local **practice**.  
- regular workshops or at-desk training, to develop local cycle of data gathering, reporting, reflecting/planning, implementing.

## Resources:

- The use of resources for briefing a specific audience in the **value, purpose** and/or **practice** of APM/PPR.  
- eg. *Information on a student-facing web site, or in a course handbook; or a simple diagram of the quality process for staff*
- Local guides/templates for data collection, local role definitions (who does what), internal process / dates / submission methods etc.
- Annotated slides, for those who can't make the face-to-face training.

## Collection of data

APM and PPR require similar sets of data or input from key stakeholders such as students, alumni and employers. Some of this data is already being collected by academic departments and administrative services of the university and will provide valuable input. However, not all the data that is needed to implement a full APM and PPR may be available or easy to access. If this is the case, the process should be completed using the data currently available or relatively easy to collect, and steps should be identified in the action plan to ensure that more data will be generated for the next APM or before the next PPR.

### *Collection of new data*

For information areas where data is not currently collected, these will form into two main groups:

#### *1. Data that is easy to collect but isn't currently being collected.*

Identify what data is possible to collect in an appropriate timescale and set up mechanisms to collect it. This might be through a short one-off survey, or a student focus group. If that isn't possible, include in the action plan the steps you will take to collect this data for the next APM or PPR.

Always try to use existing processes and sources to collect any new data. If a student questionnaire already exists, for instance, then modify the questions on that to provide the data you need. If a suitable questionnaire doesn't exist at the moment, use one of the Ministry-approved templates in the *Resources* section of this handbook.

#### *2. Data that the department doesn't currently have access to.*

Heads of Department and their Deans can ask the Faculty or Institution to set up the necessary data collection methods, either for this or a future APM or PPR. If that isn't possible, the unavailability of data can be recorded in the APM or PPR, and raised by the IQAC at either Institution or Ministry level if deemed important for the process.

More detailed data needs are provided in the APM and PPR chapters. The above processes for collecting data can apply whenever you read about new data within those chapters.

## **In Summary: how to prepare for quality processes**

Drawing on the three areas of need described in this chapter (role definition, training and data collection) the following steps are recommended for faculty and departments preparing for quality processes.

### *Preparations for all processes*

1. Identify quality process roles within the Faculty and departments.
2. Ensure that the core roles (Dean, FQAC, Heads of Department) are briefed/trained in the overall quality process, and in both APM and PPR.
3. Standardise student records, student questionnaires, staff performance checks, etc. to ensure that good quality internal data is collected across all departments.
4. Investigate any existing alumni and employer data collection, and explore options to improve and extend this to provide data necessary for PPR in the future (this may need institution or Ministry support).
5. The Dean confirms and advertises the timetable for quality processes (APM, PPR) within the Faculty, giving suitable notice for each department.
6. Ensure that departments complete at least one APM before they undertake their first PPR. Then much of the data – and action plans - will be available from the first APM to feed into the PPR.

### *Preparations for APM*

1. Allocate FQAC member as co-lead with the Head of department.
2. Develop a training plan so that all staff and students are informed and aware of their role, and implement it.
3. Head of department oversees data collection, ensuring that data is gathered, student interviews are allocated and timetabled, etc.
4. If there has been a previous APM or PPR, review the status of any action plans from previous reviews.

### *Preparations for PPR*

1. The VCAA constitutes a panel, and the panel members are briefed of their role.
2. Develop a training plan so that all staff, students and employers are informed and aware of their role, and implement it.
3. Head of department oversees data collection, ensuring that data is gathered, student interviews are allocated and timetabled, alumni and employers are contacted, etc.



## Section 4: New Programme Approval

The processes for developing and approving new programmes are summarized in the *Academic Programme Review Policy* and in the *New Academic Programme processes, Articles 13 & 14* of the Bylaw. Oversight and final approval of the process is managed by the *Academic Programme Development Directorate (APDD)* of the *Ministry of Higher Education*.

In order to be eligible to establish new programmes, universities normally have to have achieved Stage 3 accreditation with the Ministry of Higher Education, otherwise in exceptional cases the Ministry may decide. They must then complete the New Programme Approval (NPA) process and receive approval from the Ministry before the new programme can be launched and students recruited. Oversight of the development of the proposal for a new programme will normally be the responsibility of the Head of the proposed awarding department or faculty.

The process of approving new programmes is designed to make sure that:

- there is a clear need for the programme, supported by evidence;
- there are clear educational goals and learning outcomes;
- the curriculum is appropriate to deliver those goals;
- there will be sufficient physical and staffing resources to enable the programme to be delivered with a high-quality student experience;
- the University has the appropriate quality assurance processes in place to confirm the ongoing quality of the programme.

Details of the above aspects are set out in a document called the **Programme Specification** which forms the core documentation of the programme approval process. The programme specification defines the nature of the programme. Use of a common format for the programme specification allows comparison to be made:

- between programmes with a similar degree title being delivered by different universities (e.g. bachelors' programmes in biological sciences delivered by different universities) and also
- comparison between the programmes delivered by the departments within an individual university, providing a clear picture of each university's portfolio of programmes.

Detail of the programme structures is important to enable good understanding of the structure, aims and outcomes of the programme and to enable the need for the programme to be confirmed in terms of its difference from existing programmes.

An example template for a programme specification is provided in [Appendix 1](#).

### Need for the programme

The Dean/Head of the Department that will award the programme, along with the academic members of staff making up the programme team should identify the proposed discipline area and level of the award they wish to develop, for example an undergraduate bachelors' degree in Biology.

In order to identify the need for the programme, the programme team should:

- determine what similar programmes, if any, are already being delivered by the university or by other universities within the region;
- meet with regional Governmental and non-Governmental employers and industry representatives to explore their need for graduates within the discipline area and the skills they are looking for when recruiting employees;
- discuss with the MoHE their identification of potential need for the programme within the region;
- clarify the potential areas of employability of the graduates through analysis of the market statistics for employment at a national level.

The outcomes of each of these activities should be clearly presented in the application form.

## Educational goals of the programme

If it has been determined that there is a need for the programme in terms of the graduate employment and that there are sufficient numbers of potential students, the programme team should proceed with developing the specification for the programme.

The key to the programme specification is the development of the educational goals and the learning outcomes. These set out what the overall **aims** of the programme are, and what skills and knowledge the students should have acquired and be able to demonstrate by the time they graduate from the programme – the **learning outcomes**. It is important, when drafting the framework to take account of the feedback from the MoHE and from the prospective employers regarding the skills they need the students to have acquired.

The **aims** of the programme define the over-arching educational goals the department plans to deliver. As such they are broad in scope. For example, a programme in Biology might have the aims of providing:

- a teaching and learning programme of high quality that is informed by research;
- an education that will enable graduates to follow a variety of careers including research or working in related industries;
- students with a broad appreciation of biological sciences, and advanced knowledge of one or more areas of the subject including appreciation of aspects of the underpinning research;
- students with a range of practical and transferable skills;
- students with the skills to analyse and interpret data from experiments or field work and to present those findings to different stakeholders.

The **learning outcomes** for the programme specify what the student should have achieved and be able to demonstrate by the time they have completed the programme. The learning outcomes are therefore represented through the curriculum, in terms of what the students are taught, and through the assessments, in terms of how achievement of the outcomes is demonstrated.

A prospective employer should therefore expect the graduate to be able to demonstrate a specific subject-based knowledge and a set of defined subject-based and transferable skills.

The subject-based aspects can be defined as:

- acquisition of a specific body of knowledge for that discipline;
- understanding of the key concepts of the discipline;
- ability to analyse and present key issues in the discipline;
- demonstration of practical skills, e.g. laboratory or technical skills where appropriate;
- preparation for progression to a specific career (e.g. pharmacy or medicine).

The transferable skills can be defined as the ability to:

- communicate effectively orally and in writing;
- manipulate and interpret numerical data;
- access and utilise databases and electronic resources;
- evaluate the value and reliability of different sources of information;
- use information to solve problems;
- work effectively as an individual or as part of a team.

Learning outcomes are expressed in terms of what the student should be able to do by the time they have successfully completed the module or the programme as a whole. The first word of the learning outcome should always be a verb that describes an action which can be assessed, such as *describe*, *explain* or *demonstrate*. This is then followed by the subject, i.e. what is to be explained or described.

Examples of the expression of learning outcomes could be:

On successful completion of the programme students should be able to:

- Describe the core principles of...
- Explain how the ecology of the region has developed over ...
- Undertake an analysis of data derived from...
- Interpret the findings of laboratory experiments...
- Research the literature to explain...
- Communicate effectively in writing the concepts of....
- Demonstrate the ability to work safely within the laboratory...
- Solve mathematical problems using...

For each individual programme, these learning outcomes should be expressed within the specific context of the programme. For example, the specific body of knowledge would be summarized in terms of the subject area of the discipline which the degree programme is planned to cover. Each module will have more specific learning outcomes that relate to an element of the programme so that all the modules taken together will encompass the learning outcomes of the programme as a whole.

## An appropriate curriculum

The curriculum for the programme is based on the educational goals of the programme. It comprises:

- What is taught
  - Subject knowledge
  - Subject skills – e.g. laboratory techniques
  - Transferable skills
- How it is taught – the modes of delivery, e.g.
  - Formal lectures

- Seminars and tutorials
- Practical classes
- Independent study
- Online learning
- How the programme is assessed
  - Coursework assessment, e.g.
    - Essays
    - Reports
    - Presentations
    - Posters
    - Data analyses
    - Problem solving
  - Examinations/tests e.g.
    - Multiple-choice questions
    - Short-answer questions
    - Essay questions
    - Problem solving

The programme is normally made up of a set of modules which the student will follow each academic year. Some of these will be modules, which all students have to take as part of the degree. These include modules that are core to the discipline (representing at least 50% of the programme), basic modules that address skills needs etc., and general courses that are included in all programmes (for example Islamic studies, foreign language, computer skills, Afghan contemporary history and environmental preservation). Some programmes will include optional modules, which allow the student to choose to study specific specialisations within the overall subject of the programme.

Each module should be described in a module specification which defines, in the same way as the programme:

- the module learning outcomes;
- what is taught;
- how it is taught;
- how the module learning outcomes are assessed.

The module learning outcomes will be more detailed than the over-arching programme level outcomes, but will relate to them.

An example template for a module specification is shown in [Appendix 2](#)

For each programme the set of module specifications should map onto the overall programme specifications. Any stakeholder, for example a prospective student, a member of academic staff or a graduate employer should be able to see how the set of modules builds up to make the full programme. Modules should build on each other, so that students' knowledge and skills progress as they move through the programme.

## Sufficient resources

In order for the programme to be delivered successfully, the department and the university must be able to provide sufficient resources. These resources include staffing, educational resources and estate resources:

## Staffing:

The department must be able to demonstrate that it has already in place, or has credible plans to employ:

- sufficient numbers of academic staff with the appropriate educational experience and subject knowledge to be able to deliver the programme;
- sufficient numbers of trained staff to manage the library facilities, the IT infrastructure, technical staff to support the operation of specific facilities such as laboratories;
- sufficient numbers of administrative staff to manage the programme in terms of operations such as student admissions, management of student records, maintenance of student teaching timetabling, assessment scheduling and management, student support functions.

## Educational resources:

The department must be able to demonstrate that it has:

- sufficient resources in terms of books and journals for the students to use during their studies;
- sufficient IT resources to support the students' studies;
- sufficient resourcing of individual equipment for safe laboratory or fieldwork use.

## Estate resources:

The department must be able to demonstrate that it has access to sufficient teaching space for the lectures, seminar teaching, laboratory teaching and any specialist facilities required for successful delivery of the programme.

## University quality assurance processes

The University will need to demonstrate that it has in place effective quality assurance processes to assure a high-quality student learning experience. This will require the university to have been operating both Annual Programme Monitoring (APM) and Periodic Programme Review (PPR) and to have reported on these operations to the MoHE.

## Process for New Programme Approval

The initial proposal for a new programme may be initiated at any organizational level within the university. This may therefore be developed by a department, a faculty or the university leadership. The proposal may also be based on a recommendation by the MoHE where there is identification of a regional need for the new programme.

### Stage 1

When it has been agreed to develop the initial plans for a new programme, the faculty should identify the department that will take responsibility for the development. The Head of Department should then establish a group of academic staff, with administrative support, to:

- undertake the initial assessments of the need for the programme,
- develop the programme specification (Appendix 1),
- and prepare the submission form (Appendix 3).

See the Appendixes for the example templates

## **Stage 2**

Faculty approval should be undertaken by a panel:

- Dean of the Faculty (Panel Chair)
- Two senior academic staff from outside the department but from related academic disciplines
- Chair of the Faculty Quality Assurance Committee (FQAC)/ or another member of the FQAC if the Faculty Dean is Chair
- Member of the institutional Quality Enhancement Committee
- Member of the Faculty Curriculum Committee

The panel should determine whether:

- there is a need for the programme;
- there are clear educational goals and learning outcomes;
- the curriculum is appropriate to deliver those goals;
- there are sufficient physical and staffing resources to enable the programme to be delivered with a high-quality student experience.

On the basis of the panel's conclusions, the faculty Academic Council and the Dean (Appendix 3 sections 8 & 9) may:

- Approve the proposed degree programme  
Or
- Approve the programme with recommendations for the department to consider for improving the programme.  
Or
- Approve the proposed degree programme with conditions that have to be met before the programme can start  
Or
- Refer the programme for more developmental work  
Or
- Reject the programme proposal

If the programme has been approved at Faculty level but with conditions, the Head of Department should prepare an action plan setting out how the conditions will be addressed before the proposal is considered at university level.

The outcome of the panel's considerations should take the form of a report for the University setting out the rationale for the programme, the panel's judgement regarding whether the programme should be approved or referred and the action plan (if required) setting out how any conditions will be addressed and by when.

## **Stage 3**

University level approval (Appendix 3 sections 10 & 11):

This requires consideration of the programme proposal by the university's Academic Council. The Council should receive the report from the Faculty Approval process along with the action plans to address any specific conditions. The Council should also receive guidance from the Vice-Chancellor for Academic Affairs and the Vice-Chancellor for

Administration and Finance. The VCAA will report on the academic quality of the programme and the VCAF will confirm that the equipment, staffing and facilities required for the programme are available or can be put in place in time before the programme commences. The final step at the university level is approval by the Chancellor (Appendix 3 section 12)

## **Stage 4**

### Ministry approval

Following approval by the university's Academic Council, the university should submit the proposal form to the Directorate of Academic Programme Development of the Ministry of Higher Education. The MoHE approval process involves approval by:

- the Academic Programme Development Directorate (APDD),
- the Directorate of Quality Assurance and Accreditation (QAAD),
- the National Curriculum Committee,
- the Minister and
- the High Council of the MoHE.

The Ministry will first send a team to undertake a site visit (Appendix 3 section 13) on the basis of this report, the APDD and MoHE will undertake final approval of the programme (Appendix 13 section 14-16).

Once the programme has been fully approved and any conditions have been met, the department can recruit students and deliver the programme. The quality assurance processes will then proceed as for the normal cycle, with Annual Programme Monitoring and Periodic Programme Review.



## Appendix 1 Exemplar Template for a Programme Specification

University of XXXXXXXXX

1. Programme Specification: *Programme Title*
2. Faculty: *Faculty name* Department: *Department name*
3. Level: *undergraduate/graduate,*
4. Award: *BSc/BA/MSc/MA*
5. Normal period of study: *3 years/4 years/5 years*
6. Entry Requirements: *set out any specific entry requirements for applicants for the programme*
7. Programme Aims:  
The programme aims to provide:  
*Insert the programme aims...e.g.*
  - *an education that will enable graduates to follow a variety of careers – specify any targeted career paths - including higher degrees and research;*
  - *a high quality learning experience;*
  - *development of an in-depth appreciation of subject xxxxx;*
  - *development of a range of practical and transferable skills – specify any specific skills delivered by the programme as well as the generic ones.*

### 8. Programme learning outcomes:

On successful completion of the programme students will be able to demonstrate the following subject-based learning outcomes:

*Specify each of the subject-based learning outcomes that the students should be able to demonstrate on completion of the programme, stating how it will be taught within the programme, through which modules, and how achievement of the learning outcome will be assessed.*

On successful completion of the programme students will be able to demonstrate the following transferable skills:

*Specify each of the transferable skills that the students will be expected to be able to demonstrate on completion of the programme learning outcomes, stating how it will be taught within the programme, in which modules it will be taught, and how it will be assessed.*

*For example...*

*On successful completion of the programme students will be able to demonstrate effective oral communication skills.*

*Training in oral communication skills will be delivered in modules XXX, YYY, ZZZ in which students will gain experience of giving oral presentations and receive formative feedback. Assessment will be through assessed presentations of coursework (Module ZZZ) and of the project outcomes (final year project module)*

### 9. Programme structure:

*For each academic year list the modules that the student will study and identify which ones are core (modules that all students on the programme will study) and which are optional (the list of modules students may choose from where there is some choice of specialisation allowed within the programme).*



*Make sure that the module learning outcomes and the programme learning outcomes map together*

## Appendix 2 Exemplar template for a module specification

University of XXXXXXXXX

1. Module Specification: *Module Title*
2. Faculty: *Faculty name* Department: *Department name*
3. Level: *undergraduate/graduate,*
4. When delivered: *e.g. 1<sup>st</sup> semester year 1 or 2<sup>nd</sup> semester year 3*
5. Indicative content of the module: *give a brief description of the subject content of the module that will be taught.*
6. Module Aims:  
The module aims to provide:  
*Insert the module aims...e.g. for a 1<sup>st</sup> year biosciences module in ecology*
  - *an introduction to conservation biology;*
  - *training in plant identification;*
  - *training in plant sampling techniques.*
7. Module learning outcomes:  
On successful completion of the module students will be able to demonstrate the following subject-based learning outcomes:  
*Specify each of the subject-based learning outcomes that the students should be able to demonstrate on completion of the module, stating how it will be taught within the module, and how achievement of the learning outcome will be assessed. e.g. for a biosciences module*  
*Describe the relationship between soil type and plant distribution for a specific habitat;*
  - Taught through lectures and fieldwork*
  - Assessed through coursework essay and end-of-module exam**Explain how the introduction of specific plant species has changed the local ecology;*
  - Taught through lectures and fieldwork*
  - Assessed through mini fieldwork project**Demonstrate effective plant identification skills*
  - Taught through practical classes*
  - Assessed through practical test of identification skills*  
On successful completion of the module students will be able to demonstrate the following transferable skills:  
*Specify each of the transferable skills that the students will be expected to be able to demonstrate on completion of the module learning outcomes, stating how it will be taught and how it will be assessed.*  
*For example....*  
*On successful completion of the module students will be able to demonstrate effective oral communication skills.*
  - Students will gain experience of giving oral presentations and receive formative feedback in the three tutorials.*
  - Assessment will be through an assessed presentation of the mini fieldwork project.*

## 8. Module structure

*Specify how the student learning and assessment will be structured, e.g.*  
*Teaching: The formal teaching will be delivered through 10 lectures, 2 tutorials and 3 laboratory classes.*

*Independent Study: Students should undertake guided independent study equivalent to 20 hours work. This will comprise reading specified chapters of the course textbook and undertaking research for the coursework essay.*

*Assessment: The module will be assessed through a 1000 word coursework essay, a 10 minute oral presentation and a 1 hour short-answer examination paper.*

## Appendix 3 – MoHE Application forms for New Programme Approval

**Table 3: Application form for New Program Approval**

1	Contents of proposal	Summary programme description
2	Proposed Program	Program name
3	General information	History of faculty/HEI, readiness for establishment of new program, logics of establishment and primary preparations, who prepared or assisted the proposed program curriculum....
4	Need assessment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Description of program</li> <li>2. Aim of the program</li> <li>3. Reason of establishing the new program</li> <li>4. Necessity and importance of proposed program</li> <li>5. Establishment of the new program based on national and regional requirements</li> <li>6. What new scientific revolutions especially in national level demanded the establishment of new program</li> <li>7. Does this program exist in neighbouring and regional countries? If yes which country and University?</li> <li>8. In which organizations or entities can the graduates of this program work?</li> </ol>
5	Functional conditions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Number of existing appropriate academic staff for running the new program (Bachelor, Master, PhD)</li> <li>2. Does the HEI own its buildings. If yes what is the number and specification of the teaching buildings (number of floors, teaching rooms, laboratory, library, computer lab, health clinic and air conditioning facilities)</li> <li>3. Number of existing programs</li> <li>4. Required facilities and equipment for the new program</li> <li>5. Approval of curriculum by the national curriculum committee at MoHE</li> <li>6. For financial issues, what precautionary measures are undertaken to ensure extra budget for infrastructure and expenses if required</li> </ol>
6	Current condition	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Standard teaching rooms</li> <li>2. Laboratory, working group rooms, project based works.... To ensure practical works based on the program requirements</li> <li>3. List of academic staff authorized to teach along with their academic ranks, academic degree (Bachelor, Master, PhD) and field of study.</li> <li>4. Description of facilities, library, internet, IT centre</li> </ol>

	Approval steps							
7	Description of three members of proposal team	#	Name	F Name	Academic rank	Academic degree	Related Dept	
		1						
		2						
		3						
8	Approval of Faculty academic council	Registration number, date and approval text					No of total members	
							No of Members attended	
							No of Votes in favor	
							No of opposed votes	
							No of Neutral votes	
9	Approval of the Dean of the faculty	Registration number, date and approval text					Full name, academic rank, signature and stamp	
10	Approval of administrative council of the University /or vice chancellor in administrative affaires in relation to infrastructure, facilities and equipment	Registration number, date and approval text					No of total members	
							No of members attended	
							No of votes in favor	
							No of opposed votes	
							No of neutral votes	
11	Approval of University academic council	Registration number, date and approval text					No of total members	
							No of members 12attended	
							No of votes in favor	
							No of opposed votes	
							No of neutral votes	
12	Approval of university chancellor	Full name and academic rank Registration number, date and approval text					Signature and stamp	

13	Site visit description by MoHE team	
14	Approval of academic board of APDD	Registration number, date and approval text
15	Approval of Minister	Registration number, date and approval text
16	Approval of High council of MoHE	Registration number, date and approval text

## Section 5: Annual Programme Monitoring

*Annual Programme Monitoring* (APM) supports section 5 of the *National Accreditation Framework*, to ensure that:

“Academic programmes are consistent with the institution’s mission and are regularly reviewed to ensure continuous improvement”. APM is “a formal process conducted by all departments within an HEI each year to review their academic programme and identify areas for improvement” (*QA Policy Section 2*).

APM is at the heart of the quality assurance cycle, as it provides a regular opportunity to *check* and *improve* every programme through the use of *action plans*, and to highlight any quality issues to the rest of the quality cycle.

APMs take place annually for each programme, and are based around the completion of an APM form. The action plans developed as part of the APM form are then used to check progress between each APM, and form an evidence base for the *Periodic Programme Review* that can pick up longer-term issues. Chapters 5 and 6 cover these aspects in greater detail.

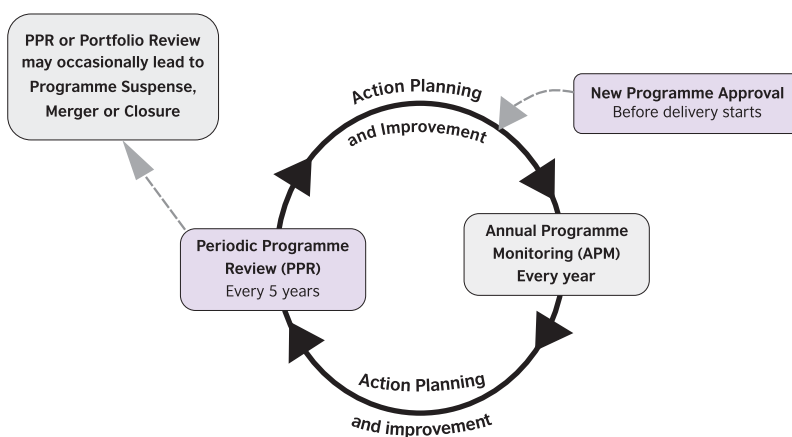


Figure 3: The position of APMs in the quality cycle.

## APM focus on the Programme

APM takes place internally for each *programme*: a separate APM form is used for each programme within the institution. A programme is a collection of elements that lead to a specific *award*, which might involve several departments and services within the institution – as described in Chapter 2 and shown in figure 2.

Individual staff, departments and services might therefore be part of several APM reports, to cover all of the programmes/awards they contribute to.

The head of the department that *awards* the programme undertakes APM for that programme.

## When, who and how?

APM takes place for all programmes at the end of the academic year. The process is undertaken by the head of the awarding department and a member of the Faculty or Institutional QA Committee.

The head of the awarding department asks other members of the department to contribute to the standard APM form, by collating and analysing data and reporting on their own area of activity. Involvement of all staff in the compilation and discussion of the form is a good way to engage staff with the quality process.

The QAC member will normally create a first draft of the form with their commentary, then check this with the Head of Department before an agreed form goes to the Dean and Faculty QAC.

## The APM Form

Each section of the APM form is described below, with notes on what is required and practical advice from the Head of Quality and from QAC members who have completed APMs previously.

APM section	What is required																																				
Department	The department that <b>graduates</b> students on the <b>programme</b> should complete the APM form for that programme, even if many departments are involved in teaching or support.																																				
Faculty																																					
Head of Department	The head of the department that graduates students on the programme.																																				
1a Title of Programme 1b Type of Provision: (for example, undergraduate, masters etc)																																					
Section 2: Student data	<p>In this section (boxes 2a to 2d), you will need to draw on some or all of the following data sources: <b>recruitment</b> and <b>registration</b> numbers, <b>retention</b> and <b>withdrawal</b>, student <b>progression</b> (movement through the programme, from year to year) and <b>completion</b> (graduation), <b>alumni</b>.</p> <p>Where it is possible, obtain data for the three previous years, in order to make a comparison over time.</p>																																				
2a Student numbers (how many students were enrolled this year and the past three years)	<p>Data in a table, separating by years and possibly different specialisms/routes/degree titles if relevant.</p> <p>Eg. Student intake over past 3 years</p> <table><tr><th>Year</th><th>Enrolments</th><th>% change</th></tr><tr><td>2015/16 Academic Year</td><td>102</td><td>0%</td></tr><tr><td>2016/17 Academic Year</td><td>115</td><td>+ 12.75%</td></tr><tr><td>2017/18 Academic Year</td><td>120</td><td>+ 4.3%</td></tr></table>	Year	Enrolments	% change	2015/16 Academic Year	102	0%	2016/17 Academic Year	115	+ 12.75%	2017/18 Academic Year	120	+ 4.3%																								
Year	Enrolments	% change																																			
2015/16 Academic Year	102	0%																																			
2016/17 Academic Year	115	+ 12.75%																																			
2017/18 Academic Year	120	+ 4.3%																																			
2b Student Progression (proportion of students successfully completing each year and number of graduates)	<p>Data in a table, showing figures and percentages by year of progression (eg. year 1, year 2, year 3, graduation), and retention figures (students remaining or withdrawing for any reason).</p> <p>Eg. <b>Year 1 (progressing to year 2)</b></p> <table><tr><th></th><th colspan="2">Students</th><th>Number progressing to year 2</th><th>% progressing to year 2</th></tr><tr><td>2015/16</td><td>102</td><td>96</td><td></td><td>94%</td></tr><tr><td>2016/17</td><td>115</td><td>102</td><td></td><td>88%</td></tr><tr><td>2017/18</td><td>120</td><td>95</td><td></td><td>79%</td></tr></table> <p><b>Year 2 (progressing to year 3)</b></p> <table><tr><th></th><th>Students</th><th>Number progressing to year 3</th><th>% progressing to year 3</th></tr><tr><td>2015/16</td><td>98</td><td>96</td><td>98%</td></tr><tr><td>2016/17</td><td>96</td><td>92</td><td>96%</td></tr><tr><td>2017/18</td><td>102</td><td>95</td><td>93%</td></tr></table>		Students		Number progressing to year 2	% progressing to year 2	2015/16	102	96		94%	2016/17	115	102		88%	2017/18	120	95		79%		Students	Number progressing to year 3	% progressing to year 3	2015/16	98	96	98%	2016/17	96	92	96%	2017/18	102	95	93%
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2017/18	102	95	93%																																		

	<p>...etc.</p> <p>Where it is useful, data might be provided about performance (marks, grades) on individual modules – especially if many departments contribute to the programme.</p>
2c Employability (proportion of graduates from last year entering employment)	<p>The data provided here will be based on what is available locally. There are internal and external data sources:</p> <p><b>Internal:</b> how are students taking up opportunities within the programme, such as work experience, attending careers talks or sessions, taking modules that have an industry or professional element, etc.</p> <p><b>External:</b> Does the institution contact graduates to collect data on their employment? If so, can this data be separated into categories (eg. those in graduate-level or professional jobs, those in further study, those in non-graduate/professional jobs)?</p>
2d Issues (identify any issues arising from this data)	<p>3 year recruitment trends, conversion rates and issues of concern. Impact of recruitment initiatives, new proposals.</p> <p>3 year student progression rates, student outcomes, issues of concern.</p> <p>Trends in employment &amp; further study rates, student work experience, employability and career skills in the curriculum.</p>
3a Student Feedback (results of student surveys and other feedback)	<p>Data sources: issues or themes obtained from: reports/minutes from regular student-staff committees; student module/programme evaluations (feedback forms collected at the end of a module/programme); irregular focus groups or student meetings, etc.</p> <p>Student module evaluations (questionnaires): try to adopt a standard evaluation form across all modules of the programme, to help comparison and analysis. A set of suggested questions for module or programme level are provided in the Resources section.</p> <p>Avoid over-evaluating students: try to use or adapt existing student feedback methods, and use a mixture of programme-level surveys, and targeted module-level surveys each year.</p> <p>It might be useful to set a benchmark for feedback – for example, 80% of students on the module choose ‘excellent’ or ‘very good’.</p>
3b Issues (identify any issues arising from this data)	<p>Issues might be academic programme related: specific issues raised regarding the curriculum, teaching methods, assessment methods.</p> <p>Highlight actions taken in response to feedback and how these are then fed back to students.</p> <p>Identify any actions that have demonstrated a positive impact on the student experience.</p>
4a Staff Feedback (feedback from teaching and administrative staff)	<p>Feedback from staff with regard to how they work with students (teaching, learning, pastoral) can be obtained in a variety of ways. It could be an annual staff survey, minutes from a department meeting, interviews with particular staff, issues raised to the Head of Department.</p> <p>A set of suggested questions for the annual staff survey are provided in the Resources section.</p>
4b Issues (identify any issues arising from this data)	<p>Common issues might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Those relating to physical resources.</li> <li>- Those relating to the organisation and delivery of the curriculum.</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Staff engagement with development opportunities or initiatives to support the student experience.</li> </ul>
5a Physical Learning Resources ( <i>comment on the learning resources available and any specific needs</i> )	Data sources: room occupancy levels, Staff and student feedback, availability and capacity of facilities in relation to student numbers.
5b Issues ( <i>identify any issues arising from this data</i> )	<p>Common issues might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Library and IT resources to support learning and teaching.</li> <li>- Management and capacity of physical resources (laboratories, teaching spaces etc) to support learning and teaching.</li> </ul>
6a Staff Resources ( <i>comment on the number of academic and support staff and the level of qualification</i> )	Data sources: Staffing data across academic, technical and clerical, staff comments via formal and informal mechanisms
6b Issues ( <i>identify any issues arising from this data</i> )	<p>Common issues might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- staffing numbers and staff:student ratio; any impact on teaching delivery</li> <li>- staff development: how many staff take training courses, are there differences in performance or practice across the programme</li> <li>- staff availability and engagement (are they on time for teaching, are they available for student consultations, do they respond to student emails, do they take part in departmental meetings etc.)</li> </ul>
7 Update on progress made on action plan from last year's APM Review ( <i>with time scale if not yet complete</i> )	<p>If this is the first APM for a programme, have any actions to improve the quality of the programme been taken in the past year that can be reported here?</p> <p>If the programme has already had an APM, copy the Action Plan table from the previous APM here, and update it to show actions that have been completed or are still ongoing.</p>
8 Update on progress made on action plan from previous periodic review ( <i>if the programme has had a periodic review within the past 5 years, comment on the progress made to implement the action plan</i> )	<p>If the programme hasn't had a PPR, are there any major changes to the programme that have been made within the past five years?</p> <p>If the programme has already had a PPR, copy the Action Plan table from the PPR here, and update it to show work that has been done/completed or is still ongoing.</p>
9 Good Practice ( <i>any specific areas of good practice to note</i> )	Is there any good practice that would be useful to share with the University, so that others can benefit from it?
10 Conclusion	Identify the most important issues raised in sections 2 – 6, and list them

<i>(summarise the issues that need to be addressed)</i>	briefly here. See if any of them can be grouped together as related issues.				
11a Action Plan <i>(the actions that the Department will take during the next academic year to improve the programme – regarding programme outcomes, content, materials, teaching methods, assessment etc)</i>	Create an action plan out of the issues listed in (10). Each action should be achievable (ie. can be completed within the next year, with existing staff and budget – or with appropriate extra support), accountable (have a named person who will undertake the action), time-limited and monitored (when will the action take place, and how will you know it is being done and is working?). Use a table format for ease of tracking, like the following example:				
	<b>Action</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Who?</b>	<b>When?</b>	<b>How monitored</b>
	1	Revise feedback form and apply to all assignments	HOD oversees revision; teachers implement form.	Semester 1 / 2019	HOD checks Implementation
	2	...			
11b Requests for support <i>(the requests that the Department wants to make to the Faculty or the University for support to address issues that it can't address itself)</i>	These result from actions that can't be completed due to a lack of resource. Some of these issues will be escalated to University level, usually at the next PPR. It helps the case if programmes can demonstrate that they are trying their best with existing resources (by making efficiencies, etc.)				

**Table 4: APM Form**

## what happens once the form is submitted to QAC?

The APM form is considered by the Faculty QAC and Dean, who may ask for further information if required. They will then approve the form, and ensure that:

- action plans are confirmed with the Head of Department
- the APM feeds into a Faculty programme monitoring report, which in turn goes to the IQAC.
- any issues that need raising institutionally are referred to the IQAC.

An overview of the APM process and information flow is shown in figure 4.

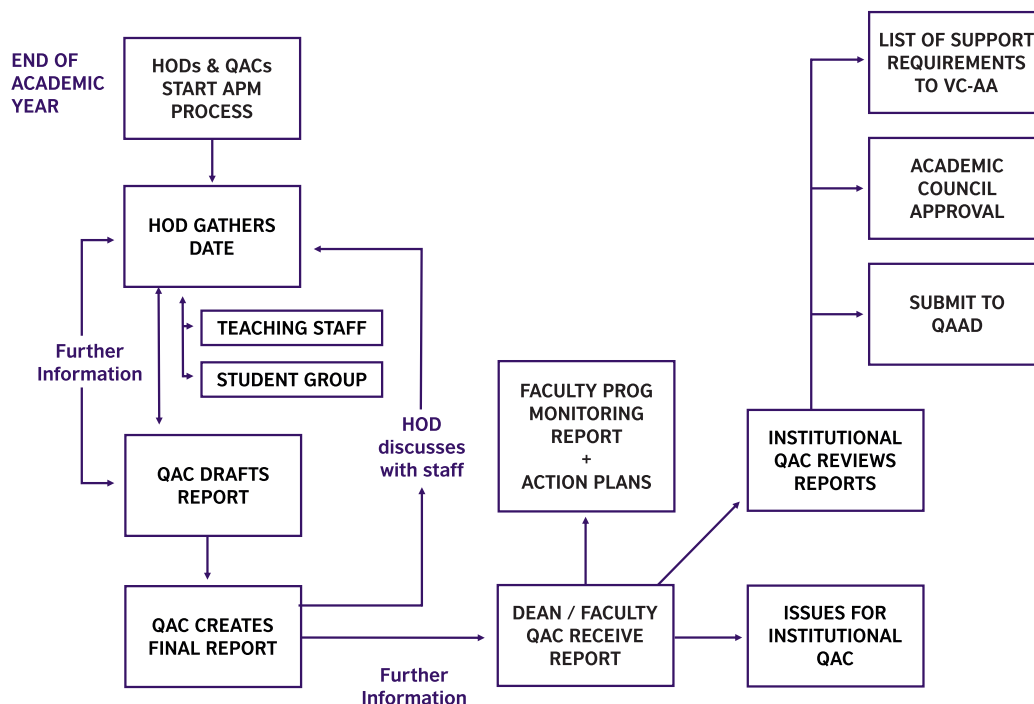


Figure 4: APM Process

## Section 6: Action Planning

An essential part of the output of any quality assurance process is the set of actions that will be taken in order to address any issues that have been identified and to undertake *enhancement* activities. Annual Programme Monitoring (APM), Periodic Programme Review (PPR) and New Programme Approval (NPA) all require programme teams to produce *action plans*. These plans define:

- what needs to be done;
- when it needs to be done;
- who is responsible for doing it;
- what resources or inputs are needed to do it;
- how successful completion of the plan will be evaluated.

An action plan represents a single record of what has been agreed in response to the outcomes of the quality assurance activities. This plan should be shared with staff at all levels of the relevant programme or department to ensure that all colleagues are engaged with the actions required. An action plan will also identify the criteria that will be used to measure whether an action has been successfully completed. From an institutional perspective, action plans are important tools enabling the Faculty or University to monitor the output of quality assurance processes, to ensure that the necessary actions are being taken and to hold relevant individuals or groups to account.

As part of Annual Programme Monitoring (APM) programme teams are required to reflect on the completion and impact of the action plan from the previous APM and the action plan from any previous PPR. As part of Periodic Programme Review (PPR) programme teams are required to reflect on the action plans from a minimum of the past three years of APM reports, and identify which actions have been completed and evaluate their impact. It is also important to identify which actions may still be outstanding. If a new programme has been developed and approved through the New Programme Approval process there may be conditions or recommendations arising from that which need to be actioned either before the programme can begin or during the first year of operation. These again can be reported on through the APM.

As a result of this connection between the APM, PPR and ongoing actions within the department, action planning is at the heart of the quality cycle: it's what drives continuous quality enhancement (as shown in figure 5.1).

An effective action plan will consist of the following core components:

- Clear, defined actions which set out the steps that need to be taken;
- Clear accountability for completion of actions;
- A realistic and manageable timescale for completion of actions;
- Mechanisms for monitoring the completion of actions and evaluating their success.