



UQAIB

Good Practice Guide



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Industry and Market
Engagement

What is the purpose of this guide?

This guide is intended to inform institutions about the ways in which Industry and Market Engagement could be developed in the Dubai context. The guide does not expand the scope of the UQAIB requirements and addresses an issue already contained in the *UQAIB Quality Assurance Manual*. It is not prescriptive and provides exemplar options to suit different circumstances that can be adapted by each institution to meet their individual requirements.

Introduction

Institutions operating in Dubai must be cognisant of the need to ensure that academic programmes are producing graduates that meet the needs of local industry, employers and the requirements of wider communities who support a well-educated population. They must also meet the future employment and further study expectations of their students, many of whom may work or study outside Dubai on completing requirements for graduation. It is recognised that institutions will vary in the markets they target and this may be reflected in their approach to student recruitment from within Dubai or other countries and in the future destinations of their graduates. Thus the requirements expected of institutions may vary and not be solely based on the needs of Dubai, although establishing their proposed position within the Dubai environment should always be addressed as a priority. KHDA, and all higher education institutions, are required to align with the aim and intent of the Dubai Strategic Plan and the prevailing legislative environment.

Institutions wishing to introduce a new academic programme or maintain an existing academic programme must ensure that appropriate linkages exist to the industries, markets and communities who have a connection to the academic programme, typically by employing the graduates. This may be in the form of specific relationships which ensure that graduates are equipped to work in specified and prescribed employment areas or there may be less specific relationships that simply ensure that graduates have appropriate attributes to meet the expectations of specific or more general employers and communities.

In all instances, the applicant is expected to demonstrate that there is student demand and a realistic expectation of meeting forecast enrolment targets after the academic programme has been introduced. It is recognised that this is a challenging area and one where enrolment estimates are often too optimistic. However, the information is critical for planning purposes and in meeting the future needs of Dubai for both general and highly specialised academic programmes and the number of graduates.

All applications for new academic programmes are scrutinised by the KHDA. This office has the responsibility to ensure that the Programme Registration application is consistent with the strategic needs of Dubai, having regard to the Dubai Strategic Plan, the extant provision of higher education and new demographic and economic trends. While KHDA has the right to reject an application on any of these grounds a compelling consultation exercise, using the guidance above, will be part of the overall consideration and may reflect positively on the aspirations of the applicant institution.

Dubai maintains an interest in the introduction of new and novel academic programmes that meet an established and wider demand. Applicants should be mindful of extant provision and recognise that with the current demand and demography that further replication of existing provision may not be desirable.

It should be noted that the strategic needs of Dubai will continue to change and do embrace an extending international positioning, related to participation in international education provision and the wider requirements of the region.

Institutions should seek clarification from KHDA if they are uncertain about the requirements for external consultation and the provision of relevant information.

It is critical to recognise that KHDA will promote the coherent and balanced development of academic programmes in Dubai and ensure the quality of academic programme developments is cognisant with high, and internationally recognisable, standards.

New Academic Programme Proposals

New academic programmes offered for the first time in Dubai require either:

- Initial Programme Registration by Validation; or
- Initial Programme Registration by Endorsement,

as set out in the *UQAIB Quality Assurance Manual*.

There must be a justification for a new academic programme and a statement from the applicant institution explaining why the proposal is being put forward and how the proposal is linked to the institution's own strategic and planning goals.

There must be evidence of consultation in the preparation of the proposal and its acceptability to relevant academic, industrial, professional and other communities. If there is a professional registration or licensing body relevant to the area of study, it must be named and written evidence, from that body, of the institution's consultation with it provided in the application.

Continued Approval of Existing Academic Programmes

The requirements of KHDA for academic programme renewal are set out in the *UQAIB Quality Assurance*. The renewal process requires institutions to provide historical and current evidence to support renewal which may be for either:

- Annual Programme Registration by Validation Renewal or by Validation Exemption; or
- Annual Programme Registration by Endorsement Renewal or by Endorsement Exemption.

In both cases annual registration, with or without the requirement for associated validation or endorsement renewal does not require an institution to provide a revised description of the target market and evidence of student and employer demand or details of evidence to support that the programme includes some localised industry element integrated into the curriculum. In all instances previously submitted evidence is deemed to remain valid and will not need to be resubmitted. However, if the validity of the information has changed substantially then updated information will need to be provided. In these instances institutions should follow the consultation approaches outlined in the previous section, as for a new academic programme for initial registration by validation or endorsement. Institutions would normally endeavour to establish long-term relationships with those organisations and groups they have previously consulted. This would allow for greater ease in the regular updating of information.

Submitting new information

As a general guide new information should be submitted if one or more of the following has occurred:

- a major change in student demand;
- a major change in employer demand that will impact on graduates;
- a change in requirements by one or more important external communities;
- a change in requirements by a professional or licensing body that either materially changes the structure or delivery of an academic programme or impacts on the recognition of graduates and their ability to practice.

The provision of revised information related to an existing academic programme is a critical part of the approval process, when required. Of particular concern is the requirement to ensure that any changes promoted by professional or licensing bodies are up to date and that institutions operating in Dubai continue to meet the requirements of these bodies. Active and regular consultation with these bodies should be a feature of managing these academic programmes.

Institutions should seek clarification from KHDA if they are uncertain about the requirements for new information.

Approaches to Conducting a Consultation

The institution produces a written summary of the consultation undertaken, the views expressed and the institution's consideration of these views. The consultation may take a variety of forms and include:

- use of a formal survey, which includes information on how the recipients were chosen, their response and how the survey information was incorporated into the final form of the academic programme proposal;
- use of focus groups, which includes information on the composition and number of focus groups, their collective responses and how that information was incorporated into the final form of the academic programme proposal;
- a broader, less focused consultation process with external groups, which includes comment on the consultative process and its robustness, the collective response from participants and how this information was incorporated into the final form of the academic programme proposal;
- a focused consultation with a specific client or clients, who may typically be the employer(s) of graduates. This would include a summary of the consultation, including the extent to which this information was incorporated into the final form of the academic programme proposal. In cases where a proposal is designed to meet the need of a specific client or clients it is essential that the applicant addresses the issue of their adherence with normal academic programme approval processes;
- a focused consultation with a professional body, who may formally accredit the academic programme and confer a particular status on graduates. In such cases applicants must address the views of prospective employers as well as the requirements of the professional or licensing body and how this information was incorporated into the final form of the academic programme proposal. Applicants would address the issue of the

nature of their long-term relationship with a professional or licensing body and in particular the timing of the granting of formal accreditation, be that at the commencement of the programme or after the completion of the first cohort of graduates. For graduates, registration with the appropriate professional registration body is usually a prerequisite to practice. It follows that the professional registration bodies are keenly interested in the content and quality of education proposed and should be actively consulted. The applicant must be clear about all jurisdictional issues of the professional or licensing body, as they relate to acceptance in Dubai, the HEP Home location and other countries.

The presentation of information and data from all forms of consultation will be enhanced by use of a proven methodology to support the accuracy of the evidence. Where appropriate a letter from an external organisation explaining their involvement in any consultation and support, or otherwise, for an academic programme proposal would add value to the application.

Institutions should endeavour to establish long-term relationships with those organisations and groups they consult. This will allow for regular updating of information, which is a KHDA requirement for the Annual Registration process for academic programmes.

In some instances a more light-handed approach to consultation may be appropriate where there is clearly a track record of offering closely related programmes in Dubai and an existing set of relevant relationships with external parties that can be documented. This would not usually apply to the introduction of postgraduate programmes that build on existing undergraduate programmes. In this instance the applicant would be required to show demand and appropriate external consultation.

Examples of Good Practice

- **DuBiotech and EnPark's Career Fair** is a platform to provide jobs for students, offering internships and training opportunities throughout the year. Connecting students with competitive employment opportunities enables attracting and retaining young talent in the region.

www.dubiotech.ae/.../531-dubiotech-and-enparks-career-fair-provides-8

- Texas A&M University at Qatar: research work is performed by the University's researchers on behalf of local industry stakeholders. A series of industry-sponsored seminars are organised for Qatar students, researchers, and faculty, but extends the invitation to other universities.