



Understanding Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education Institutions in Jordan

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JORDAN

UNIVERSITY OF ALICANTE, SPAIN,

JULY, 6 - 9 / 2009

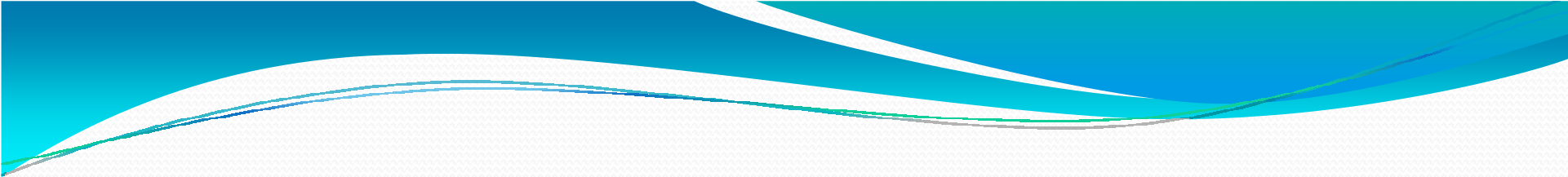
Accreditation & QA in Institutions of Higher Education

- The quality debate in higher education is not a new phenomenon.
- In the past, different terminologies were used by universities and government agencies such as academic standards, student assessment and accountability.
- Quality debate was largely about maintaining academic standards according to some national or international norms, maintaining and improving the level of teaching and learning, providing sufficient funds and resources to achieve quality in higher education.

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- Many of these issues are still important today. But the debate is largely now about:
 - The achievement of quality outcomes.
 - The establishment of appropriate management processes to monitor the achievements, and the extent to which specified goals and objectives are being met.
 - The suitability of graduates for the workforce and professions.
 - Providing data and information to stakeholders to assure them of the quality and credibility of the outputs.

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- **The difference between the old and the new quality debate is that:**

The old was concerned with inputs and national and international academic standards, while the new one is concerned more with management processes and their effectiveness, the assessment of outputs, monitoring performance, and meeting institutional needs.

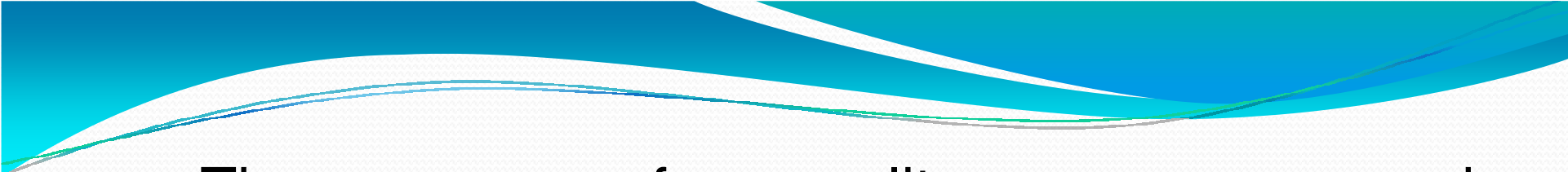


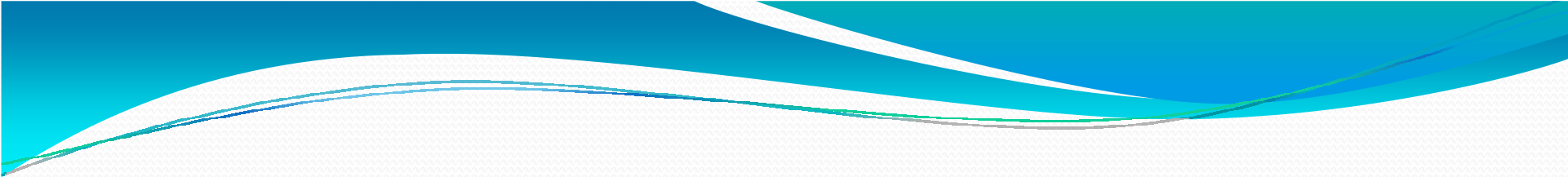
Quality assurance (QA) refers to systematic management and assessment procedures that are adopted to monitor performance and to ensure or to improve the achievement of specified quality.

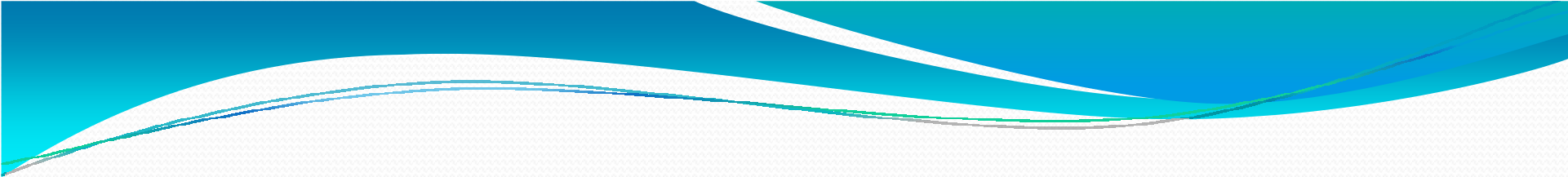


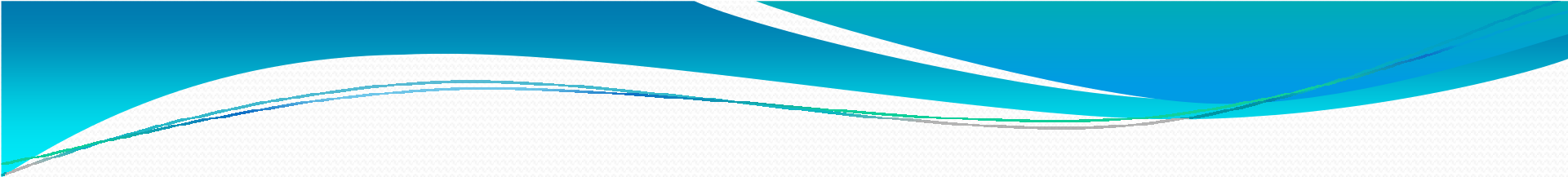
A Background

- Jordan has made significant progress in higher education, a fact reflected in the sharp increase in the number of public and private higher education institutions over the last four decades.

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- The concern for quality assurance and accreditation in higher education in Jordan began with the establishment of the first university 50 years ago.
 - This concern has continued to grow with the increase of the number of higher education institutions.
 - There are at present 10 public universities, 18 private universities, and 54 community colleges.

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- As a guarantee for a minimum standard of quality and excellence, a legislation was promulgated in 1998 to establish the Accreditation Council (AC).
 - Its primary focus was private universities.
 - Why public universities were not subject to accreditation was a matter of concern, particularly as their enrollment continued to exceed capacity levels and issues of quality became prominent.

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- Public and private pressure heightened the demand on universities and concerned public officials to achieve international standards toward Jordan becoming a regional/global center for higher education delivery.
 - To that end, in June of 2007, the (AC) was dissolved, and the Higher Education Accreditation Commission (HEAC) was established in its place by law.
 - HEAC is a financially and administratively independent entity.

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- **The scope of HEAC's jurisdiction encompasses:**
 - Mandate over private and public universities, including all and any foreign higher education institutions affiliated with Jordanian universities.
 - Responsibility for the National Testing Center, which designs and conducts standardized tests in all fields.
 - The advancement of sound means and methods to ensure that higher education institutions are in full compliance with all its regulations.



HEAC's Vision

Bringing Jordanian higher education institutions up to international competitiveness

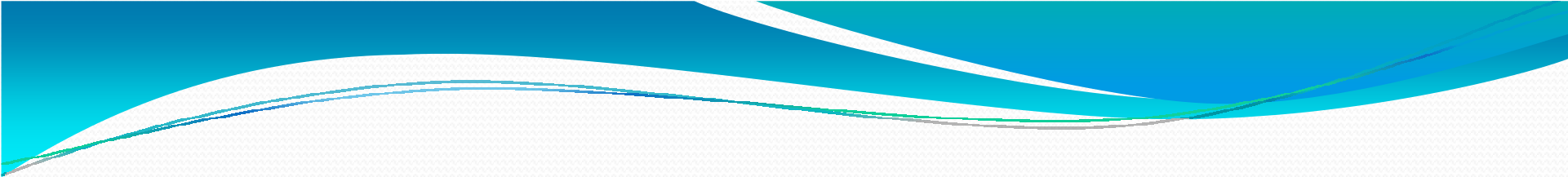
HEAC's Mission

Elevating Jordanian higher education institutions' performance and reinforcing their competitive capabilities to reach national, regional and international levels, as well as guaranteeing the implementation of accreditation and quality criteria to ensure the achievement of their objectives



HEAC's Aims

- Raising the status of higher education in the Kingdom.
- Assuring its quality.
- Motivating higher education institutions to interact with national and international universities and scientific research centers as well as international accreditation and quality control commissions.
- Developing higher education through incorporating internationally comparable standards.



Accreditation is a series of auditing and evaluating procedures and criteria aiming at guaranteeing minimum quality requirements in higher education and proposing implementation steps to ensure elevating the teaching and learning process and outcomes to enhance competing in domestic and international job markets.



Accreditation Criteria

- A series of requirements the higher education institution or academic program must comply with in order to obtain full or partial accreditation.
- They consist of the minimum quality requirement for the educational process.

Quality Assurance (QA)

- Higher education institutions continuing to adhere to minimum accreditation criteria, developing and enhancing them towards elevating the learning outcomes to an internationally competitive level.

QA Objectives:

- Implementation of advanced methods of assuring quality.
- The continued enhancement and development of the work practices and achievement of the highest possible levels in terms of education outcomes.
- Accountability

HEAC & QA

- HEAC applies institutional and program standards & criteria in order to:
 - Respond to empirical changes.
 - Receive feedback from evaluative committees entrusted with investigating accreditation requests.
 - Receive feedback from workshops, meetings, and cooperate with higher education institutions.

These accreditation criteria are minimum prerequisites for any QA requests



HEAC quality assurance system focuses on three stages:

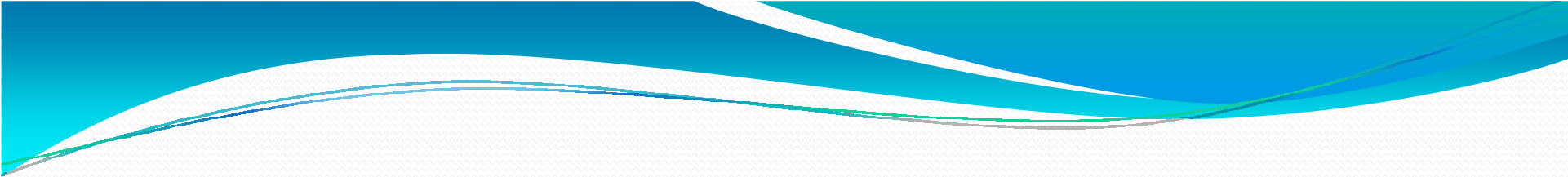
- Self - study evaluation
- Peer - Reviews
- The decision of the Commission

Stages of Evaluation Process

➤ Self-Study

At this stage, the higher education institution undergoes a phase of self - evaluation where it sets its actual information/indications against each criterion of minimum accreditation and quality assurance, associated with Jordanian universities programs provided by HEAC.

➤ It is considered a quality assurance and self-inspection test to assess the degree to which the institution in question meets the criteria.

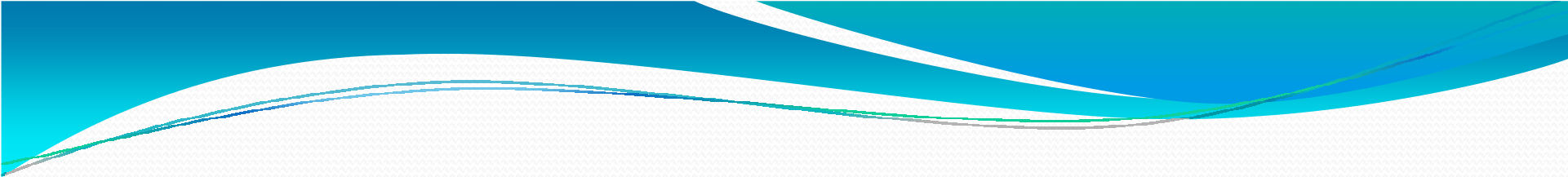
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- The institution may then re-examine its own policies, teaching methods, and learning environment to adjust, modify or apply corrective action.
 - This is to be documented and presented to HEAC for further investigation.

Peer-Review

- This is the phase that involves investigating the information the institution in question has provided to HEAC.
- HEAC commissions a committee to pay a formal visit to the institution in question to cross check the information provided with the actual situation to determine whether indeed it meets the accreditation and quality assurance criteria.
- At this point, the committee submits its report to HEAC, including suggestions for improvements the institution in question must make.


Decision Making

- HEAC further scrutinizes the details of the committee's report along with the institution's report to make a final decision concerning the findings.
- HEAC publishes the decisions without details to safeguard the integrity of the institution.
- **The decision may include:**
 - Accreditation
 - Postponement until corrective action is completed
 - Accreditation is not granted
 - A percentage score is given based on the findings
 - The score is used by HEAC to determine whether or not the institution is to receive financial or recognition rewards.



In doing the self- evaluation study, the institution should pay attention to the twelve criteria set by HEAC. They are as follows:

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- **First Criterion: Vision, Mission, & Objectives**
 - **Second Criterion: Educational Programs and their Effectiveness**
 - **Third criterion: Students**
 - **Fourth Criterion: Faculty Members**
 - **Fifth Criterion: Scholarships, Grants, Scientific Research, and Creativity**
 - **Sixth Criterion: Library and Information Resources**

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- **Seventh Criterion: Governance & Administration**
 - **Eight Criterion: Financial Resources**
 - **Ninth Criterion: Physical Resources**
 - **Tenth Criterion: Institutional Integrity**
 - **Eleventh Criterion: Community Interaction**
 - **Twelfth Criterion: Quality Assurance Management (QAM)**

Required documentation

1. Documents clearly stating the organization's establishment, history, development of its vision, mission, objectives, etc... .
2. Documents for any criterion may be requested by HEAC and must be furnished at such time as HEAC sees fit.



What to do ?

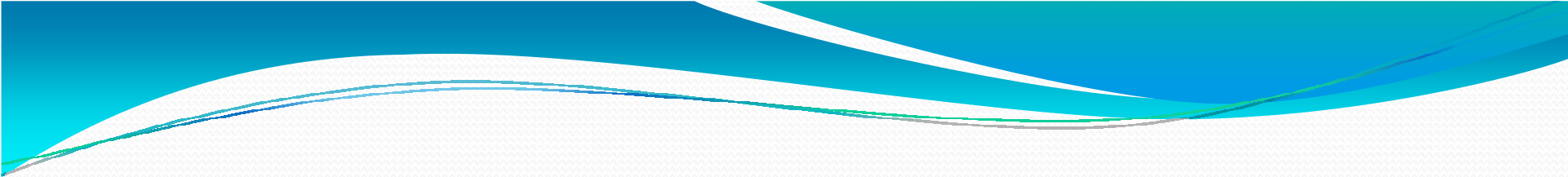
- In responding to HEAC's requirements, universities need to set some policies, regulations, and processes to assure and enhance the quality of their educational programs. In order to do that, a fully integrated quality assurance system based on a set of university prescribed vision, mission, objectives, and principles for a quality assurance framework aimed at enhancing and assuring the quality of educational programs must be developed and implemented.

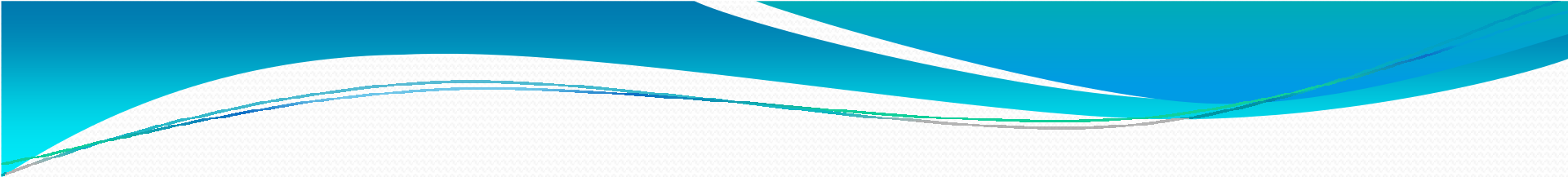
This system should focus on:


- Studying the status quo of the *university environment* including faculties, departments, programs, students, etc....
- Describing the *tasks, roles, and responsibilities of teams and individuals*.
- Identifying the *opportunities and challenges* that the changes presented from a faculty perspective.
- Describing the *strategies* used to achieve the goals and conclude with an analysis of the successful factors.
- *Commitment* from the faculty and all employees to ensuring success.

The University Environment

- Deans, leaders, and faculty responsibilities and their roles must be identified clearly. The faculty has always had responsibility to provide quality educational programs.
- The management structure of the faculty must be identified (heads, deans, associate deans, academic and research & development, etc.) and their roles and responsibilities must be set. The support of the dean and the commitment of the heads to the implementation of PQA are crucial to gaining the engagement of faculty.
- Each program must be managed by a Program Team (PT) under the leadership of a Program Leader (PL). The PT consists of the staff responsible for the day-to-day management and facilitation.

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- A ***Program Quality Assurance*** (PQA) must be designed to ensure the quality system for all educational programs offered by the university nationally and internationally.
 - PQA is framed by a set of guiding principles which includes a list of criteria against which program quality is determined and a process for program accreditation.

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- The guiding principles include a holistic review of programs, a thoughtful and critical approach to the review itself, taking account of changes in the environment that impact on programs, a commitment to meeting the requirements of HEAC, an alignment between initial accreditation, ongoing program improvement and reaccreditation, regular reporting against specified criteria and external validation.

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- The criteria should be developed by various groups working closely with consultants and experts on quality assurance. The criteria are:
 - Need for the program including future industry and community needs for graduates
 - Educational design including graduate capabilities and alignment between objectives, teaching and learning experience and assessment
 - Equity including access to programs and support
 - Management including processes and documentation
 - Resources including staff capabilities and specialized facilities
 - Evaluation and maintenance including ongoing review of programs
 - Stakeholder requirements including the needs of professional accrediting bodies to support the quality assurance aspects.



The task

The PQA system needs to be developed and implemented at the program level within existing faculty management structures.



A strategy should be conducted to ensure the following goals:

- Developing a system for PQA ownership at the program level;
- Identifying appropriate roles and responsibilities of management, academic/teaching and administrative staff within the Faculty related to PQA;
- Identifying issues that might affect programs with specific characteristics and suggesting strategies to address these; and,
- Identifying the documentation requirements for PQA and how these can be efficiently achieved.

Actions

To achieve a successful development and change of the PQA, a series of steps must be taken by the institution:

- Step 1. Establishing a sense of awareness and urgency
- Step 2. Forming a powerful guiding coalition
- Step 3. Creating a vision, and a mission
- Step 4. Communicating the vision
- Step 5. Empowering others to act on the vision
- Step 6. Planning for and creating short-term wins
- Step 7. Consolidating improvements and producing still more change
- Step 8. Institutionalizing new approaches



Communicating up and down the organization

- The strategy and outcomes must be communicated internally, to all levels within the Faculty and externally, and to relevant central committees and units within the university. In this way, the issues raised by faculty members, administrators and heads will be provided with information at the university level to inform system improvements.

**Thank you for
your keen
attention and
listening**

