

**ACADEMIC PROGRAMS
DEVELOPMENT AND
REVIEW**

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SIGNATURE AND STAMP




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ACADEMIC PROGRAMS DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW POLICY

1. PURPOSE:

This policy establishes the formal framework through which UTAS fulfils its institutional obligation to review, monitor, and develop its academic programs and courses in a systematic and transparent accountable manner. The policy ensures that all programs offered by UTAS meet and continue to meet the standards set by the Oman Authority for Quality Assurance of Education (OAQAE), including those articulated in the Oman Qualification Framework (OQF), Program Standards Assessment (PSA) and the Institutional Standard Assessment (ISA).

Beyond regulatory compliance, this policy provides UTAS with the governance architecture necessary to detect quality gaps early, respond to them systematically, and document improvement in a manner that stands up to external scrutiny. It assigns clear responsibilities, defines approval pathways, and establishes the procedural standards that all review activities must meet. In doing so, it protects the integrity of UTAS qualifications, safeguards the interests of students, and provides the University Council, Academic Council, and accreditation bodies with the assurance they require that academic standards are being actively upheld across all programs and branches.

2. SCOPE:

This policy applies to all academic programs and courses offered, under development, or under consideration for discontinuation, across all branches and delivery modes. It covers undergraduate, postgraduate, and non-credit programs, whether delivered in-person, through blended learning, or via distance education modalities.

The policy governs all activities associated with the review, monitoring, and development of academic programs, including but not limited to:

- Curriculum content, structure, and sequencing
- Learning outcomes
- Delivery methods and modalities
- Assessment strategies and learning resources
- Stakeholder engagement processes
- Compliance with accreditation and regulatory standards
- Alignment with professional and industry standards
- Program documentation and record-keeping

This policy applies equally to reviews initiated as part of the regular three-to-five-year cycle and to reviews triggered by exceptional circumstances, such as significant changes in accreditation requirements, substantial declines in student outcomes, or major shifts in labor market demand. It applies to all staff with responsibilities in academic program governance, from teaching faculty through to the University Council.

3. POLICY STATEMENT:

This Policy statement encapsulates the vision, mission and priorities related to education, and the basic guidelines, principles, responsibilities, and obligations relating to program review, monitoring, and development within UTAS. The basic guiding principle of the Academic Program Review Policy is to demonstrate integrity and accountability; examine,

assess and maintain academic standards; and enhance quality in all its academic programs in line with the University's goals.

Every academic program provided by UTAS undergoes a thorough program review at three-to-five-year intervals within the continuous review cycle to identify the strengths, weaknesses and efficacy of the programs, and to propose areas for improvement by considering the labor market and stakeholders' needs, demands and feedback. Likewise, all UTAS courses are subject to semester review. Based on this review, minor changes can be proposed by Head of Department/Unit to the Dean of the College. The review Policy shall be implemented in all academic programs through major stages including reflective self-study, design and development evidence-informed internal action plans, an external review and the implementation process.

UTAS is committed to maintaining academic programs of the highest quality. UTAS academic programs shall be intellectually rigorous, professionally relevant, and demonstrably effective in supporting student achievement. This policy statement articulates the principles and obligations that govern how that commitment is operationalized through systematic program review and development.

Guiding Principles

All program review and development activity at UTAS shall be guided by the following principles:

- Integrity and accountability: review processes shall be conducted with honesty and transparency, and their findings shall be acted upon, not merely documented
- Evidence-informed decision-making: all proposals for program change shall be grounded in data, including student performance metrics, stakeholder feedback, labor market insights, and benchmarking against comparable programs

- Continuous improvement: review is not a periodic formality but an ongoing institutional disposition whereby the outcomes of each review cycle shall inform the next
- Stakeholder inclusion: the perspectives of students, staff, industry, and alumni are central to the review process
- Compliance and alignment: all programs shall remain in compliance with the standards and requirements of OAQAE and any applicable professional accreditation bodies

Review Cycles

Every academic program offered by UTAS shall undergo a comprehensive program review at intervals of no less than three and no more than five years. The review cycle is continuous: the conclusion of one review cycle marks the commencement of the monitoring period that leads to the next.

All courses within UTAS programs are additionally subject to a formal semester-level review, conducted by the responsible teaching staff at the end of each teaching period. Semester reviews serve as the primary mechanism for identifying and addressing course-level concerns in a timely manner, and their findings feed directly into the broader program review cycle.

Change Management

Proposed changes to academic programs shall be classified as either minor or major amendments in accordance with Section 5.2. Each category carries a distinct approval pathway to ensure that changes are subject to appropriate levels of scrutiny before implementation. No changes to an approved program shall be implemented without passing through the relevant approval process as defined in this policy.

Institutional Responsibility

The University Council, Academic Council, and DVCAA bear collective institutional responsibility for ensuring that this policy is implemented consistently, resourced adequately,

and reviewed periodically for its own effectiveness. The Academic Programs Department is responsible for the day-to-day coordination and monitoring of all review activities, and for maintaining the institutional records that demonstrate compliance with this policy and with external accreditation requirements.

This policy shall itself be reviewed no less than every three years, or sooner in the event of material changes to national accreditation standards or institutional strategy.

4.AUDIENCE, RESPONSIBILITIES AND DELEGATION:

The execution of program review and development responsibilities is undertaken by different entities as outlined below:

Effective program review depends on clearly defined accountability at every level of the institution. The table below sets out the specific responsibilities and expected outputs of each governance body and role. No individual or body may delegate their responsibilities under this policy without the prior written approval of the DVCAA. Where responsibilities overlap, the more senior body retains final accountability.

Tabel1: Audience, Responsibilities and Delegation

ROLE / BODY	RESPONSIBILITIES
University Council	- Approves all major amendments to academic programs, including new degree plans, program discontinuations, and significant structural changes.
Academic Council	- Provides feedback on the reviewed program being presented. - Recommends for the external review process.

		- Recommends the final degree plans for the approval by the University Council. - Approves the minor changes in the academic programs.
Deputy Chancellor Academic (DVCAA)	Vice for Affairs	- Overseas and supervises all program review and development activity across UTAS. - Reviews and approves program review reports submitted by Deans before Academic Council presentation. - approves the appointment of external reviewers. - Authorizes expedited reviews where urgent quality concerns have been identified.
Academic Programs Department		- Serves as the primary coordinating and quality-assurance body for all program review activity across UTAS. - Receives and quality-checks comprehensive review reports before presentation to the Academic Council. - Verifies that all review processes align with this policy and applicable accreditation standards. - Manages the selection, communication, and briefing of external reviewers; provides Deans with consolidated external feedback. - Circulating approved degree plans and minor changes to all University branches. - Monitors and reports on the implementation of approved changes across the institution.
Deans of Colleges		- Accountable for ensuring all programs within the college are reviewed in accordance with this policy and within the required timeframe. - Ensures proper implementation of review procedures across all relevant branches.

	- Prepares and submits a comprehensive program review report to the DVCAA before Academic Council presentation. - Presents review findings to the Academic Council and seeks endorsement for external review. - Recommends a shortlist of at least three qualified external reviewers to the Academic Programs Department and DVCAA. - Presents proposed final degree plans to both the Academic and University Councils for approval.
Deputy Assistant Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs (Branch)	- Ensures proper implementation of program review and course review procedures at the branch level. - Monitors and reports on the implementation of approved degree plans and minor changes at the branch. - Oversees the semester course review process for all programs offered at the branch.
Heads of Academic Departments	- Ensures teaching staff within the department engage fully with the semester course review process and submit their individual course review reports to the System-Wide Coordinator on time. - Consolidates staff and student feedback and prepares a departmental summary for submission to the Deputy Assistant Vice Chancellor. - Ensures approved degree plan changes and minor amendments are fully implemented within the department. - Proposes minor amendments to the Dean, supported by evidence from course and program review findings.
Teaching Staff	- Completes the approved Course Review Template at the end of every semester and submits it to the

	System-Wide Coordinator within two weeks of the close of the grading period. - Participates in program review consultations, self-study working groups, and stakeholder engagement activities as required. - Contributes to implementing approved program and course changes within their teaching responsibilities. - Notifies the Head of Department promptly of any in-semester issues that may affect course quality or delivery integrity.
Students	- Participate in course and program feedback surveys and focus groups as invited. - Student input is treated as a formal and valued source of evidence throughout the review process. - Student representatives may be invited to participate in program review consultations at the discretion of the Dean.

5. POLICY:

This policy establishes a systematic framework for the regular review and continuous improvement of academic programs and courses to ensure their quality, effectiveness, and alignment with institutional objectives and external standards. All teaching staff, students, and relevant stakeholders are expected to participate actively in the review process by providing evidence-based feedback, engaging in consultations, and implementing approved changes. The policy upholds transparency, accountability, and the use of multiple sources of evidence to maintain the integrity and relevance of academic offerings.

The process of program development and review encompasses a range of amendments that ensure academic offerings remain relevant, effective, and aligned with institutional goals. These amendments are categorized as either minor or major, reflecting the scope and impact of proposed changes. Understanding these categories is essential for determining

appropriate approval pathways and maintaining high standards across all academic programs.

Categories of program development and review

Changes to academic programs are classified as either minor or major amendments. The classification determines the approval pathway and level of institutional scrutiny applied. All proposed changes must be formally classified before any approval process is initiated.

Table 2: Categories of program development and review

MINOR AMENDMENTS	MAJOR AMENDMENTS
➤ Changing departmental/college course elective. ➤ Reviewing contact hours (theoretical and practical) and course code. ➤ Modifying departmental prerequisites for a course from either prerequisite to co-requisite or vice versa. ➤ Reviewing and enhancing the assessment system, such as continuous assessment and testing specifications. ➤ Updating the course materials provided that they do not conflict with the approved learning outcomes.	➤ Revising and formulating program objectives and learning outcomes. ➤ Reviewing student entry standards and progression criteria. ➤ Phasing out of courses/ programs ➤ Implementing new courses/programs. ➤ Introducing significant changes to educational plans/designs, such as semester duration, program structure, program duration, and the number of courses within a program, ➤ Changing course/ specialization/program title.

General university requirements

General university requirements courses associated with specific colleges shall be reviewed by the respective colleges or a committee. Likewise, all other general

University electives shall be reviewed by the respective college or an established committee.

5.1 Definitions

The following terms carry specific meanings within this policy. Where a term is not defined below, its meaning shall be consistent with the definitions provided in the OQAE ISA and PSA Manuals or the UTAS Academic Regulations.

- **Academic Program:** A structured and formally approved course of study leading to a qualification registered on the Oman Qualifications Framework, or a non-credit program approved by the University Council, comprising a defined set of courses, learning outcomes, entry requirements, and graduation criteria.
- **Program Review:** A comprehensive, evidence-based assessment of the overall quality, effectiveness, and continued relevance of an academic program, occurring at three-to-five-year intervals and resulting in a formal self-study report, an internal action plan, an external review, and a final implementation record.
- **Course Review:** A structured evaluation of an individual course conducted at the end of every semester by the responsible teaching staff, assessing content currency, learning outcome attainment, assessment validity, and student feedback.
- **Benchmarking:** The systematic comparison of a program's design, delivery, outcomes, and standards against comparable programs at peer institutions, national qualification frameworks, or relevant professional bodies.
- **Stakeholders:** All individuals and groups with a legitimate interest in the quality and outcomes of UTAS academic programs, including students, graduates, teaching staff, administrators, industry partners, employers, professional bodies, alumni, and relevant government ministries.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** The deliberate, structured process of gathering, analysing, and responding to the views and experiences of stakeholders as part of the program review cycle. Stakeholder engagement is a mandatory component of every program review.

- **External Review:** A formal quality assessment conducted by one or more independent reviewers from outside UTAS who have no conflict of interest with the program under review, validating self-study findings and producing a written report with recommendations.

5.2. Other Pertinent Elements

This policy must be reviewed in conjunction with the Academic Regulations, Academic Integrity Policy, Pedagogical Framework, as well as their corresponding guidelines and procedures.

6. REFERENCES:

SN	Institution Name	Referenced Documents
1	Ministry of Higher Education.	CAS Program Review Guide. Muscat: Ministry of Higher Education (2017).
2	Ministry of Manpower.	Curriculum Development and Review Framework. Muscat: Ministry of Manpower (2019).
3	Oman Authority for Quality Assurance of Education (OAQAE)	Oman Standard Classification of Education Framework (OSCED) (Version 1) (2009). Retrieved from https://oaaaqa.gov.om/getattachment/02690ee9-37b9-438a-a4ae-595bd0def23a/OSCED.aspx?b=0
4	Oman Authority for Quality Assurance of Education (OAQAE).	Policy for listing qualifications on the Oman Qualifications Framework (2022, May). Retrieved from https://oaaaqa.gov.om/getattachment/40175c2e-caaf-4a07-857f-ad603ce86d3e/%20Listing%20of%20Qualifications%20on%20the%20OQF.aspx?b=0
5	Oman Authority for Quality Assurance of Education (OAQAE)	Oman Qualifications Framework document (Version 3) (2023). Retrieved from https://oaaaqa.gov.om/getattachment/5b4dda1a-

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6	Oman Authority for Quality Assurance of Education (OAQAE)	Programme standards assessment manual (Version 1) (2023, February). Retrieved from https://oaaaqa.gov.om/getattachment/4359b83e-5ab9-4147-8e73-1ff0f9adcfae/Programme%20Standards%20Assessment%20Manual.aspx?b=0
7	Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit.	Oman Vision 2040. Retrieved May 20, 2024, from hyperlink https://www.oman2040.om/vision?lang=en
8	Sultan Qaboos University (SQU).	Academic Programme Review Policy. Muscat: SQU (2012).
9	The University of Arizona.	Policy Style Guide. Arizona: The University of Arizona (2022).
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