



هيئة جودة التعليم والتدريب
Education & Training Quality Authority
Kingdom of Bahrain - مملكة البحرين

Directorate of Higher Education Reviews

The General Framework

of Higher Education Institutional Review

Kingdom of Bahrain



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1. Introduction

The General Framework of Higher Education Institutional Review is developed by the Education & Training Quality Authority (BQA) and the Higher Education Council (HEC), to ensure public accountability of higher education providers and enhance the quality of higher education in the Kingdom. It incorporates the Institutional Listing Standards of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and combines the standards and processes of the BQA's Institutional Review (IR) and the Institutional Accreditation (IA) of the HEC into one document. This document includes the unified national standards and complementary processes. These standards and processes are in line with standards and good practices of regional and international quality assurance and accreditation entities.

As per the General Framework of Higher Education Institutional Review, all licensed Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) by HEC are subject to IR by BQA. It is a single joint review conducted by the BQA and the HEC. The outcome of the review is a published report with comments, recommendations, and judgements on the overall performance of the HEI against the national standards and their related indicators. The report is one of the main sources of input for the HEC's Academic Accreditation Committee to grant the Institutional Accreditation that complies with the General Framework Standards along with HEC regulations.

2. Standards and Indicators

It consists of nine Standards comprising 24 Indicators for which there will be summative judgements. The Standards are as follows:

Standard 1: Governance and Management – 5 Indicators

Standard 2: Human Resources Management – 2 Indicators

Standard 3: Quality Assurance and Enhancement – 2 Indicators

Standard 4: Infrastructure, Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and Learning Resources – 3 Indicators

Standard 5: Management of Academic Affairs – 4 Indicators

Standard 6: Teaching, Learning and Assessment – 3 Indicators

Standard 7: Research and Postgraduate Studies – 2 Indicators

Standard 8: Community Engagement – 1 Indicator.

Standard 9: Student Support Services – 2 Indicators

2.1 Standard 1 – Governance and Management

The institution has an appropriate mission statement and values, which are derived from its vision and translated into strategic and operational plans, and has well-established, effective governance and management systems that enable the HEI to discharge its full range of responsibilities, achieve its mission, and sustain its values.

Indicator 1: Vision, Mission and Values

The institution has a clearly stated vision, mission and values that are appropriate for the institutional type and the programmes offered; and these align with the national priorities of the Kingdom of Bahrain.

What is expected of HEIs operating in the Kingdom of Bahrain:

- 1.1 The institution has a publicly displayed vision, mission and values that are approved at the governing body level, guide its activities, and are well communicated to stakeholders.
- 1.2 The vision and mission are appropriate for the institutional type and programmes on offer and aligned with the national priorities and strategies of the Kingdom of Bahrain and reflect the core functions of the institution and its values.

- 1.3 The institution involves internal and external stakeholders in the development of the vision and mission of the institution and its values.
- 1.4 There is a process which ensures a regular review of the vision and mission, that takes into account the national, regional and international context with respect to trends in higher education and programme offerings.

Indicator 2: Strategic and Operational Planning

There is an effective strategic plan with clear objectives and key performance indicators, showing how the mission and vision will be achieved, which is translated into implemented and monitored operational plans that include key performance indicators and targets with respect to the core functions of the institution.

What is expected of HEIs operating in the Kingdom of Bahrain:

- 2.1 The institution has a strategic plan that was developed through a process of consultation with external and internal stakeholders.
- 2.2 The strategic plan has clear objectives and key performance indicators with specific targets that are consistent with the mission and vision statements and the strategic goals of the institution.
- 2.3 There is an allocated responsibility at senior management level to ensure the implementation, monitoring and review of the strategic plan.
- 2.4 There are annual operational plans from which detailed action plans evolve for all academic and administrative departments in a manner that supports the strategic plan.
- 2.5 There are well-established processes for the annual monitoring and evaluation of the progress made in achieving the targets of operational plans, including data collection and reporting to senior management, with related remedial actions being clearly identified, coordinated, and executed.
- 2.6 There is an appropriate risk management system in place that enables the institution to mitigate and address relevant strategic and operational risks.

Indicator 3 - Governance and Management Practices

The institution exhibits sound governance and management practices, and financial management that are linked with institutional planning in respect of its operations and core functions.

What is expected of HEIs operating in the Kingdom of Bahrain:

- 3.1 There are clear terms of reference for the governance body (Board of Trustees) and any related sub-committees, in which the roles and responsibilities of the governing body members are clearly defined.
- 3.2 There are implemented policies and procedures for the governing body to oversee the achievement of academic standards and actively support the efforts made to achieve and maintain the academic standards for face-to-face, online and blended education.
- 3.3 The governing body and management have a clear separation of duties, both on paper and in practice and the members of the governing body are not involved in the day-to-day operations of the institution.
- 3.4 There are implemented procedures for the appointment and induction of members of the governing body, which ensure that they understand their specific responsibilities.
- 3.5 There are implemented mechanisms to evaluate the performance of the governing body members to ensure their efficiency and professional commitment.
- 3.6 Appointment to senior managerial positions is transparent, based on clear and published criteria, and supported by a robust performance management system.
- 3.7 There are formal procedures at the institutional level for scheduling and conducting meetings, and taking meeting minutes of councils, committees, and work teams.
- 3.8 The planning and allocation of resources (including financial resources) are adequate and linked to the operations and core functions of the institution.
- 3.9 There are approved delegations of authority for financial and management decisions that enable the managers of administrative and academic entities (e.g., Deans, Head of Departments, Directors, etc.) to achieve their objectives and maintain high standards.
- 3.10 The financial and accounting systems include processes to prevent and detect fraud, including internal and external financial audits and transparent reporting.

- 3.11 The governing body and management ensure the accuracy and currency of all published materials provided in printed form or electronically via the website or on social media, that inform students and the public about the institution, its services and activities (e.g., mission, vision, values, location, infrastructure, academic provisions, fees' structure, etc.).

Indicator 4: Organisational Structure

The institution has a clear organisational and management structure and there is stakeholder participation in decision-making, where appropriate.

What is expected of HEIs operating in the Kingdom of Bahrain:

- 4.1 There is an accurate and up-to-date organisational structure that is fit for purpose and accessible to all staff and students.
- 4.2 Stakeholders' participation in decision-making, including students is clear in the organizational structure, where appropriate.
- 4.3 There is effective coordination and leadership across the institution, especially among senior management.
- 4.4 All staff members know their roles, line of management in the institution and have clear job descriptions.
- 4.5 The channels of communication between the governing body, senior management, staff, students and other stakeholders are clear.
- 4.6 There is a structure for all active committees along with clearly articulated terms of reference and lines of reporting; and the effectiveness of these committees is regularly reviewed.
- 4.7 The institution has well-structured mechanisms to ensure proper circulation of the decisions and recommendations raised by its councils, committees, and work teams.

Indicator 5: Partnerships, Memoranda with other Institutions (where applicable)

The relationship between the institution operating in the kingdom of Bahrain and other HEIs is formalised, monitored and clearly explained, so that there is no possibility of students or other stakeholders being misled.

What is expected of HEIs operating in the Kingdom of Bahrain:

- 5.1 For each programme where another HEI provides the curriculum and/or

teaching or operates as a 'parent' institution, there is an active binding agreement between the institution operating in the Kingdom of Bahrain and the other institution, as per HEC regulations, which:

(i) has been entered into after due diligence to ensure the credibility of the other organisation and the programme being offered in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

(ii) states whether the programme offered in the Kingdom of Bahrain is equivalent and contextualised to a programme of the same name offered in the home country and whether graduates of the Bahrain programme are recognised in the home country.

(iii) specifies in detail the roles and responsibilities of both partners, including the teaching and assessment commitments and quality assurance arrangements.

(iv) contains a risk-management strategy to protect students should there be any dispute or closure situation.

(v) assists the institution in the Kingdom of Bahrain to improve the academic capacities of its own staff.

- 5.2 For each programme where another HEI, locally or internationally, provides some of the curriculum and/or teaching, the programme information provided to current and prospective students states clearly the institution(s) that is offering the degree, the name of the institution(s) that will be on the student's testamur, and which institution's rules and policies apply (i.e., the institution operating in the Kingdom of Bahrain or the other institution).
- 5.3 For each programme where another HEI locally or internationally, provides some of the curriculum and/or teaching, the programme information provided to prospective and current students states clearly which course or programme elements will be taught and examined by the other institution.
- 5.4 The HEI operating in the Kingdom of Bahrain has established processes and mechanisms that are regularly used to ensure that the partner (or parent) institution meets its obligations and, if needed, to approach the concerned authorities to ensure that the partner/parent institution meets its obligations.
- 5.5 Where there is a memorandum of co-operation or understanding, the points of co-operation between the two institutions are clearly set out and there are mechanisms to monitor the implementation of the terms of the memorandum, providing regular feedback, for planning, informed decision making, and continuous improvement, where applicable.

2.2 Standard 2 – Human Resources Management

The institution has appropriate human resource policies and procedures in place, including staff development, that demonstrably support and enhance the various operational activities of the institution.

Indicator 6 - Human Resources

The institution has an articulated human resources management strategy which ensures that academic and non-academic staff are employed on an equal basis, in a sufficient number and are appropriately qualified, so as to achieve the institution's mission and provide good quality higher education.

What is expected of HEIs operating in the Kingdom of Bahrain:

- 6.1 The institution has developed and implemented a human resources management strategy and operational plans that enable it to fulfil its mission and deliver quality higher education provision.
- 6.2 There are implemented policies and procedures for staff that include selecting, recruiting, and retaining qualified and experienced academic and non-academic staff.
- 6.3 The institution has a published equality and diversity policy, which ensures that all staff are treated fairly.
- 6.4 The institution has a clear policy in place regarding the handling of legal issues related to academic and non-academic staff.
- 6.5 The institution has a published systematic, transparent, and fair process for investigating, recording and monitoring complaints and grievances of its academic and non-academic staff.
- 6.6 The number of qualified and experienced academic and non-academic staff is sufficient to adequately support the full range of the institution's academic and administrative functions.
- 6.7 The institution keeps up-to-date records of the qualifications and experience of its full- and part-time academic and non-academic staff.
- 6.8 There are implemented induction processes for all new academic and non-academic staff, whether full- or part-time.
- 6.9 There are transparent and fair policies and procedures in place to recognise and reward staff through promotion or financial incentives.
- 6.10 Staff satisfaction and exit surveys are regularly conducted and their results are used for quality improvements.

Indicator 7 - Staff Development

The institution has a systematic approach to staff development and provides opportunities for all staff to remain up-to-date in their areas of teaching, research and administration.

What is expected of HEIs operating in the Kingdom of Bahrain:

- 7.1 There is an effective institution-wide staff performance management plan and processes for annual evaluation and feedback on the performance of individual staff members.
- 7.2 There are implemented policies and procedures for staff development and an institution-wide approach to the identification of staff development needs.
- 7.3 The institution supports its staff to gain qualifications/professional certificates as a continuing professional development outcome and provides them with appropriate development opportunities.
- 7.4 The effectiveness of staff development opportunities is evaluated by participants and the outcomes of such evaluations are being addressed.

2.3 Standard 3 - Quality Assurance and Enhancement

There are robust quality assurance and quality enhancement systems that ensure the effectiveness of the quality assurance arrangements for reviewing the institution's performance and for driving continuous improvement in all aspects of its academic and administrative operations.

Indicator 8 - Quality Assurance System

The institution has defined its approach to quality assurance and how its effectiveness is ascertained; and has quality assurance arrangements in place for managing the quality of all aspects of education provision and administration across the institution.

What is expected of HEIs operating in the Kingdom of Bahrain:

- 8.1 There is a clear quality assurance management system that is rigorously and consistently implemented, monitored and evaluated, with processes and mechanisms to implement improvements across the institution and for which there are clear lines of responsibility and accountability.
- 8.2 All institutional policies, procedures and regulations are clearly articulated, documented, and consistently applied and reviewed for effectiveness and enhancement, and are accessible and effectively communicated to students

and staff.

- 8.3 There is a process to regularly monitor compliance with the HEC regulations.
- 8.4 There is an implemented mechanism to disseminate information, which ensures that academic and administrative staff members have an evident understanding of their role in quality assurance and enhancement.
- 8.5 The institution has a mechanism in place to actively and fairly engage students, individually and collectively, in the quality and enhancement of their educational experience.
- 8.6 The institution undertakes regular and systematic monitoring of its core operations and conducts periodic reviews of all key aspects of its performance against clearly specified and appropriate indicators.

Indicator 9 – Quality Enhancement

There are clear, well-articulated and documented quality enhancement arrangements, including benchmarking exercises, surveys and the gathering of appropriate and relevant feedback from all stakeholders on a regular basis, the results of which inform planning, decision-making and quality enhancement.

What is expected of HEIs operating in the Kingdom of Bahrain:

- 9.1 There is a clear and well-articulated and documented benchmarking policy, which is consistently implemented.
- 9.2 Benchmarking takes place against other appropriate national, regional or international institutions of a similar profile for all core activities of the institution.
- 9.3 The findings of benchmarking exercises have been used to enhance the activities of the institution, where applicable.
- 9.4 There are clear and documented approaches to eliciting stakeholders' feedback regularly through a variety of implemented mechanisms, including surveys to evaluate the effectiveness of the institution's services.
- 9.5 There are mechanisms to ensure the utilisation of the received stakeholders' feedback to improve the institution's services and to inform the relevant stakeholders of any actions taken.
- 9.6 The institution conducts regular cohort analysis and monitors employability rates to enhance the programmes' relevance to the market needs.

2.4 Standard 4 – Infrastructure, Information and Communications Technology and Learning Resources

The institution has appropriate and sufficient physical infrastructure, ICT and learning resources to support the academic programmes and administrative operations of the institution.

Indicator 10 - Infrastructure

The institution provides physical infrastructure that is safe and demonstrably adequate for its type and core functions.

What is expected of HEIs operating in the Kingdom of Bahrain:

- 10.1 The institution ensures the compliance of its premises and facilities with the related HEC regulations through continuous reviews.
- 10.2 There are registers showing that the provided classrooms, tutorial and study spaces, library, offices, laboratories, amenities, medical facilities and security services are suitably equipped, sufficient and timetabled for the academic and non-academic activities and events.
- 10.3 There is a record of all physical infrastructure and equipment showing scheduled cleaning, maintenance and upgrades.
- 10.4 The institution has appropriate arrangements to ensure the security, efficiency, integrity and the availability of appropriate accommodation for conducting the examinations and other assessments.
- 10.5 There are formal, appropriate and implemented action plans whenever there is a need to modify or expand the institution's premises, and/or facilities to satisfy the requirements of the academic and administrative operations.
- 10.6 There are effective published policies and processes for occupational health and safety that are made available to staff, students and visitors, and comply with the laws and regulations of the Kingdom of Bahrain.
- 10.7 Access to the premises is appropriately restricted, secured and convenient for staff and students with special needs.
- 10.8 Where applicable, the residential accommodation offered by the institution is clean, safe, supervised and of a standard which is adequate to the needs of students, and there are arrangements in place to ensure that regular inspections are conducted.

Indicator 11 – Information and Communications Technology

The institution provides coordinated ICT resources for the effective support of its academic and administrative operations, and safeguards against copyright infringements of print and digital resources.

What is expected of HEIs operating in the Kingdom of Bahrain:

- 11.1 There is an ICT operational plan - including active disaster recovery plans, and planned maintenance and replacement of ICT resources, which is systematically implemented, monitored and revised, to ensure that systems are fit for purpose, and up-to-date and reliable ICT services are available to all students, staff and other stakeholders.
- 11.2 There are up-to-date registers showing the provision of ICT systems and services, including the availability of sufficient hardware and software for staff and students.
- 11.3 The institution uses appropriate management information systems to record and provide reports for the governing body, management and academic staff so that effective and informed decisions can be taken.
- 11.4 The institution has formal arrangements to ensure that the ICT systems and services are accessible to staff and students with special needs, where applicable.
- 11.5 There are effective arrangements that prevent unauthorised access to, and inappropriate use of, ICT resources, and provide adequate safeguards against copyright infringements of print and digital resources.
- 11.6 The institution has appropriate policy and procedures for the use of its website and social media accounts, to effectively engage with its stakeholders and ensure the accuracy of the published information.

Indicator 12 - Learning Resources

The institution provides sustained access to sufficient information and learning resources to fully support effective delivery of its academic programmes.

What is expected of HEIs operating in the Kingdom of Bahrain:

- 12.1 There are appropriate and effective policies and procedures for managing the utilisation of learning resources and dealing with the misuse cases of these resources.

- 12.2 There are implemented policies and procedures to ensure that there are effective and adequate physical and electronic library and learning resources for students and staff, including access to the learning management system, databases, books and journals.
- 12.3 The institution has a comprehensive and well-managed learning management system, which is appropriate, sufficient to accommodate all users, and ensures the safety and integrity of personal data.
- 12.4 There is a system to ensure that students and academic staff are inducted and well-supported in the use of the learning management system, library and learning resources.

2.5 Standard 5 – Management of Academic Affairs

The institution has a comprehensive academic management system with a clear management structure and processes in place, to ensure that all academic affairs are effectively planned and managed.

Indicator 13 – Academic Management and Integrity

The institution upholds and maintains academic standards and protects academic integrity throughout its teaching and research activities.

What is expected of HEIs operating in the Kingdom of Bahrain:

- 13.1 There is academic planning derived and linked to the institution's mission and strategic goals, which clearly reflects among other aspects: a philosophy of teaching and learning; the type programmes on offer as well as the services provided to students; and the mechanisms to evaluate the achievement of strategic goals.
- 13.2 The institution has appropriate arrangements that include provision for academic leadership at programme and individual course level, and clearly identify academic staff responsibilities, as in teaching, research, scholarly activity, consultancy, community engagement and academic administration, to ensure a balance amongst these various responsibilities in line with the related HEC regulations and international norms.
- 13.3 The institution has appropriate arrangements to ensure the balance between the number of senior academic staff with relevant experience and high academic ranks and junior academic staff who have just started their academic career, as well as demonstrating diversification among their background and qualifications.
- 13.4 The institution employs an appropriate and effective mentoring system that

provides guidance and continuous support for junior academic staff.

- 13.5 The institution has clear and published ethical and legal regulations, policies and procedures related to academic affairs and practices, which are implemented, regularly reviewed and accessible to academic staff and students.
- 13.6 There are effective arrangements in place to acknowledge intellectual property rights and to prevent, detect and deal with plagiarism, in addition to other forms of academic misconduct (e.g., cheating, forging of results, and commissioning others to do the work).
- 13.7 The institution has a set of comprehensive policies, regulations and procedures in place for staff and student conduct that deal with any unacceptable behaviour and discrimination.
- 13.8 The institution has a clear and published policy on required student attendance and punctuality, and effective procedures and systems to monitor and enforce it.
- 13.9 The institution has a published, systematic, transparent, and fair process for investigating, recording and monitoring complaints and grievances of its students.

Indicator 14 – Design and Approval of New Academic Programmes

The institution has rigorous systems and processes for the design and approval of new programmes to ensure sound academic standards are met.

What is expected of HEIs operating in the Kingdom of Bahrain:

- 14.1 The institution has effective policies and procedures for the proposal, design and approval of new programmes, which take into consideration the mission of the institution, national priorities, employability skills, local, regional and international market demands including employability rates and the required infrastructure, learning and human resources to deliver the proposed programme.
- 14.2 The institution has formal and effective arrangements to ensure the involvement of internal and external stakeholders in the processes for the design and approval of new programmes and to demonstrate the compliance of newly developed programmes with the requirements of the NQF and HEC regulations.
- 14.3 The institution has formal and appropriate arrangements for benefiting from external expertise, regional and international reference points, in the design/development processes of new programmes.

- 14.4 Newly developed programmes have clearly articulated objectives/aims, learning outcomes, admission requirements, progression routes and career paths for prospective students.

Indicator 15 – Academic Programme Reviews

The institution has rigorous systems and processes for the review of existing/running programmes to ensure sound academic standards are met. These are consistently applied, regularly monitored, and reviewed.

What is expected of HEIs operating in the Kingdom of Bahrain:

- 15.1 There are effective policies and procedures for the review of existing/running programmes that ensure the involvement of all internal and external stakeholders, including students.
- 15.2 There are implemented policies and procedures for annual reviews of academic programmes, which include analysis of year-on-year results relevant to student satisfaction, achievement levels, completion rates and progression to further study or employment, etc., that inform the improvement of programme quality and enhance the delivery of programmes.
- 15.3 There are implemented policies and procedures for periodic and external reviews to ensure that programmes and their curricula are up-to-date; reflect current research and trends in the discipline (fitness of purpose); and are relevant to the labour market and societal needs.
- 15.4 There is a clear mechanism to ensure that the results of the annual, periodic and external programme review reports and related action plans are being used by senior management for decision making and, where appropriate, being shared with all stakeholders including students.

Indicator 16 – Admission and Certification

The institution has appropriate and rigorously enforced admission criteria for all its programmes and formal arrangements for ensuring the accuracy and authenticity of student records and certification.

What is expected of HEIs operating in the Kingdom of Bahrain:

- 16.1 The institution has up-to-date, clear and accurate information about its academic programmes, admission criteria, which are published and available to prospective students and other stakeholders.

- 16.2 The institution regularly reviews admission criteria taking into account stakeholders' feedback and using information on students' outcomes, to ensure that the criteria are appropriately providing equal opportunities for prospective students and are aligned with local, regional and international academic norms for the discipline.
- 16.3 The language(s) of teaching and learning in the programme is clearly stated and the admission criteria include minimum language entry requirements that must be met.
- 16.4 The institution has clearly stated regulations about the transfer of credits from one programme to another or from another institution, that are fairly implemented for all relevant prospective students.
- 16.5 There is a policy and procedure in place to support access and recognition of prior learning, which accords with the NQF requirements, and there is an up-to-date register which is kept for all recognition of prior learning assessment and admission activities/records, where applicable, and where legislation permits.
- 16.6 The institution has a procedure in place to ensure that all application enquiries are responded to in a timely and appropriate manner.
- 16.7 The institution has formal arrangements that enable prospective students to appeal against access and enrolled students against transfer decisions.
- 16.8 The institution has a published policy that is administered effectively regarding the collection of and refund of student fees.
- 16.9 The institution has appropriate arrangements to ensure that foundation studies, including access courses and bridging courses, enable students to meet the admission criteria.
- 16.10 The institution provides students the opportunity to exit a programme at a given level and transfer to another programme, while specifying the details and the level of the other available programmes to transfer to and award given (if any) at the time of exit (where applicable).
- 16.11 There is an effective system for the management of students' information and academic records that includes processes for accurately entering and verifying data on enrolments and grades, backup of records, and processes to preserve the integrity and confidentiality of records and protect against unauthorised access or improper use.
- 16.12 There are effective mechanisms in place to ensure and maintain the safety and integrity of the process of certificate issuance.

- 16.13 The institution makes students records, transcripts and certificates available to its students in a timely manner.

2.6 Standard 6 – Teaching, Learning and Assessment

The institution has effective mechanisms and clear processes in place to ensure the quality of the teaching, learning and assessment.

Indicator 17 - Management of Teaching and Learning

There are effective mechanisms to ensure the quality of teaching and learning provision across the institution.

What is expected of HEIs operating in the Kingdom of Bahrain:

- 17.1 There are institutional/college teaching and learning policies and procedures, which include a range of appropriate teaching strategies, instructional methods (including e-learning) and learning resources that are consistently implemented, monitored and reviewed for effectiveness to achieve the learning outcomes.
- 17.2 The institution has an appropriate mechanism to ensure that all academic staff are consistently updating their course syllabi, which include mode of delivery, semester weekly schedule, instructional methods, and assessment types and dates, and which are made available to students on a regular basis.
- 17.3 Where practicums, work-based learning or internships, or capstone or graduation project are in place, there are implemented policies and procedures with regard to learning agreements if applicable, assessment strategies, and the roles and responsibilities of the various stakeholders.
- 17.4 There is a system to track and regularly monitor the student's learning experiences and progress, with mechanisms for improvement.
- 17.5 The institution has a consistently implemented, effective system to monitor the quality of all modes of teaching and learning (including e-learning), leading to continuous improvement.

Indicator 18 – Graduate Attributes and Learning Outcomes

The institution ensures that graduate attributes at the institutional level and learning outcomes for all programmes and courses are clearly formulated reflecting employability skills and there are effective mechanisms to ensure that graduates achieve the graduate attributes and the learning outcomes of the programmes.

What is expected of HEIs operating in the Kingdom of Bahrain:

- 18.1 There are implemented effective mechanisms to ensure that graduate attributes at the institutional level and learning outcomes for all programmes and courses are clearly formulated and publicly available.
- 18.2 The institution identifies the employability skills as per the recent trends in the labour market and ensure these skills are embedded in the graduate attributes and the learning outcomes.
- 18.3 Benchmarks and external reference points are used to determine and verify the equivalence of learning outcomes with occupational standards, where appropriate, and with other similar programmes locally, regionally or internationally.
- 18.4 There are implemented mechanisms to ensure that graduate attributes and learning outcomes are achieved across all programmes.
- 18.5 The institution regularly tracks graduate destination and uses this information to inform the development of appropriate programme and course learning outcomes and ensure academic standards are attained.

Indicator 19 - Assessment and Moderation

There are implemented transparent assessment policies and procedures including moderation, which ensure that the assessment of student learning is appropriate and accurately reflects the academic standards and the learning outcomes achieved by students.

What is expected of HEIs operating in the Kingdom of Bahrain:

- 19.1 There are effective assessment policies and procedures that contribute to the design of appropriate formative and summative assessments in terms of their level of complexity, validity, alignment with course and programme learning outcomes, rigour, and fairness and transparency of marking and timely feedback.
- 19.2 The assessment policies and procedures are published and systematically implemented across the institution.
- 19.3 There are effective policies and procedures that govern the pre and post internal and external moderation of assessment and clearly state the roles and responsibilities of the moderators and the mechanism for their appointment.
- 19.4 There is a clear and transparent grade appeal process that is communicated to students and consistently implemented across the institution in a timely manner.

- 19.5 The institution has effective policies and procedures for the security and retention of assessment documents and records and back-up mechanisms.

2.7 Standard 7 – Research and Postgraduate Studies

The institution has a research operational plan appropriate for its type, mission and strategic goals that is well-resourced, implemented, monitored and reviewed for enhancement.

Indicator 20 – Research Management and Support

The institution has an operational research plan appropriate for its institutional type, which includes monitoring its research output, together with policies and processes to ensure the ethical and effective conduct of research.

What is expected of HEIs operating in the Kingdom of Bahrain:

- 20.1 The institution has a clear research strategy which is aligned with the national priorities and encourages innovation and collaborative research.
- 20.2 The institution has implemented an operational research plan appropriate for its type and mission, which includes key performance indicators and targets, and is regularly monitored and reviewed for improvement to support the institutions' strategic goals.
- 20.3 In accordance with HEC regulations, the proportion of the institution's budget allocated for the support of research is monitored and is sufficient to support the institution's strategic goals.
- 20.4 There are effective policies related to research ethics' issues, which are well-disseminated and consistently implemented.
- 20.5 There are fair, transparent and implemented research policies for the awarding of research grants, conference participation, academic promotion, or other incentives to support academic staff in developing their research output.
- 20.6 There is an implemented systematic approach to ensure that research and scholarly activities have a positive impact on teaching and student learning and are relevant to academic and professional fields.
- 20.7 The institution has an appropriate mechanism to communicate its operational research plan to all relevant stakeholders.
- 20.8 The institution has formal arrangements in place for its research output to be documented and published via printed and/or electronic forms (catalogues, journals, website, social media accounts, etc.).

Indicator - 21 Postgraduate Studies (where applicable)

Where the institution offers postgraduate studies, it provides effective resources, supervision and assessment for research students.

What is expected of HEIs operating in the Kingdom of Bahrain:

- 21.1 There is a mechanism in place to ensure that the learning outcomes of the research component(s) are aligned with the programme outcomes and are assessed properly in line with the NQF requirements.
- 21.2 The institution has implemented policies and procedures, which are aligned with HEC regulations, for the effective supervision and support of research students.
- 21.3 There is regular monitoring and review of research students' progress and satisfaction in their programmes of study.
- 21.4 There is a rigorously implemented mechanism involving well-experienced and qualified research supervisors, and internal and external examiners, for the assessment of the research component(s), to ensure that these are at an appropriate level and comparable to international standards.

2.8 Standard 8 - Community Engagement

The institution has a clear community engagement operational plan that is aligned with its mission and strategic goals.

Indicator 22 - Community Engagement

The institution has a clear, well-conceptualised and regularly reviewed approach for serving and engaging with local communities in order to fulfill its social responsibilities.

What is expected of HEIs operating in the Kingdom of Bahrain:

- 22.1 The institution has a clearly articulated community engagement statement, policies, and operational plan, which are aligned to its mission and strategic goals and are consistently implemented.
- 22.2 The institution has appropriate arrangements for strengthening its links with the business community and ensuring its positive contribution to its core functions.
- 22.3 The institution has appropriate arrangements in place for involving relevant external stakeholders, including alumni, professional bodies, and university partnerships, in community engagement activities.

- 22.4 The institution encourages and supports staff and students to engage in community and professional activities in line with its community engagement operational plan.
- 22.5 The institution has a database of community engagement activities that is used for planning purposes.
- 22.6 The institution has a mechanism in place for collecting feedback on community activities from relevant stakeholders and uses it for improvement of future community engagement activities.

2.9 Standard 9 – Student Support Services

The institution provides efficient and effective student academic and non-academic support services from admission to post graduation, and encourages the personal development of students.

Indicator 23 - Student Academic Support

Students receive efficient and effective academic support, which enhances their learning experience.

What is expected of HEIs operating in the Kingdom of Bahrain:

- 23.1 Prospective students are properly briefed on the nature and requirements of the programme(s) in which they are interested and provided with advice on choosing their programme of study.
- 23.2 The institution has effective procedures for ensuring that all admitted students are properly inducted on the various academic support systems and services available to them.
- 23.3 Reasonable accommodations are made for students with special needs, including academic support, where appropriate and for different modes of learning, and these are regularly monitored and reviewed.
- 23.4 Students have access to career information, advice and guidance, including progression to further study and any professional body exemptions that may be available.
- 23.5 The institution has appropriate arrangements for enabling all students to have fair access to academic staff outside regular teaching and learning sessions.
- 23.6 There are effective procedures to allocate for every student an academic advisor, who regularly follows up on and discusses the student's progress, and provides them with guidance and advice in a timely manner.

- 23.7 The institution has an effective mechanism to identify and support students at risk of academic failure.
- 23.8 There is an effective learning environment that promotes the concept of lifelong learning and ensures equal opportunities for all students.

Indicator 24 - Student Non-Academic Support

Students receive non-academic support and guidance, which are appropriate for their needs and encourage their personal development.

What is expected of HEIs operating in the Kingdom of Bahrain:

- 24.1 The institution has appropriate arrangements for providing all students with information on scholarships, financial advice and support and access to transportation services, where applicable.
- 24.2 There are appropriate arrangements in place to ensure that international students receive guidance and appropriate advice before and after their arrival in the Kingdom of Bahrain. This advice relates to travelling to and living in the Kingdom of Bahrain, information about the local culture, religious considerations, etc.
- 24.3 The institution has appropriate formal arrangements for the selection, monitoring and evaluation of its student recruitment agents, where applicable.
- 24.4 The institution has appropriate arrangements for providing all students with emergency contact numbers for support outside official working hours.
- 24.5 There is a range of effective student support services related to counseling, health and welfare.
- 24.6 The institution provides students with opportunities, whether face-to face or virtual, to engage in wider social, recreational, community and cultural pursuits aimed at promoting their development as individuals.
- 24.7 The institution proactively engages with its alumni and encourages their interaction with current students to provide support, mentoring and career advice.

3. Judgements

Each Indicator will have a judgement; i.e. 'Fully Met', 'Substantially Met', 'Partially Met' or 'Not Met' (as shown in Table 1), which will lead to a Standard judgement.

Table 1: Criteria for Indicators' Judgements

Judgement per Indicator	Criteria
Fully Met	All the Indicator's applicable expectations are addressed.
Substantially Met	At least 75% of all the Indicator's applicable expectations are addressed.
Partially Met	More than 50% and less than 75% of the Indicator's applicable expectations are addressed.
Not Met	50% or less of the Indicator's applicable expectations are addressed.

Each Standard will be issued a judgement of 'Fully Met', 'Substantially Met', 'Partially Met' or 'Not Met' depending on the Judgement of the Indicators within it, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Criteria for Standards' Judgements

Judgement per Standard	Criteria
Fully Met	All applicable Indicators are 'Fully Met'.
Substantially Met	At least one of all the applicable Indicators is 'Substantially Met', whereas the remaining are 'Fully Met'.
Partially Met	At least one of all the applicable Indicators is 'Partially Met', whereas the remaining are either 'Fully Met', or 'Substantially Met'.
Not Met	At least one applicable Indicator is 'Not Met'.

The aggregate of judgements of the standards will lead to an overarching judgement – ‘Compliant with the General Framework Standards’, or ‘Partially Compliant with the General Framework Standards’, or ‘Not Compliant with the General Framework Standards’, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Description of the Overall Judgements

Overall Judgement	Description	Outcome
Compliant with the General Framework Standards	All the standards of the General Framework of Higher Education Institutional Review are ‘Fully Met’ or ‘Substantially Met’.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The judgement will be final, and the institutional review report will be published after going through the related procedures.
Partially Compliant with the General Framework Standards	Less than four standards of the General Framework of Higher Education Institutional Review are ‘Partially Met’, and the remaining standards are either ‘Fully Met’ or ‘Substantially Met’.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The judgement will not be final, and the institution will be subject to an extension visit <u>in less than two years</u> after the institution and the concerned entities are notified with the initial review judgement. In this case only the judgement will be published on the BQA website. Based on the extension visit, the overall judgement may change to ‘Compliant’ or ‘Not Compliant’ with the General Framework Standards, and the institutional review report will be published after going through the related procedures.
Not Compliant with the General Framework Standards	Four standards or more of the General Framework of Higher Education Institutional Review are ‘Partially Met’, or one of the standards is ‘Not Met’, or the institution did not successfully pass the extension visit review.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The judgement will be final, and the institutional review report will be published after going through the related procedures. The institution will be re-reviewed after one year from the publication date of the institutional review report. Based on the institutional re-review, the overall judgement may change to ‘Compliant’ or ‘Not Compliant’ with the General Framework Standards.

Newly established HEIs that have not been institutionally reviewed should be listed on the NQF within one year before issuing the licence to start their operations. These institutions will be subject to institutional reviews as per the General Framework of Higher Education Institutional Review after the graduation of their first cohort.

The 'Listed' HEIs on the NQF Register maintain this status, if they pass the institutional reviews, which are conducted every five years. The institution may be reviewed earlier based on the request of the concerned entities.

Within one month from the publication of the review report, the institution that has succeeded in its institutional review should apply for HEC institutional accreditation.

If the institution receives a 'Not Compliant' judgement after the 'extension visit' or in its 're-review', the institution will not be listed or remain listed on the NQF and the HEC will take the necessary actions towards the institution. Appendix A outlines the institutional listing, review and accreditation processes.

4. Extension Visits

In the cases where the overall judgement is deferred (i.e., subject to an extension visit), the institution will receive a list of recommendations that will be extracted from the Standards that are 'Partially Met' by the institution.

After receiving the recommendations, the institution will need to submit a progress report and evidence showing how these recommendations have been addressed, in line with the related BQA procedures.

After the submission of the progress report and evidence, the institution will be subject to an extension visit based on which the final judgement will be either 'Compliant with the General Framework Standards', or 'Not Compliant with the General Framework Standards'. The IR report will be a composite of the results of the findings of the original site visit and the findings of the extension visit and will be published after going through the related BQA procedures.

5. Non-compliance with the Review Process

The institution may receive an overall judgement of 'Not Compliant with the General Framework Standards' because of its failure to comply with the review process and requirements.

6. Appeals

The institution will have an option to appeal the review overall judgement and will be processed according to related BQA procedures.

The institution will also have an option to appeal the HEC's decisions related to the refusal or deferred, suspension or withdrawal of the IA, which will be processed according to related HEC procedures.

7. Interim Visits

Within 18 months of receiving the IA, accredited HEIs are required to submit to the HEC a progress report and evidence showing how the recommendations related to IR and HEC regulations have been addressed.

Accredited institutions will be subject to at least one interim visit during the IA period. These visits will be carried out by a joint BQA-HEC team. The main purpose of interim visits is to discuss progress made by accredited HEIs with respect to the recommendations listed in their IR reports, to ensure full compliance with the

General Framework of Higher Education Institutional Review's Standards and to investigate any related complaints made against the accredited HEIs.

Based on the outcome of the interim visit(s), the joint BQA-HEC team may recommend the suspension or the withdrawal of the accreditation by the HEC in non-compliance cases.

8. Institutional Review General Policies

This section aims to clarify the relevant review policies related to Directorate of Higher Education Reviews (DHR) and identifies the roles and responsibilities of the concerned entities and personnel involved in the institutional review processes. These policies are to be used as per BQA procedures in general and the DHR procedures in particular.

Definitions:

Authority: Education & Training Quality Authority

Directorate: Directorate of Higher Education Reviews

Director: Director of Directorate of Higher Education Reviews

Policy 1: External Reviewers Participation in Higher Education Institutional Review Panels of the Directorate of Higher Education Reviews

1. Purpose

This policy covers the arrangements for the participation of external reviewers in the DHR review panels and ensures that the participation process is transparent and is conducted as per the BQA's procedures and regulations.

2. The Policy

- 2.1 The DHR shall benefit from the experience of the external reviewers who are listed on the DHR's Experts Register and who are qualified and experienced in reviewing higher education programmes, as per BQA's general policy and DHR's criteria.
- 2.2 External reviewers may be requested to attend training sessions or awareness workshops organized by the DHR.
- 2.3 The DHR shall determine the required number of the external reviewers and

reviewers' requirements for each review depending on the nature of the institution.

- 2.4 The review panel shall maintain the confidentiality of all the information and data received during the review process, except for information that falls in the public domain, and will not divulge them to any other person or bodies. The review panel members have to sign a confidentiality declaration in relation to the information received and the outcomes of the review, as per the BQA's and the DHR's procedures.
- 2.5 Each review panel member shall sign a declaration that he/she has no conflict of interest with the institution, which is under review. The external reviewer is obliged to officially declare to the DHR any possible conflict of interest, as per the DHR's procedures and definition of conflict of interest.
- 2.6 External reviewers are required to abstain from providing any consultation in any form or means, or indulge in any other forms of communication or cooperation with, or provide support to, the institution, which is under review, before the lapse of 12 months from the publication of the review reports.
- 2.7 The BQA shall make the necessary arrangements for the review panel members' flight tickets, accommodation and residence (in case they are not local reviewers). Panel members will be provided honorariums and they may also furnish claims for other expenses (if applicable) resulted from site review visits and any other visits related to the review, as per BQA's procedures and guidelines.

Policy 2: Observers' Participation in Higher Education Institutional Reviews Conducted by the Directorate of Higher Education Reviews

1. Purpose

This policy illustrates the general principles related to the approval of the participation of observers in institutional reviews, taking into account critical factors regarding the requirements of HEIs operating in the Kingdom of Bahrain. The DHR shall determine the categories or persons permitted to observe the review process.

2. The Policy

- 2.1 The BQA shall examine requests submitted by agencies and organizations that are concerned with quality assurance and reside outside the Kingdom of Bahrain, to observe the review processes.

- 2.2 The DHR may, from time to time, request an institution under review to allow a Directorate's staff member to observe the whole or part of the quality review process.
- 2.3 External observers of reviews are allowed subject to the approval of both the BQA and the HEI under review.
- 2.4 External observers shall maintain the confidentiality of all the information and data received during the review process, except for the information that falls in the public domain, and will not divulge them to any other person or bodies. The external observers have to sign a confidentiality declaration in relation to the information received and the outcomes of the review.
- 2.5 Each external observer shall sign a declaration that he/she has no conflict of interest with the institution. The external observer is obliged to officially declare to the DHR any possible conflict of interest, as per the DHR's procedures and definition of conflict of interest.
- 2.6 External observers are required to abstain from providing any consultation in any form or means, or indulge in any other forms of communication or cooperation with or provide support to the institution under review before the lapse of 12 months from the publication of the review report.
- 2.7 The external observers or the bodies they represent, shall be responsible for all the expenses related to their presence to observe the review including flight tickets, accommodation and residence costs; in addition to any other expenses.

Policy 3: Administrative Arrangements for Reviews Outside the Kingdom of Bahrain

1 Purpose:

This policy clarifies the criteria used to determine the importance of conducting visits outside the Kingdom of Bahrain as a part of the institutional reviews, to identify the extent of the quality of the provision in the Kingdom when the HEI is a branch of an education institution or other form of institution outside the Kingdom of Bahrain, or at least a 'sister institution' of the parent institution that is operating outside the Kingdom of Bahrain.

2 The Policy:

- 2.1 To identify whether an external review visit is required or not, the following factors should be considered:
 - a) The risks for students and the reputation of the institution's programmes

- b) The academic accreditation of the 'parent country' of the institutions operating outside Bahrain, and the quality assurance arrangements.
 - c) In case the proportional number of enrolled students in Bahrain is significant enough to lead to a remarkable impact on the financial status or the academic image of the institution, the review panel should pay specific attention to this situation.
 - d) If the parent institution does not recognize some academic programmes, or the programmes are not sufficiently supported (by the parent institution or the institution in Bahrain).
 - e) Failure of the arrangements of the external partner institution: For example, the partner institution decides to suspend the academic programme suddenly, or if there were previous incidents of instability in the partners' relationships.
 - f) The rigor of the accreditation system or issuance of licensing to the institution outside Bahrain: In some cases, the accreditation awarded by an external professional body is of an importance. In this regard, the reports issued by the external quality assurance bodies can provide valuable information on the institution's provision in Bahrain. The scope of some quality arrangements of the parent institution or the partner does not cover these institutions' operations outside the country. Therefore, for any institution operating in the Kingdom of Bahrain, a consideration must be made with respect to what academic activities and programmes offered in Bahrain are covered by the quality assurance mechanisms used outside Bahrain. If the review panel is convinced that the quality assurance mechanisms used outside Bahrain are appropriate to the environment in Bahrain, then there will be no need for further investigation.
- 2.2 If the Bahraini institution has more than one partner outside Bahrain, the review panel shall consider the most important partners taking into account the above-mentioned factors. The review panel shall also take into consideration the possibility to conduct and complete a valuable review visit(s) within the time extended between the preparatory visit and the site visit in Bahrain.

Policy 4: Quality Assurance of Review Frameworks and Processes

1. Purpose:

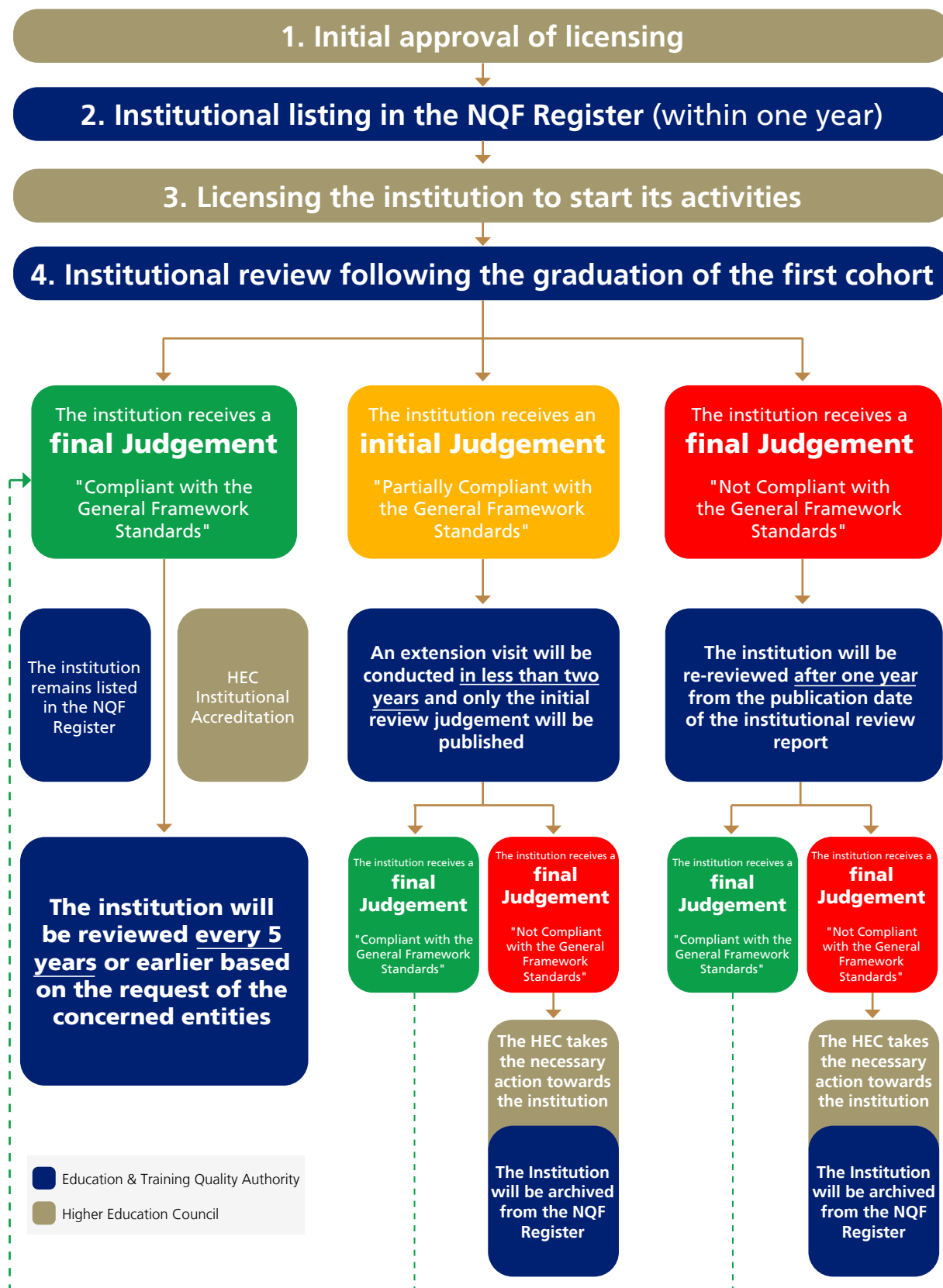
This policy illustrates the internal processes carried out by the BQA to ensure that all reviews conducted by the DHR adheres to the published Framework and are performed in a transparent manner and with high professionalism.

2. The Policy:

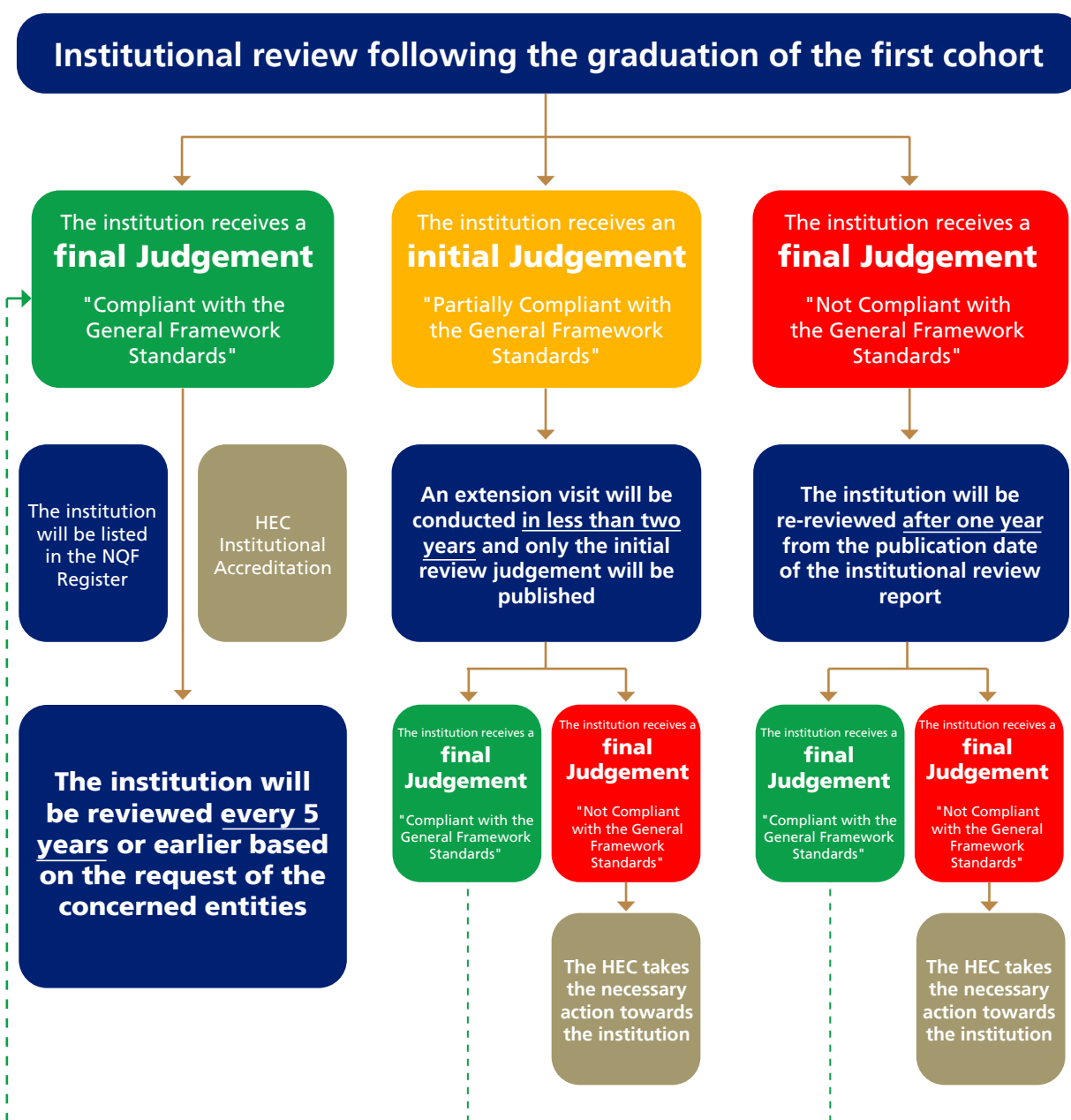
- 2.1 The DHR, through its staff members, shall comply with all internal rules, regulations and procedures by adhering to the internal mechanisms of the DHR and BQA to assure the quality of all review processes conducted by DHR.
- 2.2 The DHR shall collect feedback from its relevant stakeholders on the review processes and analyse the results to improve its mechanisms.
- 2.3 The DHR shall review its frameworks periodically to be in line with international good practices and the needs of the Kingdom of Bahrain.
- 2.4 When developing the review framework and its standards and Indicators, the DHR shall benchmark the framework with other regional and international frameworks, and collect feedback from all relevant stakeholders, particularly higher education institutions.

9. Appendix 1: Coordination Mechanism between BQA and HEC

A) Newly Established Institutions



B) Existing Higher Education Institutions that have not been Listed on the NQF or Accredited by the HEC



C) Existing Higher Education Institutions that have been Listed on the NQF and Accredited by the HEC

