

Higher Education Relevance and Quality Agency



Guidelines for the Accreditation of Cross-Border Higher Education in Ethiopia

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Acronyms Used in the Guideline

APQN	<i>Asia-Pacific Quality Network</i>
CBHE	<i>Cross Border Higher Education</i>
FHEI	<i>Foreign Higher Education Institution</i>
HE	<i>Higher Education</i>
HEIs	<i>Higher Education Institution</i>
HERQA	<i>Higher Education Relevance and Quality Agency</i>
MoE	<i>Ministry of Education</i>
ODL	<i>Open Distance Learning</i>
UNESCO	<i>United nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization</i>

Introduction

Cross border education is not a new phenomenon, and in some aspects pre-dates the development of modern education systems. In modern times there is a long tradition of students travelling to study abroad and there has also been an ongoing exchange of scholars and researchers. The nature and scale of cross-border education, however, has changed in the last few decades. The traditional educational transfers have been supplemented by an increasing emphasis on the commercial potential of education - the "export" of education from one country to another (UNESCO-APQN). This approach of higher education has interested opportunities of access and human resources development of countries that are involved in promoting cross border higher education.

Depending on who or what crosses the border, cross-border education can take different forms: a person can go abroad for educational purposes (people mobility); an educational program can go abroad (program mobility) or an institution or provider can go or invest abroad (institution mobility) (Antony, 2006)¹.

Since its establishment in 2003, the Higher Education Relevance and Quality Agency (HERQA) has been working to assure quality and relevance of higher education through accreditation and institutional quality audits. These were, however, limited to regular and distance programs offered by local HEIs. Recently, the number of local and foreign HEIs applying to engage in Cross-border higher education (CBHE) especially at Master's degree level has increased. In addition, there is increasing need for qualified personnel capable of implementing the Growth and Transformation Plan of the country. A foreign provider is allowed only to provide higher education programs at second and third degree levels as these programs are envisaged to foster technology transfer. The Agency therefore, with the aim of meeting the needs of its stakeholders, has developed these guidelines for the accreditation and quality assurance of CBHE.

¹ Antony Stella. 2006. *Quality in Higher Education*, Vol. 12, No. 3, November 2006 Quality Assurance of Cross-border Higher Education

Definition of Terms

Agency- Agency refers to Higher Education Relevance and Quality Agency(HERQA)

Cross-border higher education- In this document Cross-border higher education means higher education that is provided by an institution in a source/provider country to students studying in Ethiopia using collaborative and non-collaborative transnational arrangements, such as franchising, twinning and joint degree programs or an Ethiopian higher education providing higher education institution in another country using collaborative and non-collaborative transnational arrangements, such as franchising, twinning and joint degree programs.

Accreditation- Accreditation is permission granted by HERQA to a higher education institution to offer programs at degree level for a given period after its human, material and financial resources it has put in place for the execution of the program(s) have gone through a thorough examination by a team of experts designated by the Agency.

Reaccreditation- Re-accreditation is permission granted to a higher education institution by HERQA to offer programs at degree level for additional period after the institution's human, material and financial resources put in place for the execution of the program(s) have gone through an intensive scrutiny by a team of experts designated by the Agency.

The Branch Campus Model

The branch or satellite campus model is an arrangement in which a FHEI follows HERQA's standard procedure for the establishment of private HEI and establishes its campus anywhere in Ethiopia to offer higher education program(s). A HEI programmes offered in the Ethiopian branch campus at least should be of comparable standards with those offered in the parent institution in the home country and must meet the standards and quality assurance requirements currently applicable to Ethiopian HEIs.

Franchised Model

Ethiopian HEIs may use educational programs, courses, or instructional materials developed and owned by an FHEI as long as they have the required permit or license from the FHEI and provided they comply with the policies, standards and guidelines of MoE/HERQA for curricular offerings.

The Twinning Model

This model establishes the criteria under which a graduate and/or undergraduate program(s) run through a twinning arrangement in which a FHEI (recognized and accredited by competent authorities in its home country) and an accredited Ethiopian HEI, collaborate to offer courses, and enrich curricular content and pedagogy. A twinning arrangement involving study on host and home campuses may be recognized provided that, upon successful completion of an approved course of studies, students are awarded degrees of the FHEI. The Ethiopian students in the programme will be required to be taught and assessed at least a third of their courses by teachers from the FHEI or spend not less than two semesters or one academic year, on the overseas campus of the FHEI and this would form part of the graduation requirements. Responsibility for QA shall be borne by both institutions and in any case, the programmes must at least meet Ethiopian Minimum Academic Standards² and have comparable standard and quality as courses offered in the home country leading to the same qualifications.

The Distance learning Model³

Distance education is taken to be the provision of programs of study which provide both content and support services to students who rarely, if ever, attend for face-to-face teaching or for on-campus access to educational facilities. All programmes delivered by this mode must meet Ethiopian Minimum Academic Standards for the respective disciplines as well as other standards and performance criteria articulated for all aspects of open and distance education⁴.

Purpose of the Guidelines

The Guidelines aims to:

- Provide a framework for quality provision in cross-border higher education.
- protect students and other stakeholders from low-quality provision and disreputable providers
- enhance the development of quality cross-border higher education that meets the nation's human, social, economic and cultural needs.

² There is an urgent need to develop Ethiopian Benchmark Academic Standards/NQF

³ Guidelines for open & distance learning should be developed soon

- support and encourage international cooperation and enhance the understanding of the importance of quality provision in cross-border higher education.
- provide a scheme of application, accreditation, monitoring and evaluation of programs delivered by a FHEI in Ethiopia or by an Ethiopian HEI overseas through CBHE.

SECTION I: Conditions for Quality Assurance and Accreditation of CBHE

This section provides:

- details of the requirements that must be met by a FHEI for accreditation to operate in Ethiopia and offer its overseas qualifications both through the conventional face-to-face, classroom-based mode and through the ODL mode.
- requirements that should be met by Ethiopian providers to operate overseas.
- details about evidence to be presented by applicants in order to demonstrate that the necessary requirements are met.

1.1 Accreditation/reaccreditation

1.1.1 The foreign higher education institution (FHEI) should offer either only programs / courses that have been properly accredited by an accreditation authority in its country of origin or through appropriate, authorized self-accreditation that, in the opinion of HERQA has appropriate standing and authority. A local partner that seeks to operate in a collaborative arrangement with a FHEI shall be required to seek accreditation from HERQA.

1.1.2 The accreditation permit to operate as a FHEI shall be renewable, subject to review, within a given period depending on the levels of programs. Permission to operate will also be revocable at any time, based on reasonable grounds and following a process which accords procedural fairness.

1.1.3 FHEIs accredited to operate in Ethiopia will be subject to the quality assurance requirements of their overseas accrediting authority and any other requirements specified by HERQA as conditions of the accreditation to operate in Ethiopia.

1.1.4 HERQA may prescribe any other condition for accreditation, if it is expedient to do so in the overall interest of the higher education system in Ethiopia.

1.1.5 The procedures for the review, accreditation, and reaccreditation of a FHEI that seeks to offer Ethiopian qualifications that comply with the Ethiopian standards will be similar to that for the accreditation and reaccreditation of Ethiopian private higher education programs.

1.2 Quality and standards of programs and curriculum

- 1.2.1 The FHEI shall provide evidence based statement of relevance of the program if the program is new to Ethiopia.
- 1.2.2 The FHEI shall provide soft and/or hard copy of relevant modules (to be used at least for consecutive three terms in the case of ODL) and other teaching materials prepared as per the standard and quality set by the quality assurance agency or similar appropriate authority in the FHEI's country of origin.
- 1.2.3 The educational programs to be conducted in Ethiopia by FHEI leading to award of degrees shall have the same nomenclature as it exists in their parent country and the degree awarded to students at local institution will be identical to the degrees awarded to on-campus students.
- 1.2.4 The FHEI (for franchising arrangement) shall furnish an undertaking declaring that the degrees awarded to the students in Ethiopia shall be recognized in the parent Country and shall be treated equivalent to the corresponding degrees by the FHEI at home.
- 1.2.5 The academic quality and standards of educational programs should be comparable to those of the awarding FHEI.
- 1.2.6 There shall not be any distinction in the standard of the curriculum, mode of delivery, pattern of examination and assessment etc. and such degrees are fully recognized in their parent Country.
- 1.2.7 The curriculum of the FHEI's program shall provide for local content where appropriate.
- 1.2.8 The FHEIs is responsible for ensuring the academic standards and quality of learning opportunities offered through a collaborative arrangement are adequate to enable a student to achieve the academic standard required for its award.
- 1.2.9 The FHEI shall be subject to monitoring and visitation as determined by HERQA/MoE from time to time.
- 1.2.10 HERQA may cause an inspection, whenever it deems appropriate with or without prior notice, to assess the infrastructural and other facilities available and/or to verify the compliance of conditions, norms, standards etc. prescribed by HERQA from time to time

during the period of validity of accreditation on receipt of complaint from parents or general public.

1.2.11 The FHEI and/or its local partner(s) shall be monitored by HERQA in order to give information to the public on their program offerings and accreditation status.

1.3 Rights of students

1.3.1 Students at local institution will be enrolled in principal seat of the franchising HEI would be eligible to all rights and privileges including right of transfer to main campus abroad upon closure of local institutions for any reason and to all other rights as are admissible to students at principal seat.

1.4 Provision of information

1.4.1 A FHEI shall furnish annual report giving details of the number of students admitted, programs conducted, total fee collected, amount transferred to parent country, investment made, number of students awarded degree and any such information that HERQA/MoE may require to judge efficiency and effectiveness of the institution.

1.5 Financial Arrangement

1.5.1 A FHEI opening its branch campus/entering into franchised agreement with local institutions is required to meet financial requirements in the form of working capital, performance guarantee, tangible assets as is required by the relevant regulation for foreign investment in higher education

1.6 Facilities and Environs

1.6.1 The site selected for the institution must be suitable from academic point of view and possess civic facilities like provision of water, electricity, telephone, internet with appropriate bandwidth etc.

1.6.2 Classrooms, library, laboratories, administrative areas, staff office and leisure facilities should be appropriate in scope and quality for the size and nature of the institution, and the delivery methods and the types of courses it offers.

1.6.3 Details of library holdings, electronic resources (text and reference books and academic journals appropriate to the type of the program) and access to learning resources for students and staff at the Ethiopian site/s and arrangement for access by students and staff of the resources of the parent institution overseas have to be provided.

1.6.4 IT facilities including accessibility for students.

- 1.6.5 A resource center(s) equipped with adequate computers, broadband internet access, hard and/or electronic copies of relevant text and reference books and academic journals depending on the type of the program.
- 1.6.6 Indoor and outdoor facilities for games should be ensured to provide healthy out-lets to students for taking in the sense of competition and tolerance.

1.7 Application

The FHEI shall present a written application submitted to HERQA that shall contain:

- 1.7.1 A valid investment and other similar licenses, as required by appropriate laws, issued to the FHEI to operate/ to offer higher education programs in Ethiopia;
- 1.7.2 An up-to-date copies of a document indicating the accreditation status or its equivalent of the FHEI issued by the relevant authority in the country of origin;
- 1.7.3 Copies of recent external, independent reviews or external quality audits of the institution, its courses and its operations;
- 1.7.4 A clearly articulated proposal setting out the name, aims and objectives of the program, curriculum, academic resources, and a time table of the scheduled activities for the first;
- 1.7.5 Name and address of the HEI or its permanent representative in Ethiopia (who will be responsible for the activities of the FHEI);
- 1.7.6 Certificate of rent/ lease (at least for three years if the program is Master's level and five years if the program is PhD level) of the building in which the institution uses for such as offices, resource centers and tuition;
- 1.7.7 Deposit slip/credit advice bearing the name of the applicant institution for payment of application;
- 1.7.8 Proof of the institution's governance arrangements, quality assurance processes and a staffing profile appropriate to its goals and academic purposes;
- 1.7.9 Copies of academic legislative and policy documents such as on student admission, assessment and grading, staff recruitment and appointment, research and outreach activities;
- 1.7.10 Copies of information provided to students regarding fees and charges, refunds of tuition, and grievances such as through website and/or student handbook.
- 1.7.11 Copies of policies and procedures relating to student support services such as the availability of academic staff for consultation, guidance and counseling, and tutorials;
- 1.7.12 Copies of documented policies and procedures for appointing supervisors of research students including thesis/ dissertations write up and open defense;

- 1.7.13 Documents proving that arrangements are in place for students in the event of closure of program/s or the entity, such as bank guarantee, insurance policy, or other form of underwriting that commensurate with the tuition fee rate number of students the FHEI intended to enroll.
- 1.7.14 The FHEI shall have to declare in advance the detailed guidelines for admission, entry level qualifications, fees of all kinds, the examination and evaluation procedures and there shall not be any deviations with the prescribed procedures in their parent Country, vis-à-vis Ethiopia
- 1.7.15 An up-to-date and authoritative record of agreement signed between FHEI and the local HEI that should clearly indicate the scope of the arrangements, duties and responsibilities of the two parties, financial arrangements, quality control mechanism, mode and means of payment, validity period, procedure for resolution of differences and termination of agreement etc.

1.8 Organization for Institution

- 1.8.1 A FHEI seeking accreditation of a cross border program should be able to demonstrate that it has in place or is able to put in place a robust administrative structure specific to graduate study.
- 1.8.2 A FHEI proposing to offer a CBHE program should establish a Graduate Committee to approve courses and research thesis topics, the assignment of research supervisors and the award of marks and/or grades, deal with student complaints and appeals and approve graduation lists.

1.9 For Academic Programs to Be Taught By Distance Mode

- 1.9.1 The FHEI shall designate a competent key person holding a minimum of Master's degree who will manage the program.
- 1.9.2 The teaching learning method should include independent study of learning materials, completion of various activities, formative assessment tasks, tutorials, practical work and opportunities to interact with others as well as research activities.
- 1.9.3 Interactive texts shall be at the heart of teaching and learning. These shall be supplemented with other advanced and best possible mix of media resources that should encourage interactivity between students and lecturer(s), students and tutors, students

and students, and student and institution in a much more effective way such as: print media, static and interactive digital media, asynchronous web technologies.

- 1.9.4 The assessment strategy should include formative and summative assessment aspects and ensure that students develop effective cognitive, reflective, self-management and practical skills.

1.10 Criteria and Process for Renewing Accreditation

- 1.10.1 Accreditation permit to operate as a HE provider in Ethiopia is granted for a period of up to three years for Master's level training and five years for PhD level training after which the accreditation must be renewed or revoked. Applications for the renewal of accreditation must be submitted to HERQA in time for the process of renewal to be completed before the permission expires.
- 1.10.2 Applications for renewal are assessed against the same requirements as outlined in this guidelines. However, the evidence submitted should focus on improvements and outcomes since the previous accreditation. Institution's annual reports to HERQA, reports of external quality audits by HERQA (based on self evaluation report of the HEI) and report from accreditation authority in the FHI's country of origin will provide much of the evidence required for renewal of accreditation. HERQA will specify (if need be) the additional information required for renewal of accreditation.

1.11 Accreditation of a program(s) offered by an Ethiopian HEI Overseas

- 1.11.1 An Ethiopian HEI intending to offer a graduate degree to foreign students under a branch campus or twinning or franchised programs shall have at least first time accreditation.
- 1.11.2 The procedures for the review, accreditation, and reaccreditation of an Ethiopian HEI that seeks to offer Ethiopian qualifications overseas as a full-fledged provider shall follow the standards and quality assurance requirements currently applicable to Ethiopian private HEI programs if it satisfies the requirement of the quality assurance or any relevant authority in the receiver Country.
- 1.11.3 If the provision is based on a collaborative agreement with a FHEI in a receiver or other source Country, it shall abide to the regulations governing the partner institution.

1.12 Processing

The application will be processed by HERQA team that shall:

- 2 Verify accreditation/recognition status of FHEI from quality assurance agency or any relevant authority in its home country.
- 3 Verify and authenticate claims in the application and supporting documents.
- 4 Conduct site visits to (host) institution in Ethiopia at which curriculum is to be delivered.
- 5 Make recommendations to the HERQA Board through the Director.
- 6 Upon the Board's approval, HERQA shall issue accreditation permit to a successful applicant.

1.14 Duration of Accreditation Permits

Accreditation Permits are subject to review within a period of no more than three to five years. The process for renewal of an accreditation permit is described above (see Section 1.10).

1.15 Consumer protection measures

- 1.15.1 It is illegal to register students and/or offer cross-border courses or to advertise any such courses that are not accredited. It is also unlawful to publish “false or misleading” advertisements relating to courses. An applicant in the process of seeking accreditation must refrain from making any public statement or advertisement, which falsely implies that it has approval to operate in Ethiopia before accreditation is formally granted by HERQA.
- 1.15.2 There will be penalties for advertising as a higher education institution, offering or advertising a higher education award or conferring a higher education award in Ethiopia before accreditation is formally granted.
- 1.15.3 Course providers are not allowed to collect fees more than three months in advance, and should have satisfactory arrangements for refund in case of cessation of courses

1.16 Interpretation of the guidelines

It is quite likely that, no matter how carefully a law or regulation has been drafted, some difficulties or uncertainties will occur during the implementation phase. These will be due to difficulties or differences in interpretation (including differences in local/regional interpretation), loopholes in the law, or unforeseen circumstances.

The HERQA shall have power to issue any clarifications to remove any doubt, which may arise in regard to implementation of these guidelines.

SECTION II: Guideline for Program Levels of Study

2.1 Masters program

Admission

- 2.1.1 All entrants into Masters Degree programs offered by CBHE must meet the minimum Ethiopian requirements for higher education enrollment. Evidence that the entrant has successfully completed his /her undergraduate degree courses with a minimum CGPA of 2.00 in his/her major areas and passing in an entrance examination.
- 2.1.2 The FHEI shall be bound by the advice of HERQA and MoE with regard to admissions, entry qualifications and the conduct of courses / programs, as may be communicated to them from time to time.
- 2.1.3 The admission of students for a course of study, examination and assessment of requirements should be equivalent to comparable programs delivered by the awarding institution.

Research Climate

A FHEI seeking reaccreditation of a **Masters program should** be able to demonstrate that it has:

- 2.1.4 established a positive climate that encourages and supports research;
- 2.1.5 staff who will contribute to the program are research active;
- 2.1.6 staff who will contribute to the program have recent research publications in areas appropriate to the program;
- 2.1.7 Sources of research funds and adequate funds are available to support the approved research projects of students and the program.

Links

A FHEI seeking re/accreditation of a masters or a PhD program should be able to demonstrate that it has:

- 2.1.8 links with industries, businesses and professions appropriate to the program;
- 2.1.9 links with other HEIs appropriate to the program;

2.1.10 Staff Requirement

- 2.1.11 Tutors/instructors:

A teacher designated to teach a Master's level program offered by a FHEI shall have at least Master's degree and a rank of **assistant professor** in a relevant field of study, experience in teaching at a higher education institution, and at least **one published scientific paper** in a peer reviewed journal

2.1.12 Details of academic staff profile including the number, qualifications, experience, expertise and sessional/full-time mix appropriate for the nature, mode of delivery, range and levels of the courses offered.

2.1.13 Details of administrative and support staff, staff involved in the quality assurance, coordination and delivery of the institution's higher education courses.

Fees

2.1.14 A higher education institution applying to launch a single Masters program shall pay 7500.00 (Seven thousand and five hundred) ETB for the accreditation processes. If an institution wishes to run more than one program, 3500.00 (Three thousand and five hundred) ETB shall be paid for every additional program.

2.2 PhD Program

Admission

2.2.1 All entrants into degree programs offered by CBHE must meet the minimum Ethiopian requirements for higher education enrollment. Evidence that the entrant has successfully completed his/her masters degree with a minimum of 3.00 CGPA or equivalent in his/her area of specialization.

2.2.2 The FHEI shall have to declare in advance the detailed guidelines for admission, entry level qualifications, fees of all kinds, the examination and evaluation procedures and there shall not be any deviations with the prescribed procedures in their parent Country, vis-à-vis Ethiopia

2.2.3 The admission of students for a course of study, examination and assessment of requirements should be equivalent to comparable programs delivered by the awarding institution.

2.2.4 The FHEI shall be bound by the advice of HERQA and MoE with regard to admissions, entry qualifications and the conduct of courses / programs, as may be communicated to them from time to time.

Research Climate

A FHEI seeking reaccreditation of **a PhD program** should be able to demonstrate that it has:

2.2.5 established a positive climate that encourages and supports research;

2.2.6 staff who will contribute to the program are research active;

2.2.7 Capable staff who will contribute to the program and have recent research publications in areas appropriate to the program;

2.2.8 Ensure that adequate funds are available to support the approved research projects of students on the program.

Links

A FHEI seeking re/accreditation of a graduate or a PhD program should be able to demonstrate that it has:

2.2.9 links with industries, businesses and professions appropriate to the program;

2.2.10 links with other HEIs appropriate to the program;

2.2.11 links with employers likely to recruit the graduates of the program.

Staff Requirement

2.2.12 Tutors/instructors/advisors:

A staff designated to teach and/or advise PhD students shall have PhD and a rank of at least **associate professor** in a relevant field of study, experience in teaching at a higher education institution, and at least two scientific published papers in a peer reviewed international journal.

2.2.13 Details of staff profile including the number, qualifications, experience, expertise and sessional/full-time mix appropriate for the nature, mode of delivery, range and levels of the courses offered. Tutors/instructors:

2.2.14 Details of administrative and support staff, staff involved in the quality assurance, co-ordination and delivery of the institution's higher education courses.

Fees

2.2.15 A higher education institution applying to launch a single PhD program shall pay 10000.00 (Ten thousand) ETB for the accreditation processes. If an institution wishes to run more than one program, 5000.00 (Five thousand) ETB shall be paid for every additional program.

2.3 Account and Bank Address for Fee Payment

The prescribed fees stated under 2.1.9, 2.2.14, 2.3.15 are payable at the Commercial Bank of Ethiopia, Addis Ababa, Mehal Ketema Branch, bank account number 0171598153900, Higher Education Relevance and Quality Agency, Type B.

2.4 Effective date

This guideline shall enter in to force on the date of its endorsement by the Board of the Agency.