



**Good Practices
and
Communication Strategy**

Good Practices for Quality Assurance and Accreditation

1. Mission Statement

NAEAC is mandated to improve the standard and quality of education of the agriculture degree programs based on established standards, policies, procedures and criteria. It has clear written mission statement to develop, operate and sustain a viable mechanism of quality assurance to meet emerging challenges of global competitiveness and intensify efforts to transform the country into a knowledge economy. The overall objective of accreditation is to improve the quality of education, enhance the capacity of institutions and upgrade physical infrastructure to achieve and sustain academic excellence. The mission statement makes clear that accreditation, with the objective of external quality assurance and improvement of the specific academic program area, is a major task of the Council and that there exists a system of procedures and processes to achieve this mission.

2. Relationship between the Accreditation Council and Higher Education Institutions

External assessment and accreditation of the degree programs is the single most important function of the Council. The Council believes in the meaningful partnership with its stakeholders. It has developed a strong bond of relationship among all the stakeholders including teaching faculty, students, parents, alumni and the employers. There

exists an essence of mutual trust and credibility leading to a very close coordination and collaboration among its partners. All accreditation instruments and documents have been prepared and finalized in a participatory and consultative manner. Feedback from institutions and sharing of AIC reports is a regular feature.

3. Transparency of Decision Making

The Council carries out accreditation of degree programs on the basis of self assessment of the degree programs and external quality assessment in line with Council's /HEC approved standards/criteria. The Council enjoys full autonomy in carrying out its functions. It has been authorized to take independent decisions without any influence and favour. Council has to ensure transparency and efficiency in all its processes and procedures and is accountable to HEC being the controlling authority. A number of measures have been adopted to streamline the accreditation process of the agriculture degree programs. These include preparation of guidelines for program evaluators/experts, standardization of appointment and selection criteria for program evaluators/experts as well as organizing training programs for them. Besides accreditation procedures, different forms/questionnaires are also used along with a set of accreditation standards and criteria.

4. Selection of Program Evaluators/ Experts

The Council maintains a roster of experts/program evaluators of about 120 professors/scientists and experts pertaining to almost 15 disciplines of agriculture. These

program evaluators/experts are drawn from academia, research and industry. Clear and well defined guidelines and instructions as well as tool-kit are provided to program evaluators (PEs) to ensure a transparent and independent assessment and accreditation of degree programs. Special training programs are also organized by acquiring the services of foreign resource persons to ensure uniformity and consistency of the assessment process. Formation of Accreditation Inspection Committees is approved by the Chairman-NAEAC on the basis of merit and competence.

5. Mechanism of Information Sharing

The Council is obliged to share all types of information/ documents, etc. with its stakeholders. Adequate mechanism exists for the publication and dissemination of information relating to the activities and functions of the Council. As per bye-laws of the Council, it publishes annual progress report besides quarterly progress reports and monthly financial statements, etc. Accreditation activities are reflected through flashing news of the on-site visits of Accreditation Inspection Committees (AICs).

Press Releases are issued after culminating the inspections and convening of Council meetings. Awareness Seminars are mandatory and Council has so far organized more than 27 such seminars in various Higher Education Agriculture institutions in Pakistan. AIC reports and actionable recommendations are communicated to the Council members and Head of Departments (HODs) of the concerned disciplines.

Parents Alert and Brochures are also published for the general information of all the stakeholders. The Council continuously updates its website i.e. www.naeac.org with latest data/Information including Annual Reports, Parents Alert, press releases, conferences, minutes of the meetings, and training workshops, etc.

6. Documentation and Dissemination of Information

National Agriculture Education Accreditation Council (NAEAC) firmly believes in clear and consistent documentation of reports, manuals and studies, etc. The Self Assessment Reports (SARs) received from the host institutions clearly state the objectives, procedures and expectations of the evaluation process. The Terms of References (TORs) of the AICs embody decision making criteria, assessment methods and reporting format. The experts of the AICs are explicitly briefed about the significance of transparency, un-biased and impartiality of the external evaluation process during on-site visit. The Council assures that each academic program is peer reviewed for accreditation in the same way across institutions. The Council maintains a set of guidelines for experts/program evaluators.

7. Availability of Resources

The Council has been receiving adequate funds from HEC during the last few years. An amount of Rs. 19.00 million has been received as grant from Higher Education Commission (HEC) until 2013-14 i.e. Rs. 2.71 million average grant per year that was enhanced to Rs. 4.00

million since 2012-13. The Council prepares its annual budget estimates with the commencement of the financial year. Budget breakup is approved by the Council. The Council Accounts are maintained as per Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) of HEC and by a well trained /qualified official.

Annual Activities, tasks and workload are finalized corresponding to the availability of the annual grant. Council charges affordable accreditation fee duly approved by the Council members. The Annual Accounts of the Council are being audited by a Commercial Audit Firm annually.

The Council secretariat maintains core staff of four officials comprising One Secretary, One Admin/Finance Officer, One IT Coordinator and an office attendant. It also organizes a roster of about 120 peer reviewers/experts covering all 15 disciplines of agriculture and an Executive Committee.

Experts /program evaluators are being paid honorarium of Rs.5,000/- per day during the on-site visit of the degree programs as approved by the Council. Average cost of on-site accreditation visit is estimated at about Rs. 40,000/-.

8. Efficiency of the System of Appeals

The Council as per its bye-laws under clause-10 sub-section- f provides the right for appeal against the decision of AIC and the Council but so far no such appeal has been filed. However, an efficient system of appeals has been developed and is in place.

9. Networking of Accreditation Councils

Generally, every accreditation Council collaborates with other Accreditation Councils through effective networking. The networking is remunerative in terms of sharing of accreditation experience, joint projects and staff exchange programs. The NAEAC networking endeavors at two tier level; i.e. networking among within the accreditation Councils of HEC and a broader networking with all the Registration and Accreditation Councils of Pakistan. The networking may yield joint participation in projects and seminars.

Sharing record of meetings and visits and membership of the networks of the organizations at national and international level.

10. Comparability of Standards amongst similar academic programs

Almost all the Accreditation Councils (ACs) have developed and adopted a system of comparison of similar academic programs in respect of standards of quality assurance. NAEAC has also developed and implemented a system of program rating in terms of W, X, Y, and Z. This provokes a healthy competition among degree programs besides making the process more objective, quantitative and rationale. The accreditation outcomes are available in the form of criteria for comparison among similar degree programs. AIC reports provide guideline for developing rating and ranking at program level as well as list of clustering of academic programs for making comparison.

Communication Strategy

1. Introduction

The NAEAC Communication Strategy is designed to establish a continuous flow of relevant information to NAEAC stakeholders. It is intended to be a mechanism of outreach, feedback, public relations and resource mobilization. It would also help improve awareness and transparency of information relating to the quality of agriculture degree programs being offered in Pakistan. Its primary objective is to disseminate the NAEAC mandate, objectives, activities, and results of the quality assurance programs aimed at improving the quality of agriculture degree programs being offered by different education institutions in Pakistan.

2. Background

The Higher Education Commission of Pakistan (HEC) attaches high importance to quality assurance and capacity enhancement of degree awarding institutions. For this purpose it has established a number of Accreditation Councils with the mandate to undertake accreditation of all degree programs offered in the country. The NAEAC is one of these Councils dedicated exclusively for accreditation of agriculture degree programs based on standards, procedures and criteria set by HEC. The accreditation of the degree programs is based on external evaluation of the quality of faculty, curriculum, teaching and learning methods as well as the adequacy of physical infrastructure

of the university/college concerned. All agriculture degree awarding institutions in Pakistan are required to get their degree programs accredited by NAEAC. As of December 2010, NAEAC has accredited 38 degree programs out of 170 being offered by 17 agriculture education institutions country-wide. At present these data and information are shared with stakeholders in the form of following reports and outreach sources. Important among these include: Awareness Seminars at the Universities and Colleges, Annual Reports of NAEAC, Quarterly Progress Reports, NAEAC Council Meetings, On-Site Visits, Press Releases, and Parent Alerts.

3. Objectives

The main objectives of the NAEAC's Communication Strategy are to: (i) disseminate information about its activities and accreditation processes and programs; (ii) issue alerts for prospective students and their parents on the accreditation status of various agriculture education institutions and the degrees programs they offer; (iii) collect, compile, and disseminate general information and data on agriculture education in Pakistan; (iv) reach out all stakeholders, including students and their parents, faculty, HEC management and QAA, heads of agriculture education institutions, government and international agencies concerned, agro-industry, employers of agriculture graduates in the public and private sectors, media, educators, bankers, farmers, consumers, etc. on accreditation and quality enhancement programs of HEC/NAEAC; and (iv) to create awareness for continuing need for internal and external monitoring of education

quality and learning innovations in agriculture education institutions.

4. Strategy

Dissemination of information is of paramount importance in order to improve awareness amongst the stakeholders and to ensure transparency of information and public interests. This requires continuous propagation of the institutions concerned and their aims, objectives, activities, and results of the programs and projects, they handle. The Strategy is designed to establish a continuous flow of all relevant information to stakeholders and outreach sources as well as mechanism for feedback, public relations and resource mobilization. The main features of the strategy include, but not limited to the followings:

- i. Dissemination of real time data and information on agriculture education in Pakistan with all stakeholders and outreach sources through electronic and print media as well as personal visits and interviews.
- ii. Exchange of information database on NAEAC accreditation activities of agriculture education institutions within HEC, QAA, Accreditation Councils, and outside to public and private agencies concerned at the national and international levels.
- iii. Networking with agriculture accreditation councils at international levels and exchanging experiences on accreditation exercise, quality

assurance, learning/teaching innovations, and international best practices on methodology.

- iv. Maximizing the use of electronic media as a channel of communication given its cost effectiveness.
- v. Establishing links with regional and international Quality Assurance and Accreditation agencies relevant to Agriculture with the objective to mobilize external assistance in the form of grants and technical assistance.
- vi. Participation in national, regional and international conferences relating to quality assurance and accreditation
- vii. Regular and timely production of various progress reports and updating of NAEAC website to provide real time information

5. Target Audience

The target audiences of NAEAC are all stakeholders and outreach sources, including the following:

- i. Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), HEC i.e. (MD QAA & DD QAA),
- ii. Council Members of NAEAC,
- iii. Accreditation Councils,
- iv. Agriculture Education Institutions,
- v. Quality Enhancement Cells (QEC's) in Agriculture Institutions,

- vi. Parents and Students,
- vii. Alumni Associations,
- viii. Employers of Agriculture Graduates
- xi. National, Regional and International Agencies Concerned

6. Key Messages

The key messages to be communicated will relate to and focus on the image building and qualitative improvement of education degree programs and capacity building of institutions to bring them at par with internationally accepted standards.

- i. Improving quality of education and capacity building,
- ii. Ranking of the agriculture degree programs by discipline and universities concerned.
- iii. Employability of agriculture graduates and their contributions to national development and well-being.
- iv. Initiatives aimed at quality enhancement, capacity building, and teaching/learning innovations.
- v. Linking the Accreditation Councils (ACs) through networking of ACs IT Specialists working group
- vi. Resource mobilization for improving the quality of agriculture education in Pakistan particularly from major employers like Agro-Industries, etc.

7. Communication Mix

The following medium would be adopted for transfer of and dissemination of information:

- i. Electronic and Print Media
- ii. Multimedia, Radio, Television, Online, etc.
- iii. E-News Letters, Brochures
- iv. Evaluation Reports of the Accreditation Inspection Committees
- v. Conferences and Meetings
- vi. Telecommunication, etc.