



**Title:** Program Design, Development and Approval Policy

**Code:** GU-PL08PDDA

**Version:** 3.1

**Date of Issue:** 2023

**Effective Date:** July 2023

**Approval Authority:** University Council

**Document Owner:** Vice President for Academic Affairs

**Review:** The policy is subject to a periodic review every 4 years or in a shorter cycle as per amendments of regulations



## 1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to guide the design, development and approval of programs offered by Gulf University in order to assure their quality. The policy outlines a set of principles to be used in program design and development, which will inform the approval of new programs.

## 2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All programs at Gulf University
- All individuals involved in program design, development and approval at Gulf University

## 3. Abbreviations

<b>BOT</b>	Board of Trustees
<b>BQA</b>	Education and Training Quality Authority
<b>CILOS</b>	Course Intended Learning Outcomes
<b>C-PRDC</b>	College Program Review and Development Committee
<b>HEC</b>	Higher Education Council
<b>NQF</b>	National Qualifications Framework
<b>PILOS</b>	Program Intended Learning Outcomes
<b>U-PRDC</b>	University Program Review and Development Committee

## 4. Definitions

**Advisory Board:** The Advisory Board advises departments incorporated in Gulf University on the strategic direction of both Gulf University and individual departments in order to further the interests and reputation of Gulf University and the Kingdom of Bahrain in general. This advice can extend to program development,

student recruitment and retention and can serve to foster relations with the business community, local government and other external stakeholders.

**Benchmarking:** Benchmarking involves comparing an institution's processes and practices against good practices in other Higher Education Institutions.

**Course:** A course is composed of teaching and learning activities which guide and support students towards the attainment of a set of learning outcomes. A course is the smallest unit of teaching and learning activities at Gulf University.

**Course Intended Learning Outcomes:** Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs) describe the knowledge, skills and attributes envisaged to be achievable by students who have been enrolled in a course. CILOs therefore contribute to PILOs.

**External Validation:** External validation refers to the process through which the consistency, relevance and rigor of the proposed program is ensured.

**Graduate Attributes:** Graduate attributes refer to the characteristics a graduate is expected to display upon having completed a program associated with the qualification that has been awarded. Graduate attributes refer to the personal qualities, academic capabilities and more general skills developed as a result of following the program.

**Mapping:** Mapping refers to the process of placing qualifications on the Bahraini National Qualifications Framework. This process requires the credit value of qualifications to be stated and for qualifications to be placed at the appropriate level on the NQF.

**Notional Learning Hours:** Notional learning hours describe time allocated to study. This study time can comprise formal classroom instruction, time spent in self-study (for example, reading and revising notes) and time spent on assessment. Notional learning hours are calculated by those with experience in the subject area by envisaging the time that the average student would spend on tasks required by a course or program.

**NQF Credit:** A NQF credit is a measurement of learning at specific levels of a National Qualifications Framework. It is assumed that one credit of learning will result from ten 'notional' hours of study. Credits are assigned to courses, programs and qualifications. The credits assigned to qualifications comply with the National Qualifications Framework of the Kingdom of Bahrain.

**NQF Level:** The Bahraini National Qualifications Framework comprises ten levels. Each level signifies a stage of achievement with respect to learning ranging from the less to the more complex and demanding.

**NQF Level Descriptors:** NQF Level descriptors provide a general, shared understanding of learning and achievement at each of the ten levels of the NQF. Each descriptor relates to generic statements that describe the expected level of achievement with respect to:

- Knowledge (theoretical understanding and practical application)
- Skills (generic, problem solving, analytical skill and communication, ICT, numeracy)
- Competence (autonomy, responsibility and context).

Level descriptors are used to map qualifications to the NQF and were designed to be used across a wide range of learning contexts.

**Program:** A program is a carefully designed and structured series of teaching and learning activities which support and guide students towards the achievement of the intended learning outcomes set for it.

**Program Intended Learning Outcomes:** Program Intended Learning Outcomes (PILOs) describe the knowledge, skills and attributes envisioned to be achievable by students who have followed a program of study. Demonstration of achievement of the PILOs is a necessary requirement for the award of a qualification associated with a program.

**Purpose Statement:** A purpose statement describes the overall goal or purpose of a program of study by, for example, describing the way graduates of the program will contribute to workplace needs or to society more generally. It can also describe the way the program contributes to the vision and mission of the institution offering the program.

**Qualification:** A qualification recognizes and certifies the learning achieved as a result of following a program of study. It therefore signifies and certifies the achievement of the PILOs by a student who has followed the program.

## 5. Policy Statement

This policy guides the design, development and approval of programs in line with the vision, mission and strategic direction of Gulf University. The program shall be relevant to community and industry needs. Gulf University encourages interdisciplinary program which brings diverse experience and expertise. The process of designing and developing programs shall involve members of the

academic staff with input from other internal and external stakeholders including current and former students and employers. The proposed program shall be validated by 3 external validators and their feedback shall be implemented in developing the program. The policy signifies the providing and developing appropriate staffing and learning resources at GU. All program design and development shall be cognizant of the requirements necessary for a qualification to be registered on the NQF and to comply with the regulations of HEC as well as the requirements of BQA.

**6. Policy Details**

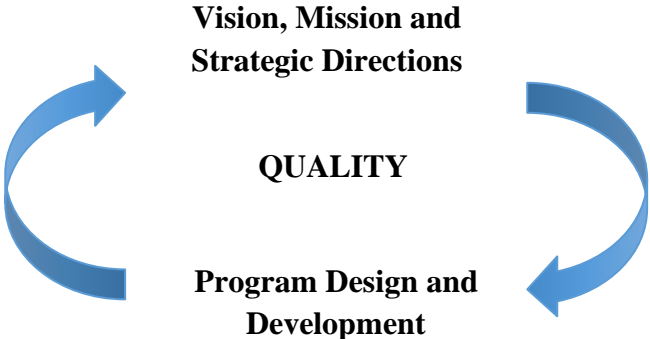
**6.1 Program Design and Development**

All program design and development at Gulf University are quality assured and collaborative approach which will be informed by the following principles:

- 6.1.1. Compliance with HEC, BQA and NQF Regulations and Standards.**
- 6.1.2. Consideration of Gulf University’s Vision, Mission and Strategic Directions**

Programs offered at Gulf University need both to drive and be driven by the Mission and Vision Statements of the University as well as its strategic direction identified in planning documents.

This dynamic process is captured in the following diagram and is understood to contribute to quality:



**6.1.3 Feasibility**

Any program aims to meet the aspirations for employment of its graduates. Program design and development will, therefore, conduct a feasibility study to consider labor market needs in the Kingdom of Bahrain and in the region in general.

This process will also ensure that any programs developed at Gulf University are in line with the Kingdom of Bahrain's *Higher Education Strategy 2014- 2024* and, thus, that Gulf University serves the Kingdom's developmental needs with respect to its contribution to higher education. A program feasibility study is also a requirement of the NQF.

#### **6.1.4 Program Justification of Need**

Program justification of need is a comprehensive standardized form which is prepared by program manager. The key parameters included in justification of need are: accreditation standards in the related field; requirements of national regulatory bodies namely, , BQA, HEC, GDQ (NQF); feasibility study; benchmarking summary; market research; feedback from industry and employer; requirements of professional bodies; published national and international reports in related field; program rationale etc. Highlights of each report/standard and its reflection in designed program reinforce the relevance of proposed program as fit for purpose.

#### **6.1.5 Benchmarking**

The principle of benchmarking is also key to program design and development at Gulf University. Benchmarking involves comparing proposed program against other programs identified as embodying best practice in design and delivery.

#### **6.1.6 Alignment**

Alignment involves ensuring that elements of the program are coherent and jointly contribute to the program fulfilling its purpose and to providing a high quality learning experience for students enrolled in it.

#### **6.1.7 Feedback**

A principle informing program design and development at Gulf University involves the role of feedback in contributing to the process of alignment noted in 6.1.6. Feedback is sought from various stakeholders including current and past students, prospective employers of graduates from the program, experts (including external reviewers) from the subject area in which the program is located and the Advisory Board.

#### **6.1.8 Mapping**

The NQF Level Descriptors are used along with other sources of information to place qualification/program on the NQF. The best practice is to determine the level of program (level 1 to level 4) and weight and allocation of courses on the NQF level 5 to 8.

Mapping panel comprising of internal and external experts proposes the level and credit value of each unit that comprises the program. Mapping scorecard reflects the NQF Level and Credit value for each course offered in the program. Confirmation panel comprising of internal and external experts (other than the members in Mapping panel) ensures that the proposed level and credit value are consistent and compatible to NQF level descriptors.

In order to ensure consistency and alignment of proposed program with university mission, graduate attributes, standards of International Accreditation Bodies the following mappings are done:

- Mapping of Program Aims to University Mission
- Mapping of Program Graduate Attributes to University Graduate Attributes
- Mapping of PILOs to Program aims
- Mapping of PILOs to Standards of International Accreditation Bodies
- Alignment of Teaching, Learning & Assessment Philosophy to PILOs

Other mappings related to curriculum, teaching, learning and assessment are:

- Mapping of Courses to PILOs
- Mapping of CILOs to PILOs
- Mapping of Courses to Assessment Methods
- Overall Mapping of Assessment Methods to CILOs
- Mapping of components/criteria of each assessment method to CILOs

### **6.1.9 Resource Identification**

Resource identification involves availability and planning of staffing, physical and any other learning resources serving the program. Apart from qualified and experienced academic staff with relevant specialization, library books and journals, classrooms, computer labs and laboratories, workshop, studio, e learning, digital library, software applications are required to ensure delivery of program as per best practices around the world.

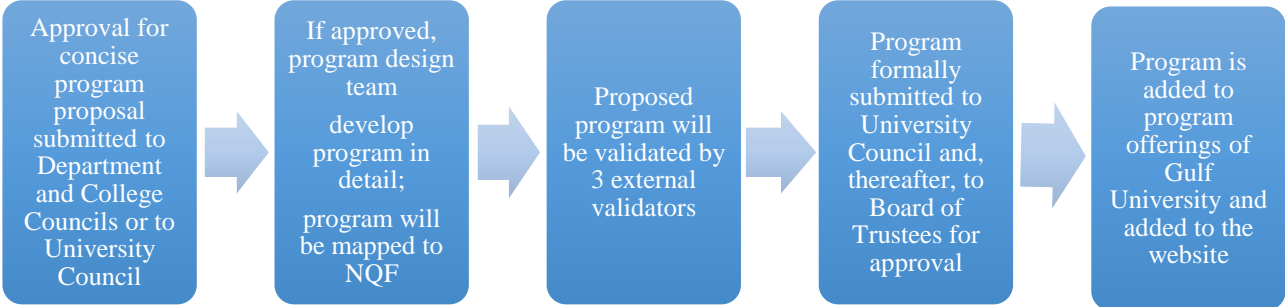
### **6.1.10 External Validation**

In ensuring quality and standards of the proposed academic program external validation is sought to review the program justification of need, program aims and ILOs and its alignment with university mission and graduate attributes, curriculum and course design, mapping of courses according to NQF level descriptor, availability of physical and learning resources, access, transfer and progression of students, opportunity for students to learn etc. External validators are nominated based on the approved criteria of selection and prepares the evaluation form along with recommendations once details of the proposed program are provided to him.

The developed criteria for selecting external validators ensure that they are subject experts and have academic experience in proposed program area in diverse regions and countries; industry exposure to identify labor market need, sufficient knowledge and expertise in recent practices in program design and development. S/he is familiar with the requirements of accreditation bodies at national, regional and international level. The recommendations are implemented in the proposed design and are validated further by the external validator. One of the 3 external validators is invited for site visit at a later stage to ensure availability of required infrastructure, staffing and other resources to start student intake. External validators are selected as per the criteria and their roles are identified to validate the proposed program.

**6.2 Program Approval**

Approval for the proposed program is sought by means of the following process:



**6. Responsibilities**



**Faculty members are responsible for:**

- Following this policy appropriately.

**Heads of Departments are responsible for:**

- Ensuring that all faculty members and students are fully informed of this policy.
- Implementing this policy appropriately.

**Deans are responsible for:**

- Ensuring that all faculty members follow this policy.
- Implementing this policy appropriately.

**C-PRDC and U-PRDC are responsible for:**

- Following this policy appropriately.
- Adhering to the responsibilities listed in TOR

**Mapping Panel and Confirmation Panel are responsible for:**

- Following and implementing this policy appropriately.
- Following and implementing the Mapping Policy & Procedures appropriately.

**External Validators are responsible for:**

- Following this policy appropriately.
- Adhering to the responsibilities listed in TOR of external validators

**The Vice President for Academic Affairs is responsible for:**

- Systematic review of the effectiveness of this policy as custodian.

**Board of Trustees is responsible for:**

- Approving the proposed program.

**7. Related Policies**

- Assessment Policy
- Policy of Mapping Programs to National Qualifications Framework
- Teaching and Learning Policy

## 8. Related Procedures

- Assessment Procedures
- Procedures of Mapping Programs to National Qualifications Framework
- Teaching and Learning Procedures

## 9. Related References and Standards

<b>BQA</b>	National Qualifications Framework Handbook
<b>BQA</b>	Programs-within-College Reviews Handbook
<b>HEC</b>	Institutional Accreditation Standards Handbook