



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

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## 1. Purpose

This document describes how the Gulf University Policy on the Design, Development and Approval of Programs is to be implemented. It does this by describing the steps that must be followed in order to ensure quality in program design, development and approval and by identifying the responsibilities of post-holders involved in all processes. The Procedure document aims to ensure that implementation of Gulf University's Policy on the Design, Development and Approval of programs is standardized across all Colleges, Centers and Units.

## 2. Scope

These procedures apply to:

- The design, development and approval of all programs at Gulf University.
- All individuals involved in program design, development and approval at Gulf University.

## 3. Acronyms

<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 university 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 National Qualifications Framework of Kingdom of Bahrain. 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 National Qualifications Framework of Kingdom of Bahrain 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 on 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. Procedure Details**

### **5.1 Stage (1): Proposing a New Program**

Proposing a new program shall involve the following steps:

- 5.1.1 One or more of academic staff in the department shall submit to the Department Council a proposal of a new program with indications of the potentiality of the program.
- 5.1.2 One or more of University Council members shall submit to the University Council a proposal of a new program with indications of the potentiality of the program.

- 5.1.3 Department Council, upon approval, shall recommend the proposal to the College Council.
- 5.1.4 College Council shall review the recommendation of the Department Council, shall send to the University Council, if approved. The delivery mode (physical, online and hybrid) of the program shall be agreed at this stage.
- 5.1.5 University Council, upon approval of the proposal received from either Council members or Colleges Councils, shall provide a decision of initiating the design and development of the proposed program, and shall send it to University Program Review and Development Committee (U-PRDC).
- 5.1.6 U-PRDC shall review the proposal of the new program, and provide recommendation to relevant C-PRDC to initiate the design stage of the new program. If necessary, U-PRDC shall form a team from its members to support C-PRDC.

## **5.2 Stage (2): Designing a New Program**

- If the proposed program is outside the domain of the College, U-PRDC shall form a team consisting of internal and external experts to initiate design and development of the proposed program.
- If the proposed program is within the domain of the College, C-PRDC shall form a team consisting of internal and external experts to initiate design and development of the proposed program.
- If the proposed program is within the domain of the Department, HOD/Program Leader shall form a team consisting of internal experts to initiate design and development of the proposed program

The Program Team shall initiate the design stage of the new program, which involves the following steps:

### **5.2.1 Compliance with HEC, BQA and NQF Regulations and Standards:**

Regulations of HEC:

- a bachelor program consists of at least 120 Credit Hours.
- 14 and 7 teaching weeks are the minimum length of a regular and summer semesters, respectively.
- Minimum and maximum loads of a full-time student are 12 and 19 Credit Hours in a regular semester, and 9 Credit Hours is the maximum load in a summer semester. Specific exceptions are applied in accordance with the HEC regulations.
- Regulation related to online/hybrid program

- Admission, student transfer, teaching staff, learning resources, physical resources, requirements for continuing the study and graduation are per HEC regulations.

#### Regulations of BQA and NQF:

- Well defined and clear aims of the program, which are aligned with the University mission and strategic goals.
- Curriculum design ensures balance between theory and practice as well as balance between knowledge, skills, and competences.
- Curriculum organization provides appropriate academic progression year on year within 8 semesters study plan that ensures courses prerequisite mechanism.
- Curriculum and associated courses meet the standards and norms of discipline, which are determined by the relevant National and International accreditation and professional bodies.
- Program is designed/developed based on Intended Learning Outcomes, which are addressed in the program and course specifications.
- Program courses are mapped to the PILOs.
- Program courses are mapped to the NQF Level Descriptors in accordance with the level of awarded degree .
- Internship program is considered and included in the curriculum design with appropriate assessment mechanism.
- Appropriate range of teaching and learning are outlined and aligned with the course types and levels.
- Appropriate range on IT infrastructure and services including learning management system
- Validity and reliability of assessment are ensured and consistently implemented to provide accurate, fair and transparent measurements of the learner's achievement of the learning outcomes.

#### **5.2.2 Consideration of Gulf University's Vision, Mission and Strategic Directions:**

Consideration shall be given to the contribution of proposed program to Gulf University's Vision and Mission Statements and to the Strategic Directions of the University.

#### **5.2.2 Market Research and Feasibility Study**

Above-mentioned studies shall be conducted within 3 months from the proposed resolution/date:

5.2.2.1 By scrutinizing the Kingdom of Bahrain's *Higher Education Strategy 2014-2024* in order to whether the proposed program has the potential to contribute to the:

- High level objectives envisaged for the National higher education system in the Higher Education Strategy 2014-2024.
- Goals identified in the document.

5.2.2.2 By searching the needs of the labor market in Kingdom of Bahrain and GCC region. This search shall also focus on:

- Identifying various types of positions open to graduates of the program.
- Establishing the frequency of such positions.
- Surveying the prospective students to identify the demand for the proposed program.
- Surveying employers to identify their needs.
- Identifying the skill sets required in the labor market from the graduates.
- Conducting competitor analysis.
- Calculating financial feasibility of the proposed program.

### **5.2.3 Benchmarking**

Program benchmarking shall be conducted within 2 months from the proposed resolution/date which involves:

- Identifying similar programs at other universities in Bahrain, region and internationally.
- Identifying the graduate attributes, aims, learning outcomes, admission criteria, teaching and learning methods, assessment methods, career opportunities, staffing, resources of the benchmarked programs
- Exploring the way in which the proposed program could incorporate these characteristics and practices whilst, at the same time, incorporating characteristics and practices unique to Gulf University.
- Identifying relevant accreditation and professional bodies.

This process shall develop benchmark report including domain analysis.

### **5.2.4 Program Justification of Needs**

Program Justification of Needs form, (Form GU-PR15PD-F01) shall be prepared by Program Team/Program Leader to identify the reflection of market research, requirements of National Accreditation and Regulatory Bodies, requirements of Professional Bodies, published National and International reports in similar field, feedback from industry and employers

on the proposed program. Highlights of each report/ standard mentioned above and its reflection on designed program provides important input to develop and validate the program. This form shall be completed within 2 weeks after the completion of market research, feasibility study and benchmarking exercise.

#### **5.2.5 New Program Procedures**

The completion of steps 5.2.1, 5.2.2 and 5.2.3 mentioned above shall develop the new program outlining:

- The program rationale,
- The results of market research undertaken to determine labor market needs in Bahrain and the region,
- The qualification associated with the program,
- The NQF level and credit value of the qualification,
- The results from local, regional and international benchmarking and the implications for program design,
- The planned intake,
- Mapping of resources and staffing to deliver courses both physical and online

### **5.3 Stage (3): Developing a New Program**

The Program Team shall proceed with the process of development of the new program which incorporates the following steps and shall be completed within 3 months of preparing the justification of need report:

#### **5.3.1 Alignment**

Alignment involves ensuring that all elements of a new program are coherent and contribute to the purpose of the program in meeting workplace and social needs in the Kingdom of Bahrain, the region and internationally. Elements of program design and questions to be asked of those elements appear in the following table, (Table 1):

**Table 1: Elements and related Questions in Program Design**

<b>Program Elements</b>	<b>Questions</b>
<b>Qualification</b>	Which qualification registered on the NQF will the program lead to? How does this qualification meet workplace needs?

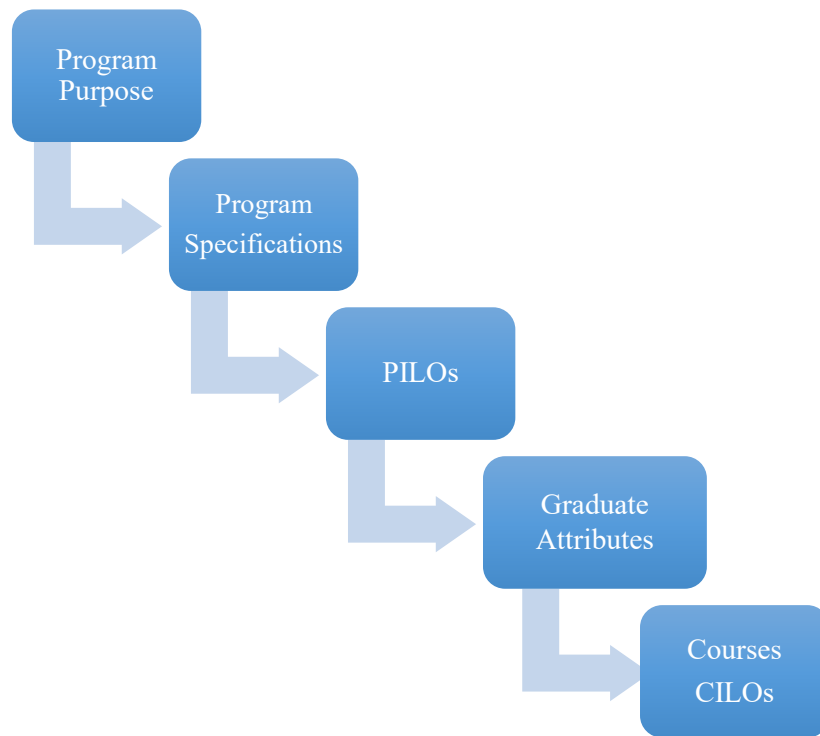


<b>Program Purpose</b>	What is the specific purpose of the program? How does the proposed purpose of the program meet the needs of the workplace and society, in general?
<b>PILOs</b>	How do PILOs contribute to the achievement of the purpose?
<b>Courses</b>	How do CILOs contribute to the attainment of PILOs?
<b>Assessment</b>	How will assessment be planned to ensure that students' attainment of PILOs and CILOs are measured, and students' progress towards these is supported?
<b>NQF level</b>	How do the PILOs and CILOs meet the requirements of the NQF level at which the program is placed?
<b>Credits</b>	How will the planned time for the program allow for the attainment of credits? How many notional learning hours are involved and how will they be spread over the duration of the program?
<b>Alignment of Teaching, Learning and Assessment Philosophy, infrastructure and staffing to PILOs</b>	How do the teaching, learning and assessment philosophy, infrastructure and staffing align with the program intended learning outcomes?
<b>Mapping of Courses to PILOs</b>	How do the courses align with program intended learning outcomes?
<b>Mapping of CILOs to PILOs</b>	How do the course intended learning outcomes align with the program intended learning outcomes?
<b>Mapping of teaching and learning Methods to courses</b>	How do teaching learning methods align with the courses?
<b>Mapping of Assessment Methods to courses</b>	How do the assessment methods align with the courses?
<b>Overall Mapping of Assessment Methods to CILOs (for each course)</b>	How do the assessment methods align with course intended learning outcomes?

<b>Mapping of components/criteria of each assessment method to CILOs</b>	How do the components/criteria of each assessment method align with the course intended learning outcomes?
<b>Enrolment</b>	How many students will be enrolled in the program?
<b>Staffing</b>	Are sufficient qualified staffs available to deliver the courses and coordinate the program?
<b>Mapping of staffing to courses</b>	How does the staffing align with courses?
<b>Resources</b>	Are sufficient resources for teaching and learning, such as classroom facilities, library and laboratories, available to support the attainment of CILOs and PILOs?
<b>Mapping of resources to courses</b>	How do the resources align with courses?
<b>Spaces (Physical and Digital platform)</b>	Are sufficient physical spaces available to support the planned enrolment? Is there appropriate online platform and virtual learning environment for online delivery of the program?
<b>Work Experience</b>	Are sufficient opportunities available to students for work-based experience?

Alignment shall be achieved by following a recursive process of adjustment and readjustment of the design of the program:

- This process shall begin with writing a Purpose Statement.
- The Purpose Statement shall inform the development of Program Specifications, PILOs and Graduate Attributes.
- The PILOs shall allow for the identification of the courses that deliver the CILOs contributing to the attainment of PILOs.



The process shall be recursive in that it may be necessary to return to:

- The Purpose Statement as program specifications are developed in order to ensure alignment between these two elements of program design,
- PILOs and the Program Purpose as courses that deliver the CILOs are identified.

### **5.3.2 Feedback and Quality Assurance**

Feedback from internal and external stakeholders shall assist in ensuring that the alignment outlined in 5.3.1 is achieved. Feedback shall be elicited from stakeholders including:

- Current and past students,
- Prospective employers of graduates of the program,
- Experts (including external reviewers) in the subject area of the program.

Feedback shall be used to inform successive drafts of the program design.

### **5.3.3 Benchmarking**

Attention shall be paid to the benchmark indicators identified in 5.2.3.

### **5.3.4 Mapping**

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

Curriculum mapping and assessment mapping provide an overview of program and courses and the mechanism to ensure student achievement of learning outcomes for each course thus contributing to the entire program. The Program Team shall establish the following mapping to ensure alignment of program ILOs and course ILOs; alignment of teaching, learning and assessment strategies to PILOs and alignment of assessment methods:

- Alignment of Teaching, Learning & Assessment Philosophy to PILOs
- 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 (Quiz form, Assignment Form, Major examination Forms)

The proposed program shall be mapped on to NQF as per “Procedures of Mapping Programs to National Qualifications” document ensuring full compliance with GDQ regulations and NQF Handbook. Dean of the College shall form Mapping Panel and Confirmation Panel comprising of internal and external members/ experts.

Mapping Panel shall establish the NQF level of each course of the program. The NQF level shall be determined by comparing the CILOs and their assessment to the ‘NQF level descriptors’. The Mapping Panel shall then establish the overall NQF level of qualification, which shall be the exit level of the program, since the number of credits is predetermined for each level of the programs per GU regulations. The Mapping Panel shall prepare the NQF credits for each course based on notional learning hours to achieve the CILOs. Mapping Panel shall prepare the documents along with mapping score card.

Mapping scorecard and related documents shall be sent to the external validators. Once validated by the 3 external validators, the above documents shall be sent to Confirmation Panel.

Confirmation Panel comprising of members independent of the Mapping Panel with relevant expertise and experience confirms the credit values and NQF level for the overall program.

### **5.3.5 Resource Identification**

Resource identification involves availability and planning of staffing, learning resources, physical facilities and infrastructure and any other resource 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. The Program Team shall identify the staffing and resources required and availability of current resources and staffing. Mapping of resources to staffing, mapping of staffing to courses as per program domain shall be prepared by Program Team to plan for program staffing, learning resources, infrastructure and facilities.

### **5.3.6 External Validation**

- External validation aims to provide quality academic program and best practices in order to serve labor market. The following criteria shall apply for selecting external validator:
  1. The candidate should have specialized subject knowledge in proposed program area.
  2. S/he should possess appropriate academic experience in the concerned discipline of the proposed program.
  3. The candidate should have exposure to industry or labour market needs within the domains of the proposed program.
  4. S/he should have sufficient knowledge of the requirements of the program accreditation bodies at national and international level.
  5. The candidate should have awareness of recent practices in program design and development.
  6. S/he should be familiar with quality assurance practices and maintenance of academic standards at national and international level.
  7. S/he should not have any conflict of interest with the university (at organizational level, staff and student level).
  8. S/he should be available and approachable at appropriate time and place or should be available virtually on a case-by-case basis.
  9. S/he should possess diverse background and have work experience in similar accredited program in reputed higher education institutions across regions or countries.
  10. The nominated validators shall represent diverse backgrounds, academic and professional exposure to diverse regional and international accreditation bodies.

11. S/he should preferably have research publication in the area of program design, review and development

- **Role of External Validator**

In order to ensure the relevance and viability of the proposed program the following roles of external validator have been identified:

1. Review the program justification of need, feedback from external stakeholders, benchmarking report, published national and international reports in the relevant field of study
  2. Review the documents related to new program, namely, alignment with university mission, strategic directions and graduate attributes, compliance with regulations of accreditation bodies, program aims and intended learning outcomes (ILOs), program specification, course specification, teaching learning strategy, assessment design, staffing, availability of resources,
  3. Review the curriculum and range of courses in relation to national and international best practices
  4. Provide feedback on relevance and appropriateness of the proposed program with reference to current professional practices; labour market requirement, research in relevant field etc.
  5. Review the number and allocation of courses in each level of the program according to NQF level
  6. Review the mapping of courses on NQF level descriptor
  7. Comment on the availability and future arrangement of physical, human and any other learning resources serving the new program
  8. Give feedback and recommendations on the validation of the program.
  9. Conduct site visit to review the existence of relevant physical, human and learning resources in terms of academic staff, library resources, IT resources, classrooms, studios, laboratories, workshop etc.
- Three External Validators shall review all the relevant documents namely program justification of need, alignment with university mission and graduate attributes, program aims and ILOs, curriculum design, teaching, learning and assessment strategies, number and allocation of courses at each level according to NQF level, mapping of courses to NQF level and credit value done by mapping panel, admission criteria, workload of the students and availability of physical, human and learning resources.
  - Around 25 % to 30% of the program courses shall be mapped at exit level to the NQF level descriptors of the qualification.

- All the mapping related to program, courses, and ILOs, teaching and learning methods, assessment strategies, resources, staffing shall be reviewed by the external validators.
- All the 3 external validators shall provide feedback with recommendations to Program Team in the prescribed form, (Form GU-PR15PDDA-F02).
- Once implemented the recommendations in the proposed program the external validators shall provide further feedback on implementation and shall send to program manager/ program team after validation.

#### **5.4 Stage (4): Program Approval**

- 5.4.1 C-PRDC shall Send the proposed program documents (program structure and specifications) once validated by external validators to relevant Department Council if the new program is within the domain of the college.
- 5.4.2 Department Council shall review and recommend the proposed program to College Council.
- 5.4.3 College Council will review the proposed program documents and recommend to U-PRDC.
- 5.4.4 U-PRDC should fill the required 'HEC New Program Proposal' form and send with the proposed program documents to University Council.
- 5.4.5 University Council shall review all documents received from U-PRDC, contact U-PRDC for further enhancement of documents, if required, recommend proposal approval and send to Board of Trustees
- 5.4.6 U-PRDC shall send the proposed program documents (program structure and specifications) once validated by external validator to relevant to University Council if the new program is outside the domain of the college; shall fill the required 'HEC New Program Proposal' form and shall send the proposed program documents to University Council to be approved and will send to BOT.
- 5.4.7 Once the New Program Documents are sent to HEC for final approval External Validator one of the 3 external validators shall conduct site visit to ensure availability of required infrastructure, staffing and other resources to start student intake.
- 5.4.8 Once approved by the HEC, Gulf University shall add the program to its program offerings and shall add to the University website and to the 'Curriculum Handbook'.
- 5.4.9 After one year of implementation, one of the three External Validators shall conduct a site visit and shall provide further feedback on implementation, (Form GU-PR15PDDA-F03), and shall send to Program Leader/HOD.
- 5.4.10 Program Leader/HOD shall fill the "Feedback on External Validator" form, (Form GU-PR15PDDA-F04).

## **6. Responsibilities**

### **Faculty members are responsible for:**

- Following these procedures appropriately.

### **Heads of Departments/Program leaders are responsible for:**

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

### **Deans are responsible for:**

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

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

- Following these procedures appropriately.
- Adhering the responsibilities listed in TOR

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

- Following and implementing these procedures appropriately.
- Following and implementing Mapping Policy & Procedures appropriately

### **External Validators are responsible for:**

- Following these procedures appropriately.
- Adhering the responsibilities listed in TOR of external validators

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

- Appropriate implementation of this document.

### **University Policy Development and Review Committee is responsible for:**

- Systematic review of the effectiveness of this policy.

### **Board of Trustees is responsible for:**



- Approving the proposed proposal before submission to the HEC.

## 7. Related Policies

- Assessment Policy
- Policy of Mapping Programs to National Qualification Framework
- Program Design, Development and Approval Policy
- Program Review and Development Policy
- Teaching and Learning Policy
- E -Learning and Distance Education Policy

## 8. Related Procedures

- Assessment Procedures
- Procedures of Mapping Programs to National Qualification Framework
- Program Review and Development Procedures
- Teaching and Learning Procedures
- E -Learning and Distance Education Procedures

## 9. Related References and Standards

<b>BQA</b>	National Qualifications Framework Handbook
<b>BQA</b>	Programs-within-College Reviews Handbook
<b>HEC</b>	Academic Regulations and Resolutions