

POLICY FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF OFFSHORE CAMPUSES OF PAKISTANI HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS (HEIS)

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Preamble:

Higher Education Commission (“HEC”) encourages the initiatives of Pakistani Higher Education Institutes (“HEIs”) to establish their offshore campuses. Internationalization of higher education has become a priority for many universities. It provides them with educational models that can respond efficiently to current issues and challenges of globalization.

Pakistani HEIs intending to establish offshore campuses must pay greater attention to quality of education to remain attractive and competitive. Such HEIs shall maintain quality of education at their offshore campus at par with that offered at their principal seats in Pakistan and additionally shall comply with the quality standards of the host country. The education itself and the degree formally awarded by the HEI should be understood as a right in intellectual property that is granted to students by the HEI and such right shall not be infringed or diluted by provision of education of lesser quality at other campuses of the HEI. Therefore, those campuses desirous of international expansion shall especially be mindful of quality enhancement both within Pakistan and abroad, and will commit to compliance with international best practices and standards.

The HEIs intending to establish offshore campuses must meet the requirements enumerated below:

1. Legal Requirements:

- i. The HEI shall have a provision in its charter allowing for the establishment of a campus abroad;
- ii. The HEI shall formally take approval for the establishment of the specific offshore campus from its relevant statutory bodies, Patron/ Chancellor and the relevant Government agencies including ministries of Foreign Affairs and Interior;
- iii. Since this process will also involve a foreign exchange component and transaction of funds to and from Pakistan, the HEI shall obtain approval from the relevant government stakeholders with respect to foreign exchange laws in force;
- iv. The HEI shall fulfill financial requirements including those related to endowment funds and certain amount of working capital to be retained in Pakistani Banks/Financial Institutions or at maximum in foreign branches of Pakistani banks. However, tangible assets, in form of required physical infrastructure, will need to be developed in the country where campus is located; and
- v. The HEI shall fulfill all the requirements of the host country including obtaining permission from the relevant government bodies, education departments and councils for the establishment of the campus.

2. Constitutional & Cultural Requirements:

- i. The offshore campus shall promote, protect, uphold the ideological, national and cultural values of Pakistan and host country to promote and strengthen the cross-culture harmony and diversity.

- ii. The offshore campus shall restrict itself to teaching, training and co-curricular activities. Political or other activities detrimental to national, religious, social or local culture shall not be undertaken; and
- iii. The HEI shall work within the law or policy framed by the HEC and the Government of Pakistan as well the policies of the host country, as amended from time to time.

3. Regulatory and Quality Parameters:

- i. HEIs shall only be eligible to apply for establishment of offshore campuses after 15 years of establishment;
- ii. The HEI desirous to establish an offshore campus shall be listed among top 1000 universities (general or subject wise) as per latest Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World University Rankings; however, HEIs who do not meet this criteria and intend to establish an offshore campus to impart education in any specific subject or program may request the HEC for establishment of an offshore campus and any such request shall be considered by the HEC on a case to case basis; provided that the HEI shall meet the other criteria and shall be in compliance with the quality standards defined by the HEC;
- iii. The HEI shall be meeting all the requirements of Federal Cabinet Criteria in terms of physical, academic and financial parameters at its principal seat and at any campuses/constituent units in Pakistan;
- iv. Only those programs can be offered at the offshore campus which are also being offered by the HEI at its principal seat and are meeting all applicable criteria/standards of the HEC;
- v. For any specific degree/program to be offered at offshore campus, the HEI shall have completed at least three batches of that degree/program (three batches shall have graduated) at its principal seat in Pakistan;
- vi. The offshore campus of the HEI should meet land requirements of host country and should meet all other prerequisites required by the host country.
- vii. The offshore campus of the HEI needs to be housed in a conducive environment for teaching and learning. The campus shall have all basic facilities such as water, gas, electricity, telephone and internet along with requisite I.T infrastructure;
- viii. The offshore campus shall have library with latest editions of books and research journals as required under Cabinet Criteria;
- ix. The offshore campus shall meet faculty requirements for each department as per Cabinet Criteria and teacher-student ratio at offshore campus must be at least 1:20 (for science subjects involving lab work) and at least 1:30 for others subjects;
- x. All undergraduate programs being offered by the HEI in Pakistan which will also be offered at offshore campus shall be in line with the national standards and accredited by the relevant professional accreditation councils of Pakistan and foreign country respectively;
- xi. Any MS, M. Phil and PhD programs shall have NOCs from the Quality Assurance Division of the HEC and satisfactory evaluation of their Quality Assurance Mechanism by the Quality Assurance Agency of the HEC;
- xii. The HEI shall not have been involved in unlawful activities or the mushrooming of unlawful campuses in Pakistan in the last 15 years;
- xiii. The degrees awarded to students studying at offshore campus shall be identical to the degrees awarded in Pakistan by the HEI and in no way shall infringe the rights of students;

- xiv. All students will be registered with the principal seat after fulfillment of all the legal and codal formalities. Students of offshore campuses shall be registered as students of HEI and shall have right of full transfer to the principal seat/main campus; and
- xv. Exact place of study will be mentioned on the transcripts of the students upon successful completion of their degree. Degree must be issued from principal seat of the university.

4. Site Inspection:

Upon fulfillment of mandatory requirements with respect to academic, financial and physical infrastructure, physical inspection of the institution will be carried out by an inspection committee nominated by the HEC to determine whether the HEI has the potential to run the offshore campus.

5. Recommendation of NOC:

Once the HEC is satisfied with the institutional arrangements, the HEI concerned will be allowed to operate offshore campus and for this purpose the NOC/recommendation letter will be issued for the specific subjects.

6. Monitoring & Evaluation and Reporting Mechanism:

- i. The HEI shall ensure robust monitoring and evaluation, shall institute a reporting system for all academic and administrative activities, and shall provide necessary information to relevant stakeholders;
- ii. The HEI shall provide details of programs being offered including courses, credit hours, allied facilities, faculty and other relevant information through web. The database of students (enrolled and graduated) shall also be maintained with all specific information (registration number, course/degree, commencement and completion dates) as well as their academic progression;
- iii. The University/ Institute shall be required to submit bi-annual reports for all academic and administrative activities to the HEC and relevant professional accreditation councils of Pakistan.

7. Compliance; Withdrawal of NOC:

- i. In case of (a) violation of any laws or rules (either of Pakistan and of the host country), (b) failure to comply with any of the conditions contained in the above regulations or to meet criteria and quality standards defined by the HEC, or (c) declaration of unsatisfactory performance by the HEC or relevant professional accreditation councils of Pakistan, if the HEI refrains from taking corrective actions contrary to the advice of the HEC, the HEC may after giving reasonable opportunity to the concerned HEI through hearing or after making such inquiry as the HEC may consider necessary, revoke the NOC of the HEI for the offshore campus and further forbid the HEI from establishing additional offshore campuses.
- ii. Upon revocation of the NOC, the future of students (enrolled/graduated) will be safeguarded and the HEI shall be liable to reimburse up to three times of the amount of tuition fee charged to the students.