

**Policy for Pakistani Higher Education Institutions Offering Degree Programs in  
Collaboration with Foreign Universities**

1. **Introduction**

1.1 There is an increasing mobility of students, academic staff as a result of internalization of higher education and globalization process. As a result a rapid increase in cross border higher education is being witnessed with intense competition among universities/institutions of the developed world for seeking collaboration/operation of campus at overseas locations. Despite rapid expansion of higher education, the government is unable to cope with the escalating demand of burgeoning student population. Thus, there is a pressure on the government to increase access to higher education. Cross border education provides yet another avenue to meet the challenge. Many of the foreign universities are keen to operate in Pakistan. Therefore there is a need to regulate this emerging sector and ensure quality in the provision of higher education.

1.2 The purpose of this document is to provide policy guidelines and set out criteria, procedures for collaboration with foreign institutions/universities and opening up campuses of reputable foreign universities. It identifies various related requirements, which need to be fulfilled and adhered to while negotiating collaborative arrangements or for operation of offshore campuses of foreign universities in Pakistan.

1.3 The collaborative arrangement being encouraged by the Commission may have various modes and forms leading to award of a Singular Degree awarded by the Foreign University. Collaboration modes may be either of the following:

- i) **Type – I** External degree programme for which tuition/facilitation is provided by a local institution, while course of study, study materials, question paper and assessment is done by foreign universities/institutions under supervision of 3rd party like British Council.

The local institutions in this type of collaboration would be required to fulfill all the pre-requisites of HEC criteria for an affiliated college. ([Schedule-I](#))

- ii) **Type – II** Local institution franchised by a foreign university for award of a foreign degree where students are assessed and evaluated locally and degree is awarded by a foreign university;

The local institutions desirous of operating under this mode would be required to fulfill all the pre-requisites as specified for a degree awarding institution in the

Guidelines/Criteria for establishment of a university/degree awarding institution approved by the Federal Cabinet. ([Schedule-II](#))

- iii) **Type – III** A campus entirely administered, managed and operated by a foreign university in Pakistan and award of degree by a foreign university identical to degrees given to on-campus students at principal seat.

The foreign Universities which want to operate in Pakistan through their offshore campus in Pakistan, such institutions would be required to get approval of Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Interior, respective Provincial Government and apply to HEC for NOC. Such universities would be required to fulfill all the pre – requisites of HEC approved campus criteria. ([Schedule-III](#))

## **2. Definitions**

2.1 In this criteria anything repugnant on the subject or context used hereinafter:

- a) ‘collaborative arrangement’ means any mode of collaborative arrangement as specified in para 1.3;
- b) ‘institution’ means franchised institution of higher education seeking collaboration with foreign university;
- c) ‘Commission’ means Higher Education Commission;
- d) ‘foreign university’ means franchising foreign university or educational institution, whose degree is to be offered by local institution;
- e) ‘principal’ means the head of the franchised institution;
- f) ‘Provincial government’ means higher education department of concerned province where institution/offshore campus is being opened/operated.
- g) all words and expressions used but not defined in this document shall have the same meaning as in the Higher Education Commission Ordinance 2002.

## **3. STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE (SOPs) FOR COLLABORATION**

3.1 The procedure for collaborative arrangements of foreign universities with Pakistani institutions/universities is outlined below:

### **3.2 Completion of legal formalities**

3.2.1 No foreign university, other than accredited/chartered in its country and recognized by the Higher Education Commission, would be allowed to operate through any mode as specified herein.

3.2.2 Franchising university must carry specific provision/permission for its operation overseas through any of the above modes and sponsors of local institutions would be required to submit proof of such a legal provision.

3.2.3 The local institution located in provincial territorial jurisdictions would be required to get themselves registered with provincial government and provide proof of registration to the Commission. After the registration with provincial government the local institution would be required to apply to HEC for formal NOC.

3.2.4 No Pakistani institution shall be allowed to conduct course of studies in anticipation of NOC from HEC and execution of formal agreement.

3.2.5 NOC / Permission to run the collaborative degree programme will be granted separately for each physical location where the programme is to be conducted.

3.2.6 The ownership of the local institutions collaborating with foreign university/institution shall vest in a body corporate and not in individual(s) or family. It shall be registered under the relevant laws of companies ordinance/societies registration act/trust act as a foundation/society/trust. This shall not be required in case the institution is in the Government sector.

3.2.7 All those local institutions, which do not have its own Charter/degree awarding status, desiring to have such collaborative arrangements shall NOT be allowed to use the name of “University” with its name.

3.2.8 As per the Government regulations, local institutions would be required to get their sponsoring society/trust evaluated and certified by an independent certification agency approved by the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), Govt. of Pakistan.

### 3.3 **Application for collaborative arrangement**

3.3.1 After completion of legal requirements, the sponsors of local institution would submit an inclusive proposal, accompanying prescribed fee in favour of Higher Education Commission as evaluation fee. The overseas partner shall certify after satisfying itself from HEC that the Pakistani institution fulfills the required physical, human, financial resources and that due regard has been given to assure quality and standards of degree programme.

3.3.2 The Commission shall scrutinize the proposal submitted by sponsors to ascertain as to whether it fulfills the specified basic requirements or not. If the Commission finds that there is a prima facie case for further consideration, the feasibility report shall be thoroughly scrutinized by

HEC. HEC will assess the application and may ask for additional information or recommend the case for inspection of the institution by a panel of experts.

### 3.4. **Site Inspection**

3.4.1 On fulfillment of mandatory requirements in shape of academic, financial and physical infrastructure, physical inspection of institution will be carried out by an inspection committee nominated by HEC to determine that the institution has the potential to run collaborative programmes.

### 3.5 **NOC and Recommendation**

3.5.1 On satisfactory report by the Inspection Committee, the sponsor/s shall submit the negotiated draft agreement with the overseas partner/s to the HEC for approval. The HEC may call for additional information about the collaboration. A draft MOU/agreement between local partners and foreign university needs to be submitted to Commission for approval.

3.5.2 Once the HEC is satisfied with the arrangement, the institution concerned will be allowed to enter into agreement with a foreign institution and for this purpose the NOC/recommendation letter will be issued to offer foreign degree programmes. The approval will be initially for three years.

3.5.3 The validity period of permission will initially be for three years and subsequently would be extended to the next term after a positive report from the Inspection Committee.

### 3.6 **Extension in NOC**

3.6.1 After three years, the approval can be extended subject to a satisfactory report of the Inspection Committee about smooth functioning and substantial progress. During the period of operation the Institution shall be governed by all the rules, regulations of HEC issued from time to time.

## **4. CONDITIONS GOVERNING FOREIGN COLLABORATION**

4.1 The provisions for collaborative degree arrangement/functioning of offshore campus shall be governed by the following:

#### 4.2 **Institutional and academic**

- i. The agreement shall be executed in Pakistan in accordance with Pakistani laws. No arbitration clause shall be included in the MOU/agreement, and in case of litigation if any, the jurisdiction shall be a court in Pakistan;
- ii. Local institution and foreign university shall have joint responsibilities to safeguard the interests of students and provisions for quality assurance and maintenance of standards of quality education;
- iii. This policy would cover degree programs at undergraduate level only involving 16 years of education and Master's degree programs involving 18 years of education, which requires intermediate/equivalent 12<sup>th</sup> grade qualification for undergraduate program and Bachelors/sixteen (16) years/equivalent as per Pakistani Qualification Framework for Master's program as entry requirements. In case, the 12<sup>th</sup> grade qualification is obtained from abroad, equivalence of Inter Board Committee of Chairmen (IBCC), Pakistan would be mandatory before granting admission into the respective foreign undergraduate program.
- iv. Local institution and awarding body/foreign institution shall work together to develop a mechanism that enables verification of published information before it is released and no misleading information should be published;
- v. The awarding institution is ultimately responsible for ensuring that 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.
- vi. The degree awarded to students at local institution will be identical to the degrees awarded to on-campus students;
- vii. The institutions shall be responsible to provide accurate, reliable information on all aspects of educational provisions;
- viii. An up-to-date and authoritative record of the collaborative arrangements should be publically available.
- ix. Students at local institution will be enrolled in principal seat of franchising university. They 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.
- x. The institution shall be governed by the rules and regulations framed by the franchising university from time to time regarding general scheme of studies, duration of courses, medium of instruction, detailed curricula, examination and assessment pattern, the conditions under which students shall be admitted to the examination of university etc;
- xi. Admission of students for a course of study, examination and assessment of requirements should be equivalent to comparable programmes delivered by the awarding institution.
- xii. Degree awarded in a professional field should be accredited/recognized by the relevant professional bodies of both the countries i.e Pakistan and the foreign country.

- xiii. Policies and procedures should ensure that there are adequate safeguards against financial or academic interests of students.
- xiv. The site selected for the institution must be suitable from academic point of view and possess sustainable financial and physical viability, civic facilities like provision of water, electricity, fuel gas, telephone, internet with appropriate bandwidth etc;
- xv. The institution has framed proper rules/regulations regarding efficiency and discipline of its students, staff and other employees.
- xvi. At least 10% of students be granted fee exemptions and scholarships on need basis;
- xvii. The institutions shall be responsible to provide accurate, reliable information on all aspects of educational provisions;
- xviii. In case student/s at local institution are unable to continue with degree programme due to any reason, they will have right of transfer to the main campus.
- xix. The sponsors would provide career counseling and job search services to students
- xx. That the policies for appeals and complaints shall be brought to the attention of students at the start of each academic year.

#### 4.4 **Constitutional and Cultural**

- i). The institution shall be required to strictly comply with and respect the constitutional provisions, local laws, ideology of Pakistan, cultural, linguistic and religious sensitivities;
- ii). The institution must restrict to teaching, training and co-curricular activities. Political or other activities detrimental to national, religious, social or local culture shall not be undertaken;
- iii). The institute shall have to work within law or policy framed/amended by HEC /Government of Pakistan or the concerned provincial government from time to time.

#### 4.5 **Co-curricular & health care facilities**

- i) The institution may initiate and promote the extra-curricular and recreational activities of students, and to make due arrangements for promoting their health and general welfare;
- ii). Indoor and outdoor facilities for games should be ensured to provide healthy outlets to the youngsters for imbibing the sense of competition and tolerance. The students should be encouraged to participate at least in one of the games;

#### 4.6 **Monitoring & visitation**

- i). The franchised institution shall furnish such reports, returns and other information as the Commission/provincial government may require, enabling it to judge

efficiency and effectiveness of the institution and shall also be subject to monitoring and visitation as determined by Commission.

#### 4.7 **Formal agreement/signing of MOU**

- i). Pakistani institutions seeking collaboration should ensure that the institution with which they intend to enter into collaboration is duly accredited and recognized in home country and by this Commission.
- ii). All arrangements of collaboration between institutions should be agreed upon and formally written down as approved legal agreements and signed by a senior authorized representative of the institutions. Detailed arrangements for partnership should be set out clearly in the agreement and memorandum of understanding.
- iii). The agreements should take into account the scope of the arrangements, responsibilities, financial arrangements, quality control mechanism, mode and means of payment, validity period, procedure for resolution of differences and termination of agreement etc.
- iv). The agreements should clearly spell out the provisions for quality control mechanism including monitoring, assessment procedures and review and visitation. Mechanism should be provided for ensuring the availability of student support services, library, computer and laboratory facilities, qualified faculty and financial resources and proper system of student's assessment and examination.
- v). The agreement should ensure a creditable system of student evaluation and its integrity. It is advisable that external examiners for franchised programmes are involved in the assessment of students. Overseas partners should preferably involve their own examiners in the assessment of students.
- vi). Agreements should include provisions for termination in case of breach of the terms by the overseas or local partner and should include responsibilities of the partners.
- vii). The validity period of the agreements should be clearly agreed upon by the parties. Any provision or extension should specify the requirements for review.
- viii). Termination of collaborative link should safeguard the interests of the students and should be duly notified to the general public and Commission, well ahead of the termination of such arrangement.

#### 4.8 **Disciplinary Measures and Conditions for Withdrawal**

- i). If a Foreign franchising University / Institution or local franchised institutions fails to comply with any of the conditions as contained in the above regulations and/or consistently refrains from taking corrective actions contrary to the advice of the HEC, the HEC may after giving reasonable opportunity to the concerned franchising University/Institution through hearing or after making such inquiry as the HEC may consider necessary,

withdraw the permission granted to such University / Institution to offer their degrees, diplomas in Pakistan and forbid such Foreign University / Institution to either open campuses or enter into any collaborative arrangement with any University / Institution in Pakistan.

- ii). HEC may impose financial penalty to such Foreign University/ Institution in such cases including returning the entire fee collected from students. Such Foreign Institutions shall not be allowed to open any other Centre/Institution or enter into a collaborative arrangement in Pakistan.

If any question arises as to the interpretation of these Regulations the same shall be decided by the HEC.

- iii). The HEC shall have power to issue any clarifications to remove any doubt, which may arise in regard to implementation of these regulations.



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