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and Higher Education



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**TEMPUS**

## **The Lebanese Quality Assurance System - A proposal -**

Deliverable WP1 – TLQAA Project

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## **I Introduction**

The knowledge-based economy and its quest to competences and innovation placed higher education in the centre of socio-economic development and at the core of national policies. This has been accompanied with a set of challenges that the higher education has to face. The rapid technological changes and evolutions add another set of challenges related to the need for continuous update of curricula and programmes to remain relevant to the state of the art. In order to face such challenges more autonomy and financial independence are to be provided to the higher education institutions which will have to continuously adapt and update their programmes and curricula to satisfy the changing needs. At the same time, the growing needs in terms of financing, the stronger links between higher education and the development of society and, the role of higher education in social cohesion push towards clearer and more efficient State policies. In consequence, the growing autonomy of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) develops in parallel with national policies aiming at delivering the best possible higher education services to the citizens. This pushes towards developing quality and usage of national resources devoted to higher education. In addition, focus on research with a special attention to innovation has to be enhanced to respond to the creativity needs. Employability continues to be an issue. Lifelong learning has become essential in modern societies to accompany the rapid development of science and technologies. Mobility and internationalization are real facts due to the global labour market. All the previous elements define the global challenges facing higher education in general. Specific challenges are facing the Lebanese higher education and are related to the increasing demand on higher education due to the young population growth and to the increasing demand for qualifications in the labour market. This increases the teaching load within our institutions that have also to maintain their competitiveness both at national and international levels. This competitive environment makes the pace of development of new programmes and modules even faster in Lebanon. In this evolving environment assuring and improving quality and, establishing quality assurance systems become a high priority in the modernisation agenda.

This document proposes a quality assurance system for the Lebanese Higher Education. It starts by a description of the objectives of higher education and how quality assurance supports better reaching those objectives. This description covers both the general worldwide objectives as well as the specific Lebanese ones. Chapter III is dedicated to the description of the starting points used for building the Lebanese quality assurance system, i.e. the draft law on the establishment of the Lebanese Quality Assurance Agency and, the results of the brainstorming session conducted during the kickoff meeting of the “Towards the Lebanese Quality Assurance Agency” TLQAA Tempus project. Based on those elements a model for the quality assurance system has been proposed to the Lebanese Higher Education stakeholders in a roundtable that happened in the UNESCO Palace on March 27, 2012 and where more than fifty representatives of the different stakeholders participated. This model is presented in the chapter IV. Finally, some conclusions summarize the major characteristics of the proposed model.

## **II Higher Education and Quality Assurance**

It is important to present the objectives of a higher education system before discussing the quality assurance that would apply to this system supporting the best achievement of the targeted objectives. This section presents the objectives of higher education in general as well as in the Lebanese particular case.

### **II.1 Objectives of Higher Education**

The UNESCO Commission on Education in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century known as Delors Commission has issued a report entitled “Learning: The Treasure Within” [1]. This report, while describing the principles of modern education, emphasizes four pillars of education and the learning throughout life. The four pillars are: i) learning to know, ii) learning to do, iii) learning to live together, learning to live with others and, iv) learning to be. Identical principles have been identified at the European level and are reflected in the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning [5] [4]. It is widely admitted throughout the different national higher education systems that higher education has to implant those pillars in the graduates and more generally in the society. Besides this general objective, every system defines its own specific objectives. In the draft law currently under discussion in the Lebanese parliament, the specific objectives of the Lebanese higher education are enumerated as:

1. Providing all those who would like to pursue their education and have the capacity to continue learning at this level of education, including people with special needs.
2. Providing students with academic, personal, and professional competences and promoting their capabilities.
3. Preparing specialized intellectual leaders to run the various institutions of society and cater for needs in development and work market.
4. Developing the spiritual, intellectual, and physical dimensions of all men and women and providing them with a supporting academic environment that fosters their creativity and innovation and nourishes their talents.
5. Providing continuous learning.
6. Preserving, spreading, and developing knowledge.
7. Fostering critical thinking methodology.
8. Accompanying international developments and advancements in the fields of knowledge production and transfer.
9. Promoting social integration and the advancement of the society and committing to fundamental human rights.
10. Opening up to cultures and promoting inter-cultural communication.
11. Sustaining scientific research through the creation of research centers and laboratories.
12. Promoting scientific, cultural, and technical cooperation and expertise exchange among Higher Education and scientific research institutions, both private and public, in Lebanon and abroad, and with productive establishments.

These objectives clearly show the will of having the Lebanese Higher Education contribute significantly to the national development by fostering the wider possible range of competences among the students. They also show the role of higher education in inculcating a value system in students based on human rights, inter-

cultural communication and social integration. Moreover, the international aspect is stressed upon in those objectives. This is not to surprise for a country with intense flow rates of graduates in both incoming and outgoing directions. In addition, research and other scientific activities are promoted as major objectives of the Lebanese Higher Education.

## **II.2 Quality Assurance in Higher Education**

While there is no strict definition of Quality Assurance, it can be understood as policies, procedures and practices that are designed to achieve, maintain or enhance quality as it is understood in a specific context. It should focus on[6] :

1. the interest of students as well as employers and the society more generally in good quality higher education;
2. the central importance of institutional autonomy, tempered by a recognition that this brings with it heavy responsibilities;
3. the need for external quality assurance to be fit for its purpose and to place only an appropriate and necessary burden on institutions for the achievement of its objectives.

### *II.2.1 Purpose of Quality Assurance*

Quality assurance procedures most of the time serves two major purposes: improvement and accountability. Accountability often takes the form of “rendering an account” of what is being done in relation to goals that have been set and to the general expectation of the society from a higher education institution. Therefore, accountability is often linked to public information about the fitness and soundness of the outcomes of Higher Education. Quality assurance for accountability purposes generally makes use of summative approaches where explicit statement on outcomes are reported and published. Undertaking corrective action when necessary might be envisaged. The publication of the reports aims at informing the public about the performance of the higher education institution evaluated.

Quality assurance for improvement purposes usually promotes future performance rather than making judgments on what is being achieved. The procedures and criteria used define a formative approach aiming at the improvement of the quality. The central question relates to the capacity of the HEI to detect its problems and difficulties and to remediate to them. That being said it is important to bring forward that besides the ultimate purposes of accountability and quality improvement, quality assurance in general is first a key factor of decision making.

The question about the compatibility of serving the two purposes of accountability and quality improvement is often raised. This comes mainly from the different attitudes that higher education institutions may have toward accountability oriented quality assurance versus improvement oriented quality assurance. A quality assurance system may seek the complementarities between the two approaches. This is mainly driven by the fact that both goals should be reached. There is there a tension in quality assurance approaches that has to be recognized and made acceptable. In addition, the design of the national quality assurance system should take into account the costs and resources needed to its functioning. Being cost effective is important for the sustainability of the quality assurance system. Minimizing the burden on HEIs should be considered in general as a principle. These two aspects are even more crucial in the

Lebanese case where the number of higher education institutions is relatively high and the resources are relatively limited.

### *II.2.2 General Approaches to Quality Assurance*

Four major approaches to quality assurance are generally enumerated: accreditation, assessment, audit and audit of quality assurance systems. Accreditation is an evaluation process that ends with a decision stating if the evaluated institution or programme quality are above a predefined threshold. Depending on the country, obtaining accreditation may have implications for the higher education institution itself. Assessment is an evaluation that leads to a graded judgment about quality. Assessment is more frequent in improvement directed quality assurance. Quality audit checks the extent to which the institution is achieving its own defined objectives. Finally, in well functioning higher education systems, the quality audit of the internal quality assurance mechanisms aims at making sure that an institution has the capacity of managing its own quality.

Another distinction is generally done on the level of the quality review. Two levels are generally distinguished: institutional and programmatic. It is obvious that reviewing the details of the programmes requires more efforts, resources and specialized experts.

The scope of evaluation is also a crucial aspect. One categorization is at the territorial level. This is often the case when higher education is the responsibility of the regional authorities. The other categorization is by the type of the institution. For example, one could distinguish between public and private higher education institutions or between higher education institutions and vocational education institutions.

The independence of the agency in charge of external evaluation defines a key issue in the quality assurance system. In some countries agencies are governmental bodies while in others they are fully independent autonomous entities. In this regard, the funding of the agency is also an issue. Some agencies are completely supported by public funds. Others are funded by the higher education institutions themselves. Combined funding also exists.

Once the previous elements defined, the evaluation and assessment are conducted comparing the outcomes of an institution to some reference criteria and standards. Being the reference for the whole quality process the criteria and standards should be carefully selected. They should consider the higher education context in which the evaluation is being conducted. There exist some global rules that should also be respected when defining the standards to be applied by an agency.

The methods used in reviewing an institution may also differ depending on the context but there is a general broad consensus about the main phases a well developed quality assurance system should be able to implement. In most countries quality assurance processes are organized over the following phases: a phase of internal evaluation and self-assessment; a phase of external review and assessment; and a phase of follow-up of the main decisions and recommendations about quality. There is a global consensus about the fact that peers will form the evaluators, experts and reviewers in the evaluation and reporting process. Depending on the local situation

and context the definition of who is a peer may be restricted to the members of the academic community or extended to stakeholders in general.

In all the cases above mentioned the review is based on collected data in an evidence-based evaluation approach. The data collection is done during the self-assessment (internal evaluation) or during the external evaluation which often includes a site visit. As a result of self-evaluation, the institutions are requested to write a self-evaluation report that is used by the reviewers to understand the HEI processes, its results and its capacity to manage and protect its quality. In addition to self-reporting and site visits surveys may be used to collect some statistical data.

### *II.2.3 Impact on Higher Education of the Introduction of Quality Assurance*

The impact of the introduction of quality assurance systems has been studied in the literature. Kis (2005) [7] presents a summary. She started by identifying the difficulties in measuring the impact of quality assurance which is mainly related to the difficult task of isolating the impact of quality assurance from other factors and to the general interest in creating a successful image of quality management. On the teaching and learning side, the introduction of quality systems has enhanced the quality of teaching by reserving more attention to teaching and by enhancing the teaching and learning aspect on institutions agendas. According to Kis, a shift of focus toward learning outcomes due to the quality assurance process has also a positive effect on the learning process itself.

At the institution level, a clear impact was noticed on organisational and management aspects. External quality assurance clearly affects the governance of the institutions and the distribution of power. Centralization is reinforced which reinforces the coherence and the implementation of the strategic decisions. A drawback is noted and is related to the bureaucratization aspects related to quality assurance. Transparency is largely enhanced due to the introduction of the quality assurance process.

Finally, resistance is often noticed to the implementation of quality procedures. These procedures are perceived as affecting the academic autonomy and as introducing an excessive workload.

## **II.3 The Current Quality Assurance in the Lebanese Higher Education**

Quality in the Lebanese Higher Education system has been assured implicitly by the competitive nature of the Lebanese Higher Education. The diversity of the system and its autonomy guaranteed by the Lebanese Constitution form a particularity of the Lebanese Higher Education. However, the Lebanese Higher Education has suffered from the different problems that occurred in the country and is facing an increasing demand which made the number of institutions and offered programmes expand at a very high rate.

In this context the need for a clear quality assurance system appeared. Several institutions have already undergone an external evaluation with international European and American agencies. This clearly shows the explicit needs in this domain. Several projects on quality assurance in the Lebanese Higher Education have been conducted. We report on few of them in this document. Tempus has supported

two major projects in this direction. In 2005, Tempus granted a project entitled “Quality Assurance for Higher Education in Lebanon” (QAHEL). It focused on the definition of internal quality assurance systems and to train Lebanese experts in this field. In 2006, another project has been supported by Tempus and is entitled “Creation of the Lebanese Engineering Programs Accreditation Commission” (LEPAC). LEPAC has succeeded to define some documents describing standards, procedures and regulations for the external evaluation of the engineering programmes in Lebanon. Lebanese universities have also participated to the UNDP project “Enhancement of Quality Assurance and Institutional Planning” (EQAIP) from 2002 till 2007. This project has evaluated 73 programmes in Computer Sciences, Business Administration, Education and Engineering throughout the Arab region. In 2009, AMIDEAST financed a project led by the “Lebanese Association for Educational Studies” (LAES) and in which the Tempus-HERE (“Higher Education Reform Experts”) actively participated. This project drafted the first version of a law aiming at the creation of the Lebanese Quality Assurance Agency. Most of the aspects described in chapters 3 and 4 have been debated within this project after reviewing the European and American quality assurance systems which has led to making the necessary choices and setting the ground for the Lebanese Quality Assurance Agency in Higher Education. This draft law on the establishing of a quality assurance agency has been lately submitted by his Excellency Minister Dr. Diab to the Council of Ministers. The quality assurance system and the establishing of quality assurance agencies have also been recommended at the regional level in the latest Meetings of the Arab Ministers Responsible of Higher Education. Finally, it is worth noting that Lebanon has considered in the past few years the establishing of a quality assurance system as a priority on its modernization agenda.

Presently, the “Towards the Lebanese Quality Assurance Agency” (TLQAA) project is being supported by the European programme Tempus. A consortium is formed of twelve Lebanese universities and institutions and, eight European institutions and universities. Among the European partners two European quality assurance agencies are participating to the project. The TLQAA partners are working to prepare the components of any possible external quality assurance system in the country. The present model for a possible quality assurance system is proposed in this context.



### **III Starting Points to Build the Lebanese Quality Assurance System**

The model for the Quality Assurance System described in this document has been built on the basis of two elements:

1. The draft law on the establishment of the Lebanese Quality Assurance Agency (a translation is provided in the appendix);
2. The results of the brain storming conducted during the kickoff meeting and summarized in a document by Mr. Curvale. This document has been proposed for comments to the partners. The version reproduced hereafter in the present chapter takes into account the received comments and suggestions. These are decomposed in background and motivations, goals, principles and organizational statements.

#### **III.1 Background and Motivations**

As stated earlier the competitive nature of the Lebanese Higher Education has guaranteed in the past a good quality level. The changes in the system in the last decades have pushed the HEIs toward the development of internal quality assurance and some of those institutions have gone through an external evaluation with international agencies. In addition, there is a regional and international pressure to establish a national quality assurance system and Lebanon has promised to engage in this direction. Therefore, a draft law has been prepared and is being discussed for the establishment of a Lebanese quality assurance agency. Several concerns are actually being felt and are enumerated in the following:

1. Weak quality higher education institutions are prejudicial to all institutions and for the reputation of the national higher education system.
2. The QA agency is a key element for the development of the Lebanese higher education system. It ensures that the institutions and their programs continuously seek ways to enhance their academic quality. This will have a positive impact on the development of the institutions autonomy.
3. The evaluation procedures and methods should respect internationally recognized good practices (ESGs, Chiba principles, UNESCO/OECD guidelines for quality provision in cross-border higher education, INQAAHE good practices guideline for instance). These procedures should also take into consideration the Lebanese environment and context.
4. The national quality assurance system should protect the citizens' interests in higher education. Its role is to ensure the citizens and the general public that an institution or a program meets standards or thresholds of quality.
5. The national QA system would impact the development of national higher education policies.
6. Higher education Institutions shouldn't be restricted to apply for foreign accreditations or evaluation procedures.

#### **III.2 Goals of the Quality Assurance System**

As stated earlier there are two main goals for a quality assurance system:

- Accountability
- Continuous improvement

The proposed model for the Lebanese Quality Assurance System has the following goals:

1. Encourage the improvement of quality in possibly below standards institutions;
2. Develop quality of each institution and increase trust in the higher education system;
3. Provide the society with clear and trustable information about the quality of programmes;
4. Help a better international recognition of Lebanese Higher Education (The national quality assurance framework should seek recognition from other quality assurance frameworks and establish collaborations with them);
5. Support the management and the decision-making process at systemic level;

### **III.3 Principles**

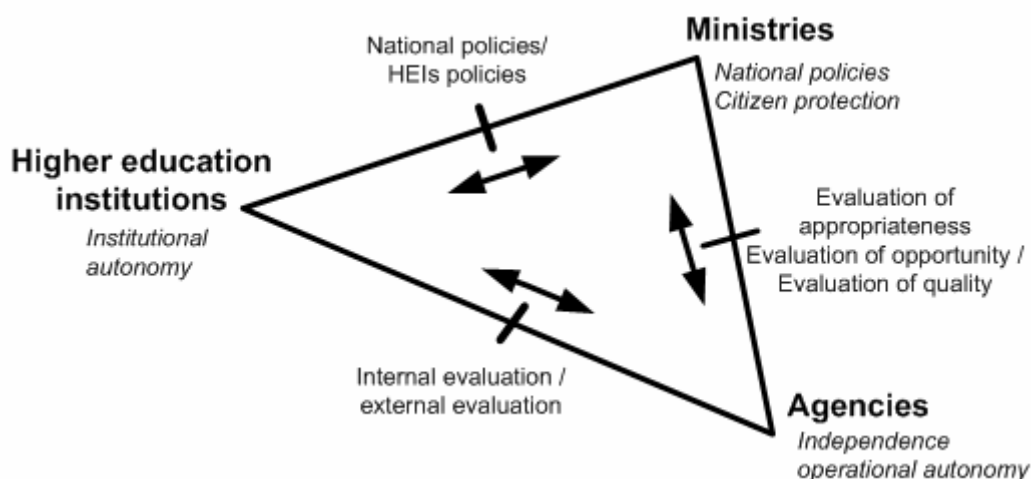
Some major principles should govern the Lebanese Quality Assurance System. These are enumerated hereafter.

1. An independent Lebanese quality assurance agency is a key element of the national quality assurance framework;
2. The quality assurance agency should rely on clearly stated minimum acceptable quality that defines a threshold;
3. The national QA agency should develop specific standards, criteria and reference in order to take into consideration the different types of programmes and organizations;
4. Peer review is fundamental in the evaluation process conducted in a Quality Assurance system;
5. The internal and external QA processes are not ranking processes;
6. The primary responsibility for quality assurance in higher education lies with each institution through its commitment to self-study, external peer review, and the employment of quality assurance mechanisms and institutional best practices;
7. As a result of an evaluation, the national quality assurance agency should identify the strengths, weaknesses and critical points. It is the responsibility of the institution not the agency to define a process to respond to the concerns raised;
8. The national quality assurance agency could award accreditation or develop quality labels as incentive to the development of quality;
9. The strength of the link between education and research is a criterion with regard to the quality of university higher education;
10. A distinction between higher education (post-secondary) and university education (based on research) may have sense and stimulate quality;
11. Stakeholders and students have an active role to play in external and internal quality assurance mechanisms;
12. External quality assurance should help and foster the development of internal quality assurance mechanisms;
13. The national quality assurance system should be a learning system;
14. The national QA agency should be a learning organization.

### III.4 Organizational Statements

Depending on the local context different organizational issues have to be clearly considered. This is crucial for the success of the quality assurance system in achieving its goals. In the following few organizational statements are provided.

1. A national quality assurance framework is made of actors that should be identified and of relationships between them that should be clearly described;
2. A national quality assurance framework is a system of relationships and tensions that can be schematized like proposed hereafter in the Figure 1;
3. The national quality assurance system should take into account the already existing quality assurance mechanisms in the Ministry (technical committees, ...) and make sure that it is coherent and well understood by all;
4. The distinction between the evaluation of quality and the evaluation of systemic, social or economical interests (evaluation of appropriateness) is crucial to the transparency of the steering decision-making processes within the higher education system;
5. The national quality assurance system could be developed through different phases and thus accompany the step-by-step building of institutional competencies by each actor involved;
6. The national recognition could be given with conditions in order to provide institutions with remediation opportunities;
7. The recognition could be given for a limited period of time;
8. The agency's evaluation procedures should be evidence based and the evaluation criteria should be clearly articulated;
9. The panels of experts should include international experts;
10. The evaluation can be at institutional or programmatic levels. Both activities can be combined according to the purpose. The choice is important with regard to the development of the evaluation approaches and methodologies;
11. The national recognition seal will have to coexist with foreign evaluation or accreditation seals;
12. The relationships between the national QA agency and foreign QA agencies have to be carefully structured and organized.



**Figure1. Model for the interaction of the different actors of Higher Education in a Quality Assurance System**

#### IV Proposed Model for the Quality Assurance System

The model that is proposed to define the Quality Assurance System has three elements. These are:

1. Architecture and goals of the quality assurance system;
2. Outcomes of the system;
3. Organization.

The three elements are described in the following.

##### IV.1 Architecture and Goals of the Quality Assurance System

Traditionally the three coordinating powers in higher education, the academic community, the state and the market, create different types of instruments for quality assurance. These alternative policy instruments are summarized in the following table reproduced from [3] . The relative forces played in a higher education system by the state, academics and market (society at large) is determinant for the choice of instruments to regulate the academic quality. This is also visible from the model provided in the Figure1.

Focus	Locus of Influence		
	Professional (Self) Regulation	State Regulation	Market Regulation
<i>Research</i>	Professional Peer Judgments	Research Assessments	Competitive allocation of research funds by state
<i>Teaching/Learning</i>	Professional Disciplines/Organizations External Examining Systems Voluntary Accreditation	Assessment Regulations Academic Audits Subject Assessment Performance-based Funding National Examinations State Accreditation	Student-Based Funding and Tuition Fees Information Provision

**Table 1. Alternative Policy Instruments for Assuring Academic Standards(reproduced from [3] ).**

Based on the draft law on the establishment of the Lebanese Quality Assurance Agency, on the brainstorming and other discussions and, on the previous projects and efforts in this domain, the goals of the quality assurance system and the targeted quality assurance agency can be defined as follows.

#### *IV.1.1 Creation of a Lebanese Independent Quality Assurance Agency*

A Lebanese independent agency should take in charge the external quality assurance in the Lebanese Higher Education system. This agency, its processes, standards and procedures shall be considered as reference in the Lebanese Higher Education for Quality Assurance. Independence of the agency must be guaranteed by legislation. The independence required is from ministries as well as from higher education institutions and other stakeholders. Independence has many dimensions. Two main dimensions may be distinguished: operational and organizational. While the agency needs to have some formal connections with the different stakeholders, its operational independence must be unambiguously guaranteed in the official documents. This operational independence should cover:

- The design and update of terms of reference or standards;
- The definition and operation of methods and procedures;
- The selection and nomination of experts;
- The execution of an institution or programme evaluation;
- The determination of outcomes.

#### *IV.1.2 Institutional Improvement*

The major objective of the quality assurance system is to contribute to the improvement of quality within the higher education institutions. It should also foster responsibility and accountability towards the society. Some important tools that must be used for this purpose include the self-evaluation, the site visit and the final reporting.

The self evaluation process would contribute to building-up a self-evaluation culture in the institutions. This is beneficial to a large extent for the improvement of quality. It is worth noting that a major element of the quality assurance framework is the internal quality assurance set by each institution. The external evaluation also reviews the internal quality assurance process in place in order to make sure it helps the continuous improvement of the institution.

The external evaluation shall provide the institutions with an external view of the whole learning processes applied and this induces positive changes that lead to quality enhancement.

#### *IV.1.3 Accountability*

The licensed institutions and their programmes should undergo regular evaluation by the Quality Assurance Agency for the purpose of quality assurance and institutional improvement. The results of those evaluations are communicated to the institutions themselves and the Ministry. Besides, the evaluation process will also lead to information that will be made public.

#### *IV.1.4 Relation with the Ministry*

As stipulated by the draft laws the quality assurance agency has no connection to the initial licensing. This licensing is the sole responsibility of the Ministry and its technical and various committees.

As stated in the subsection IV.1.3, the report obtained at the end of an evaluation is communicated to the Ministry. The consequences of this report are the sole responsibility of the Ministry. In parallel, the Ministry shall not interfere under any condition in the evaluation process.

The aspects related to the recognition and equivalence of degrees and diplomas also remain the full responsibility of the Ministry and its committees.

#### *IV.1.5 Mandatory Process*

Undergoing an evaluation is mandatory as stated in the draft law discussion. Besides the mandatory nature of the process, some incentives are also foreseen by the law. This process provides an overall evaluation of the Lebanese higher education institutions at the national level based on customized standards that shall better address the local concerns. Some incentives are offered to the evaluated institutions and are related to their participation in different committees. Although no financial incentives are expected at the current stage, but the role of the institutions in the Higher Education sector can be made connected to its disposal to undergo the external quality assurance process. Besides, this process would offer the precious expertise to the institutions that would facilitate their accreditation or evaluation by international agencies which will have a positive impact on the recognition of the institution and its programmes.

#### *IV.1.6 Coverage and Scope*

The targeted Quality Assurance system shall apply to both public and private higher education institutions, i.e. the Lebanese University and the private universities in Lebanon. It should also cover both institutional and programmes reviews. Due to the large number of institutions and by the same fact the even larger number of programmes, it would be very ambitious in the first phase to start with the evaluation of programmes. This would be a resource consuming process. It is therefore suggested to start either with pure institutional quality assurance. In parallel, a survey of the different programmes in Lebanon shall be conducted and those programmes shall be mapped into sectors. This will allow the rapid introduction, sector by sector, of programmatic quality assurance. In the future the quality assurance process could be split into two different processes: one dedicated to institutional quality assurance and another dedicated to programmatic quality assurance.

Standards shall be developed by the Agency and made public to the Lebanese Higher Education. The standards are the references to which an institution and its programmes shall be compared. These standards shall be dynamic and need to be updated on a regular basis. The evaluation of an institution should cover all aspects of teaching, research and public service. This should be clearly shown in the standards that would focus on improving the quality of teaching as well as fostering quality research in the universities laboratories. The level of research expected at an institution depends on its mission.

New forms of education are being developed currently (e.g. open and distance education, e-learning, virtual learning ...). The quality assurance of such forms of education is a crucial and critical issue that shall be tackled by the targeted quality

assurance system once those forms are recognised by the Lebanese Higher Education authorities.

It is worth noting that the quality assurance system would apply to all higher education institutions independent of the nature of the programmes that are run in those institutions.

#### *IV.1.7 Follow-up*

In the fast changing world adaptation is required from the higher education institutions to accompany the scientific and technical development. It is therefore necessary to have a regular evaluation with a period of evaluation varying between five to seven years. At the institutional level, this is equivalent to the evaluation of 6 to 8 higher education institutions per year.

Besides, it is important to have a regular follow-up of every recommendation emitted by the agency to a higher education institution. It is important to note that the recommendations are not mandatory and that the institutions are free to define their own processes that permit to remedy to the weaknesses identified. The follow up reports and results are also to be communicated to the Ministry to take all necessary measures.

#### *IV.1.8 Respect of Diversity*

The Quality Assurance System should respect the diversity of the Lebanese Higher Education. It should encourage this diversity and this must be reflected in the standards and procedures to apply.

#### *IV.1.9 Involvement of the Stakeholders*

All stakeholders including the students should be actively involved in the quality assurance system. This is clearly showed in the draft law especially in the constitution of the board of trustees.

#### *IV.1.10 International Good Practices and Experts*

The Quality Assurance System should respect the international good practices with regards to professionalism in quality assurance. The Quality Assurance Agency should be part of regional and international networks. It also should undergo itself a regular evaluation by an external authority proving the respect of the international standards.

Having international experts nominated to serve on the board of trustees as indicated in the draft law has also a positive impact. International experts shall also be part of the evaluation process.

#### *IV.1.11 Clear Appeal Process*

The higher education institutions undergoing an evaluation will receive the first draft of the evaluation report. They will have two weeks to send their evidence-based feedbacks to the Agency. The Agency will then finalize the report. It is in the right of the higher education institution to appeal the final report. The agency board would then study the arguments of the institution and take a final decision.

*IV.1.12 Transparency*

The quality assurance system should be transparent. All the standards and procedures as well as the methodology and forms should be publicly available. The list of experts should also be available.

*IV.1.13 Confidentiality*

The quality assurance agency as well as the experts should respect the confidentiality of information and interactions with the evaluated higher education institution. Only the final report and the executive summary would be made available.

*IV.1.14 Training*

The Quality Assurance Agency should conduct training sessions to the Lebanese higher education institutions. It should also continuously train the experts and its support staff.

The quality assurance agency should permanently learn and update its standards and procedures to meet the needs.

*IV.1.15 Awareness Raising*

Besides the training efforts conducted by the Agency, some awareness raising activities shall be conducted. Such activities shall target the broader set of stakeholders in the society at large allowing both decision makers and all seekers of the higher education services to be conscious of quality matters and the continuous improvement of the higher education quality due to the process conducted.

**IV.2 Outcomes**

The Quality Assurance Agency, in its efforts to achieve its goals will produce different outcomes that are described in the following.

*IV.2.1 Standards*

The quality of an institution or a programme shall be measured against clear, well defined and published standards. Several standards are recognized at the international level. However, specific and customized standards could be defined and updated taking into consideration the needs and the context of the Lebanese Higher Education. The Quality Assurance Agency would have the freedom to consult with the different stakeholders while setting and updating those standards. It is worth noting that the Agency is completely independent while defining the standards as stated above. These standards should be made publicly available.

The set of standards and procedures proposed by TLQAA shall be developed in the workpackage 2 of the project. However, it is worth noting that the evaluation is based on self-study and peer reviewing with site visit. This leads to an evidence based decision.



#### *IV.2.2 Procedures*

The Quality Assurance Agency should also set clear and public procedures. Here also the Agency has the freedom to consult with the different stakeholders when defining or updating those procedures while preserving its independence.

In addition to the publication of the procedures, the Agency shall develop and publish the forms to be used by the institutions to undergo an evaluation process.

#### *IV.2.3 Evaluation Reports*

As a result of an evaluation, a report will be written revealing the strengths, weaknesses and the critical points of the institution and its programmes when compared to the standards defined. It is the responsibility of the institution and not the agency to define a process to respond to the concerns raised in the evaluation report. The agency will also deliver an executive summary of the report that will be publicly available. Both the report and its executive summary will be provided to the Ministry.

#### *IV.2.4 Accreditation and Quality Labels*

By default, no accreditation decision will be made by the Agency after the evaluation report is finalized. This report will be handed to the Ministry that has the freedom to take appropriate decisions (recognition, accreditation ...). However, if a demand for a specific quality label or accreditation appears in the future the agency shall envisage offering such labels and accreditation after defining appropriate standards, thresholds and procedures.

#### *IV.2.5 Training and Awareness Raising Materials*

The Agency will be building materials for training experts and institutions on external quality assurance as well as on how to perform self studies. Presentations and documents will also be developed and conferences will be held to increase the awareness about QA matters in the Lebanese Higher Education.

#### *IV.2.6 Reporting and Internal Quality Assurance*

The Agency will produce an annual report about its activities. A clear internal quality assurance process should be put in place from the early beginning stages. This process shall respect the internationally recognized good practices and shall permit to the Agency to get evaluated and recognized by international QA bodies.

The policy for the quality assurance of the Agency itself should be publicly available. This document and the internal quality assurance process should reflect the mission of the Agency and its goals in QA. This internal QA should include internal feedback mechanism, internal reflection mechanism and, an external feedback mechanism (the international body evaluation). Besides the evaluation experts, advisors shall be nominated by the agency and will support the experts in the evaluation processes. The advisors will also be part of the agency internal quality assurance process.

The Agency shall also try to be part of international networks of QA agencies. This will help to exchange expertise and develop competences and capacity.

#### *IV.2.7 Studies, Papers and International Conferences*

Studies about the Lebanese Higher Education will be performed. The Agency shall also develop scientific papers that may be presented in conferences or published in a journal.

### **IV.3 Organization**

The organization of the Agency, as described in the draft law, is in accordance to the principles, goals and elements described above. Its structure is decomposed as follows:

- A board of trustees where all the stakeholders are represented;
- A board of direction in charge of the operations undertaken by the Agency;
- Supporting offices;
- A set of experts performing the evaluation of institutions and programmes.

Please refer to the appendix for more details.

In addition to the previous structure, the present model proposes that the agency includes advisors or senior experts who will support the experts in the different evaluation processes conducted. The advisors will also be part of the internal quality assurance process of the agency.

It is worth noting that the finance of the Agency is shared between the state and the higher education institutions through memberships. The running costs of an evaluation are completely taken in charge by the institutions being evaluated. Please refer to the appendix for more details.

## **V Conclusions**

This document proposes a model for the quality assurance system for the Lebanese Higher Education. The system aims at improving the quality in the Lebanese higher education institutions while fostering responsibility and accountability towards the society. The system makes mandatory the external evaluation by the Lebanese Quality Assurance Agency. This agency should be national and at least operationally independent and will form the reference in terms of quality assurance for the Lebanese Higher Education. The QA system should be transparent and should respect the diversity in the Lebanese Higher Education. The system should also support the internal quality assurance processes conducted within the institutions.

In order to achieve its goals the quality assurance system defines some standards and procedures that shall be dynamically updated. Peer reviewing is the major approach adopted to evaluate an institution and its programmes. Institutions should provide the experts with a self study and experts shall perform site visit to collect evidences. Based on the evaluation a report will be written and an executive summary will be made public. The report and the summary will be provided to the Ministry of Education and Higher Education that is free to take any decision. The executive summary will be made available to the public through the web. Institutions shall have the right to appeal the conclusions of the report. It is worth noting that the evaluation report shall detect the strengths, weaknesses and critical points of an evaluated institution and it is the role of the institution to propose and implement solutions to overcome the weak points.

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## **Appendix A: Draft Law**

### **Act**

## **Establishment of the Lebanese Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education**

### **Chapter One: Definitions and General Rules**

#### **Clause One: Definitions**

The following words and expressions, wherever they appear in the text of the present law, carry the following meanings:

1. Ministry: the ministry of education and higher education.
2. Minister: the minister of education and higher education.
3. Higher education: the learning and education that occurs in public or private institutions governed by the higher education laws and after holding the baccalaureate degree, or the technical baccalaureate degree or what is equivalent.
4. Higher education institution: an institution delivering university higher education.
5. The agency: the Lebanese Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education subject of the present law.
6. Board of trustees: the board of trustees of the agency.
7. Agency board: the executive board of the agency.
8. President of the agency: The president of the agency board.
9. Programme: it represents the learning process for a specific education level, in particular its objectives, its components, its admission conditions, its duration, its curriculum, the assessment methods and exams and its learning outcomes and leads to a degree in a specific field.
10. Quality assurance: the set of policies, procedures, actions that aim at improving, fostering and enhancing the quality.
11. Accreditation: the recognition of a specific quality level for the learning provided. It is possible to accredit an institution, one or more of its components and/or, one or more of its programmes.
12. Evaluation: the procedure adopted to assure the quality of a higher education institution, one or more of its components or, one or more of its programmes.
13. Self evaluation: the mechanism adopted within a higher education institution, through an internal quality assurance unit or any other approach, aiming at improving the quality within the institution and measuring to what extent the quality is attained and is been adopted.
14. External evaluation of the institution: the mechanism adopted by

a specialized agency independent of the institution in order to verify its quality, the quality of one or more of its components or, the quality of one or more of its programmes.

15. External evaluation of the agency: the mechanism adopted to evaluate the plans and the activities of the Lebanese Quality Assurance agency for Higher Education.
16. External reviewers: experts from outside the university institution mandated by the agency to perform the external evaluation of an institution, one or more of its components or, one or more of its programmes.

### **Clause Two: Establishing the Agency**

Under this law, an agency is established and is called “The Lebanese Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education” and is indicated in this law by the “agency.” It is an independent institution, with its own moral identity and enjoying academic, administrative and financial autonomy. It uses its rights and executes its tasks as described in this law and relative decrees. Its administrative and financial organization is defined by decrees issued by the council of ministers, based on the proposition of the minister of education and higher education.

**Clause Three: Agency’s premises**

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education is responsible of providing the agency with dedicated premises.

**Clause Four: Agency Legal Reference and its Relation to the Minister**

The agency shall be subject to the provisions of this law, and regulatory decrees and decisions issued in implementation thereof, and to the Audit Bureau a posteriori control. These provisions regulate the relation between the agency and the minister. A unit in the directorate general of higher education organizes and maintains a special register and the correspondences between the agency and the minister.

**Clause Five: Agency’s Scientific and Standards Reference**

In the exercise of its powers and duties the agency adopts and, in particular, the following:

1. The standards and references governing quality assurance in higher education institutions
2. The respect of the diversity of higher education systems
3. The respect of the autonomy of academic institutions and the confidentiality of information and correspondence with the higher education institutions
4. The commitment to integrity, impartiality, transparency and, objectivity
5. The commitment to the right of the academic institutions concerned to appeal in case of disagreement with the decisions and recommendations taken by the agency for them

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**Chapter Two: Tasks and Activities of the Agency**

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**Clause Six: Agency’s Functions**

The agency shall assume the responsibilities and functions that lead to quality assurance in higher education. It shall perform operations and activities leading to quality assurance in the higher education institutions operating on Lebanese territory, and in their programs and activities. These operations shall comply with a quality assurance model that the agency defines for this purpose and that includes mechanisms, criteria and indicators. It can also do the same tasks at institutions of higher learning operating outside Lebanon.

### **Clause Seven: Agency's Activities**

The activities of the agency shall include, in particular, the following:

1. Develop an integrated system for quality assurance
2. Evaluate the higher education institutions on a regular basis and, write reports indicating to what extent they meet the quality assurance standards adopted by the agency
3. Develop and publish documents relating to the work of the agency, and the stages and procedures required by the quality assurance process
4. Develop a clear and public mechanism for the appeal of reports and recommendations issued by the agency and relative to higher education institutions
5. Develop principles and criteria for the selection of reviewers at the agency and, determine their functions and the mechanisms of their work
6. Train and rehabilitate the auditors and experts in accordance with the principles set
7. Perform studies and research related to the work of the agency
8. Build partnerships and sign agreements related to the activities of the agency, especially with similar bodies and with networks of quality assurance in higher education
9. Foster a culture of quality in higher education
10. Undergo periodic external review with the aim of continuous development of its performance, plans and programs
11. Participate in local, regional and international meetings and conferences related to quality assurance
12. Set rules and regulations arising from the present law

The agency may build partnerships and agreements with similar external bodies and with networks of quality assurance in higher education, and may organize or participate to meetings and conferences related to quality assurance.

### **Clause Eight: Quality Assurance System**

The president and the board of the agency shall prepare a detailed quality assurance system, taking into account the provisions in force as regards higher education, and the president of the agency shall issue this quality assurance system in a decision after the approval of the board of trustees.



**Clause Nine: External Evaluation of a Higher Education Institution**

The external evaluation of a higher education institution as conducted by the agency shall include, the follow-up and the study of the self-evaluation carried out by the institution and, the verification of the commitment of the institution to the quality assurance standards set and adopted by the agency and, in particular with regards to:

- The mission and vision of the institution
- The governance
- The management
- The human resources
- The academic programmes
- The teaching staff
- The learning resources
- The students
- The offered services
- The infrastructure
- The physical and financial resources
- The institutional integrity
- The scientific research
- The services to the society
- The internal quality assurance system

**Clause Ten: Institutions Subject to the Quality Assurance Standards**

All higher education institutions, public and private, with all their branches, operating on Lebanese territory, officially licensed, are subject to provision and to the quality assurance standards adopted by the agency. In case an institution or one of its branches or one of its programmes failed to undergo the external evaluation, this shall be considered as a violation to the provisions of the applicable laws of higher education, and the minister shall be informed to take the appropriate steps and measures, within the framework of laws and regulations in force.

**Clause Eleven: Report the Recommendations and Studies of the Agency**

1. The agency's recommendations and reports related to quality assurance shall be submitted to the Minister; to do what is required by laws and regulations governing the private higher education sector

2. The final agency's reports about the higher education institutions, their programmes and their activities, must be published and transmitted to the minister and, the external evaluation report on the agency itself must also be published.

## **Chapter Three: The structure of the Agency**

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### **Clause Twelve: Agency's Composition**

The agency shall consist of:

- Board of trustees
- Agency board
- Administrative and technical units

The president and members of the board of trustees, the president of the agency and the members of the agency board, shall be appointed as specified in this law.

### **First: Board of trustees**

#### **Clause Thirteen: Composition of the Board of Trustees**

The board of trustees shall be composed of seventeen members, including its president and vice president, according to the following:

1. Two members of the professors of the Lebanese University
2. Three members of the professors of the private Lebanese higher education institutions, which have been licensed for more than 35 years, at the date of issuance of this law
3. A member of the students of the Lebanese University
4. A member of the students of the private Lebanese universities
5. Three members of the unions of medical doctors, engineers, and lawyers (a member for each union)
6. A member of the Association of the Lebanese Industrialists
7. A member of the Association of Banks in Lebanon
8. A judge from the State Consultative Council
9. Three experts in quality assurance and accreditation from outside Lebanon

#### **Clause Fourteen: Terms of the nomination of representatives of private institutions of higher education to the board of trustees**

1. Should be available in the private higher education, which nominates a representative to the Board of Trustees, the following conditions:
  - Must have practiced teaching continuously for fifteen years and have graduated at least seven promotions at the level of Bachelor and at least three promotions at the level of Masters
  - Must have been committed to the laws and regulations in force during the preceding five years to run; and not have been subject to any corrective measure during this period
2. Ten years after the issuance of a quality assurance system in higher education, are entitled only to the nomination of a member of the board of trustees the institutions of higher education, which have regularly undergone external evaluation by the agency.

**Clause Fifteen: Conditions of Membership of the Board of Trustees**

1. Any of the members of the Board of Trustees shall not occupy the position of chairman of an institution of higher education or his deputy, and that for the duration of his membership in the Board of Trustees
2. In case of vacancy of membership of a member of the Board of Trustees because of the lack of representativeness, or any other reason, the selection of a replacement should be in accordance to the same mechanism to serve the position, and it is not possible to dismiss the members of the Board of Trustees but in the absence of representativeness, or upon the violation of the point 1 of this article
3. The members of the Lebanese University and of the private universities in Lebanon shall meet the conditions of the rank of professor, and shall have not least than 10 years of experience in higher education including at least five years in the institution itself of his candidacy, including academic, administrative and regulatory responsibilities
4. The student candidates to the members of the Board of Trustees shall be in the process of preparing a PhD, and in the second year. It is required as well that the students from private higher education institutions, voters or candidates, to be preparing for a PhD thesis under the supervision of a full-time professor on the staff of the institution to which they are affiliated to

5. Members of the professional and trade unions shall have an experience of at least fifteen years in their field
6. The two members of the Association of the Lebanese Industrialists and the Association of Banks shall be holders of bachelor degree at least and shall have at least fifteen years of experience in their field of work, and they shall be in institutions capable of offering training and placement to students and having a quality assurance certificate.
7. The experts from outside Lebanon shall not have any contractual link with any of the institutions of higher education in Lebanon, and they shall have a demonstrated expertise in the field of quality assurance and accreditation, for not less than five years.

**Clause Sixteen: Term of Membership of the Board of Trustees**

The term of membership of the Board of Trustees is of four years, non-renewable, with the exception of the first Board of Trustees, which seven of its members shall serve for two additional years to respect the principle of continuity of action and as described in article twenty-one of this law.

**Clause Seventeen: Selection of Members of the Board of Trustees**

The members of the Board of Trustees are selected as follows:

1. The Council of the Lebanese University chooses two members among the professors of the University
2. The Members of the private institutions are chosen, each within the group to which he belongs, by election among the candidates of the institutions concerned
3. The Lebanese University student is selected by election between the candidates that meet the conditions
4. The students of private higher education institutions are elected among the candidates who meet the conditions, and belonging to the institutions with licensed PhD programmes
5. The boards of the medical doctors, engineers and lawyers unions in Beirut and the North Lebanon shall choose the members of the professional unions
6. The boards of the Association of the Lebanese Industrialists and the Association of Banks shall choose the members of the associations
7. The State Consultative Council shall mandate, after the approval of its board, a judge who has spent at least fifteen

years in the staffing of the administrative judiciary to participate to the Board of Trustees as a member

8. The minister shall choose the experts from outside Lebanon, from a list of nine experts, at least, referred to it by the Director General of Higher Education, after consulting the Arab and international bodies for quality assurance and accreditation in higher education.

### **Clause Eighteen: Election and Appointment of the Board of Trustees**

Each of the two sets of private higher education institutions, mentioned in Article Fifteen, selects its representatives by election, and it shall not be possible in any case to re-elect a member who has ended its membership in the Board of Trustees, but only after the expiry of one full term on the date of such completion. The rotation among institutions shall be taken into account when possible.

The Minister shall call the parties with membership in the Board of Trustees to nominate their candidates or their representatives, for the formation of the first Board of Trustees. For the subsequent Boards of Trustees, the president of the Board of Trustees of the agency shall invite the parties to the subsequent formations, as will be indicated by the Board of Trustees' rules of procedure in this regard.

The Directorate General of Higher Education shall organize the election among the members of the private higher education institutions, and between the students of these institutions. Between the students of the Lebanese University the election shall be organized by the Board of the Lebanese University. The Minister shall call for a meeting of the Board of Trustees within the thirty days following the complete selection of its members, during which are elected the president of the Board of Trustees and his deputy, in the presence of the Minister. The minister shall announce the formation of the Board of Trustees, and shall indicate in the announcement the President and the Vice President in accordance with the result of the election held for this purpose.

In the absence of nomination by the private higher education institutions as mentioned above within the period determined for this purpose, the minister shall set out an additional two weeks for submission of nominations remaining. At end of the extended period the election shall be held if the at least half of institutions

that submitted nominations. If less than the half have nominated a reduced Board of Trustees will be formed as composed of all members nominated, and will perform its functions and powers as specified in this law. The call for nomination to the other institutions remains active, and if this is done the term of the late elected members will be for the remainder of the mandate of the Board of Trustees.

If the composition of the Board of Trustees is not complete, as mentioned above, as a result of the failure of one or more interested stakeholders in nominating a member of the Board of Trustees, the Board of Trustees shall be considered legally operational if the number of members nominated is twelve members, at least.

### **Clause Nineteen: Changing the Members of the Board of Trustees**

By the end of the fourth year of the Board of Trustees in his first term, the minister replaces the three experts from outside Lebanon, and the membership of seven members chosen randomly is ended and they are replaced according to the rule in Article eighteen, and the remaining seven members shall be replaced by the end of the sixth year, making their term to be six years exceptionally, and the replacement of seven members every two years continues in the same way, with the exception of the experts from outside Lebanon who are nominated by the minister every four years.

### **Clause Twenty: Functions of the Board of Trustees**

The Board of Trustees functions include the supervision of the Agency and they cover specifically:

1. Set an internal rule of procedures for its work
2. Adoption of the mission of the agency and ensure its commitment toward this mission
3. Approval of the annual plan of the agency
4. Study of the periodic and annual reports of the agency board, based on the annual plan, and make observations about them
5. Ensure the commitment of the agency to the integrity, credibility, transparency and impartiality standards and, its observance to the global rules and traditions in the area of work and, its respect to the autonomy of the institutions of higher education in Lebanon
6. Approval of the rule of procedures of the agency board

7. Approval of the quality assurance system proposed by the agency board
8. Ensure the proper use of the resources and approval of the annual budget and the yearly account balance
9. Accept of donations and the ratification of the agreements concluded with other institutions
10. Propose the procedures and mechanism for the nomination of the president of the agency and the members of the agency board
11. Appoint the members of the agency board
12. Select the institution or agency for external review of the agency, after consulting the written opinion of the agency board, and ensure that the agency is committed to the comments, feedback and outcomes of this external review in its work, performance, plans and programmes
13. Adoption of the appropriate mechanism to safeguard the initial reports and the confidential correspondence with the institutions that subject themselves or one of their programmes to the external evaluation by the agency
14. Set and adopt a clear and published appeal mechanism by the institutions about the recommendations and decisions taken by the agency regarding those institutions that have been or one of their programs or activities evaluated by the agency
15. Submitting the external review reports to the minister together with related observations
16. Submit to the minister a copy of its meetings minutes and associated recommendations and decisions
17. All functions attributed to the Board of Trustees by regulatory decrees and organization decisions pursuant to this act

## **Second: Agency Board**

### **Clause Twenty-One: Forming the Agency Board**

The Agency Board is composed of, in addition to its president, eight experts in the domain of quality assurance and accreditation who are not full-time employees and who are selected taking into consideration the diversity of their specializations and the faire distribution over the different knowledge domains as commonly defined in the domain of higher education.

### **Clause Twenty-Two: Functions of the President of the Agency**

The President of the agency shall have in particular the following functions:

1. Chair the agency board and call for its meetings
2. Manage the human resources of the agency
3. Manage the physical and financial resources of the agency and sign on the expenditures and revenues
4. Implement the decisions of the agency board and follow-up the recommendations
5. Guide and follow-up the work progress in various plans, programmes and activities of the agency
6. Propose the financial balance of the agency
7. Propose the list of external reviewers
8. Propose the programmes of the events and conferences organized by the agency in its domain
9. Identify the needs of the agency in physical and human resources
10. Oversee the proper functioning of the offices and work on ensuring their needs
11. Sign the agreements recommended by the agency board and approved by the Board of Trustees
12. Sign the donations agreements approved by the Board of Trustees and oversee their reception
13. Ensure the integrity, impartiality and transparency of the evaluations conducted by the agency
14. Sign with the corresponding offices managers the agency reports
15. Correspond and follow-up on issues necessary for the proper functioning of the agency

In addition to the previous functions all the functions attributed to the president of the agency in the regulatory decrees and organizational decisions issued in application of this law.

The President of the agency is subject in exercising his functions to the regulations that govern the agency work and to the supervision of its board.

**Clause Twenty-Three: Participation of the President of the Agency to the Board of Trustees meetings**

The President of the agency shall participate to the meetings of the Board of Trustees without having the right to vote.

**Clause Twenty-Four: Conditions of Appointment of the President and Members of the Agency Board**



A candidate to the position of the president of the agency or to the membership of its board shall:

- be of rank professor and has practiced higher education for fifteen years at least
- have experience in the administration of higher education
- have an expertise in the field of quality assurance and accreditation
- be known for his competence, integrity and good management

The president of the agency shall not have any functional or contractual relation with any of the higher education institutions during his mandate.

### **Clause Twenty-Five: Functions of the Agency Board**

Entrusted to the Agency Board the following tasks:

1. Propose the Agency mission and develop its goals and objectives
2. Set the annual plan of the Agency
3. Set the rule of procedures for the Agency Board
4. Propose administrative and financial functioning of the Agency
5. Set the quality assurance system for the higher education institutions
6. Verify the commitment of the higher education institutions to the quality standards
7. Decide on requests for reconsideration presented by higher education institutions undergoing an evaluation of itself or, one of its programmes or, or one of its activities
8. Adopt the calendar of events and scientific conferences in the field of quality assurance and accreditation
9. Self-evaluate the activities of the agency
10. Propose necessary modifications to the rules of procedure of the agency and to the quality assurance system
11. Develop and adopt the plans and programmes of the agency and decide in all the academic matters related to the scope of work of the agency
12. Adopt the list of external reviewers, provided that their names and CVs are public
13. Recommend to develop and disseminate all kind of publications related to the scope of work of the agency
14. Study the human and physical resources needs and make appropriate recommendations and decisions
15. Study and propose the agency budget

16. Recommend the signature of agreements and submit them to the board of trustees for approval
17. Study results and recommendations issued by the institution in charge of the evaluation of the agency and commit the agency to these results and recommendations and issue appropriate recommendations and decisions
18. Prepare periodic reports on the activities of the agency and submit them to the board of trustees
19. all other tasks defined in decrees and decisions issued in application to this law

**Clause Twenty-Six: Combined membership of the Board of Trustees and the Agency Board**

May not be member of the Agency Board and of the Board of Trustees; also may not combine membership of either boards and committees and councils under the higher education act or the rules that govern the higher education

**Clause Twenty-Seven: Electing the Vice President of the Agency Board**

The President of the Agency shall call for a meeting of the Agency board during the first fifteen days that follow the election of its complete members and a vice president should be elected during this meeting. Election report shall be sent to the Minister.

**Clause Twenty-Eight: Advertising and running for the Agency Board**

The need and call for candidate to the membership of the Agency Board shall be announced six months before the vacancy of those positions. The Board of Trustees shall appoint the members of the Agency Board, from among the candidates to this board, according to the rules and mechanisms defined in its rules of procedure. The diversity of their specialization shall be considered while selecting the members of the Agency Board.

**Clause Twenty-Nine: Membership of the Agency Board**

The term of membership of the Agency Board is set to three years, renewable once. In the event of any membership vacancy, the membership should be secured as specified in Article Twenty-Eight.

**Clause Thirty: The Mandate of the Agency President**

The President of the Agency shall be appointed for five years by a decree of the Council of Ministers upon the recommendation of the Minister, from among a list of three candidates established by the Board of Trustees, to devote himself entirely to the tasks in the Agency, and his appointment may be renewed for a second term once.

**Clause Thirty-One: Advertising and running for the Position of Agency President**

The need and call for candidate to the position of the Agency President shall be announced six months before its vacancy.

**Clause Thirty-Two: Commitment to the Confidentiality of Information**

The President and the members of the Agency Board shall be committed to the confidentiality of information about the higher education institutions, which they have access, through their work in the Agency and to the confidentiality of the correspondences that occurred during the external evaluation of the higher education institutions and their programmes.

**Third: Administrative and Technical Units of the Agency**

**Clause Thirty-Three: Administrative and Financial Management of the Agency**

Linked to the President of the Agency administrative and technical units whose mission is to assist the Agency Board and the external reviewers to carry out their tasks, and provide continuing training to the external reviewers, and update the standards, and automate all the activities of the Agency.

The units are organized in three offices according to the following:

- Administration and Financial Office: shall take care of administrative and financial affairs as well as the information and information system.
- Evaluation Office: shall take care of institutional and programmatic evaluation and of the self-evaluation of the agency.
- Standards, Studies and Training Bureau: shall follow-up the development of standards, the studies, the training and the rehabilitation.

The Agency Board shall propose and amend the administrative organization of the agency that should include a functional

description of the different offices and their needs of administrators and technicians, and should define the conditions and procedures to appoint the directors of the offices and the permanent employees. This regulation shall be issued by decree of the Council of Ministers upon the proposal of the Minister.

It shall also be possible, by decree of the Council of Ministers, to review the number of offices, their designations and their functions.

## **Chapter Four: Finance**

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### **Clause Thirty-Four: Agency Budget**

The Agency shall have an annual budget that includes revenues and expenses.

Budget revenues consist of:

1. the government's contribution, which covers salaries, wages and other running costs
2. contributions from the higher education institutions
3. allowances from the evaluation of the higher education institutions, their programmes and activities
4. revenues of activities and services undertaken by the agency, and any other revenues
5. Grants and donations

### **Clause Thirty-Five: Contributions of the Institutions**

Each university education institution subject to this law shall pay an annual subscription to the benefit of the agency, whose value is determined by a decision of the Minister, upon the proposal of the Agency Board, based on the number of students enrolled in the various educational programmes offered by the institution.

### **Clause Thirty-Six: Allowances from External Evaluations**

Each university education institution shall pay to the agency against every external evaluation operation an amount, whose value is determined by a decision of the Minister on the proposal of the Agency Board, based on the size of the institution and the nature and requirements of the external evaluation conducted.

### **Clause Thirty-Seven: Expenses of the Agency**

The expenses of the Agency are formed of:

1. the salaries of the president, the offices managers and other staff
2. the cost of meetings of the Board of Trustees calculated on the basis of a meeting session compensation for each

- member augmented by the transportation and subsistence costs
3. Compensations to the president and agency board members calculated on the basis of a meeting session compensation for each member augmented by the transportation and subsistence costs
  4. the annual costs of studies, research, advisory activities, writing, printing and publishing
  5. the annual cost of training and rehabilitation of the external reviewers
  6. the compensation of external reviewers of the institutions, programmes or activities
  7. the expenses of the external evaluation of the agency
  8. the expenses of participating in local, regional and international meetings, events and conferences
  9. the expenses of affiliation to quality assurance bodies and networks and of establishing agreements
  10. the expenses of organizing seminars, workshops and conferences
  11. expenditure related to the work of the agency in the framework of the implementation of its functions, as for an illustrative example the equipment, computer programmes, databases and accessories.

The value of expenses, allowances and compensations provided for in this Article with the exception of item 1, shall be determined by a decision of the president upon the suggestion of the Agency Board.

### **Clause Thirty-Eight: Agency Revenues**

The revenues of the agency shall be placed in a special account in the Bank of Lebanon, which is managed by the president in association with the head of Administration and Financial Office, in accordance with the requirements of the agency activities and in accordance with the agency financial system.

### **Clause Thirty-Nine: Agency Financial System**

The financial system of the agency shall be issued in a decree by the Council of Ministers upon the proposal of the Minister and the recommendation of the Agency Board and shall include in particular the procedures to determine the wage of scale and the value of allowances and compensations of the president and the members of the agency board and the experts and full-time

employees and the procedures to decide on and control expenditures.

## **Chapter Five: Special provisions**

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### **Clause Forty: Rules of Procedure of the Board of Trustees**

The first Board of Trustees shall be formed in the first year following the issuance of this law. Once formed, the Board of Trustees shall start developing its bylaws, and shall submit it to the Minister within a period not exceeding three months from the date of its formation; in order to have it issued in a decree by the Council of Ministers based on the proposal of the Minister.

### **Clause Forty-One: Rules of Procedure of the Agency Board**

The Agency Board shall prepare its rules of procedures and the internal regulations of the agency within five month of its date of formation and then shall submit it to the Board of Trustees for approval and submission to the Minister to get it issued in a decree by the Council of Ministers based on the Minister proposal.

### **Clause Forty-Two: Agency Yearly Report**

The Agency Board shall prepare yearly report on the agency's activities within three months following the end of the fiscal year. This report shall be submitted to the Board of Trustees that will forward it to the Council of Ministers through the Minister which will publish it in the Official Journal.

### **Clause Forty-Three: Secretariat of the Board of Trustees and the Agency Board**

The Administration and Financial Office shall take care, in addition to the tasks entrusted to it, the secretariat of the Board of Trustees and the secretariat of the Agency Board.

### **Clause Forty-Four: Failing to form the boards or to nominate the president**

- 1- At the end of the mandate of the President of the Agency, he continues up exercising his responsibilities and duties, till the appointment of a replacement, for a period of a year at most. If the appointment decree is not issued during this period, it is permissible to the Minister of Education and Higher Education to empower a president of the agency, based on the recommendation of the Board of Trustees, taking into

account the provisions set forth in this law and the relevant regulations.

- 2- When failing to reform the Board of Trustees, as defined in this act, and the regulations issued in implementation of it, the board of trustees to exercise its responsibilities and do its duties, pending the completion of forming the new board as provided for in this law.

**Clause Forty-Five: President Unable to do his Tasks**

When the President of the Agency is unable to perform his tasks; due to illness or travel or for any other reason, or in case of vacancy of the president position due to death or resignation, the vice president will exercise the responsibilities and do the tasks during the whole period of vacancy or inability.

**Clause Forty-Six:**

This law will enter in force as soon as it is published in the official journal.