Comparative Study of Quality Assurance Agencies
International Branch Campus (IBC)
University Quality Assurance International Board (UQAIB)

1. QA Agency name:

University Quality Assurance International Board (UQAIB) of the Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA)

2. Does the QA agency have a published policy and procedure for prior approval of operations outside the geographical scope of the agency?

UQAIB, set up by the KHDA, under Resolution 21 (2011), is responsible for the quality assurance of higher education institutions located in Free Zones. UQAIB is an independent advisory Board that consists of 12 international members who are experts in higher education and quality assurance. UQAIB is only responsible for the external quality assurance of IBCs located within the KHDA’s jurisdiction.

UQAIB has developed a Quality Assurance Manual which sets out the policies and processes for external quality assurance of institutions. It uses an “Equivalency Validation Model” to ensure that the quality of an IBC in Dubai is equivalent to that of its home campus. UQAIB does not currently quality assure any institutions outside the Dubai Free Zones, and those that it does are IBCs.

- If so, what is the procedure and what are the elements of review?

- Is there a prescribed template or format for submitting an application for prior approval?

Any institution that wishes to set up in Dubai goes through two phases of approval. The initial review is carried out by KHDA, and the second phase is a quality assurance review by UQAIB. There are templates available for both phases on the KHDA website.

- Does it involve peer and/or staff review?

The first review is carried out by staff and experts in KHDA. External evaluators can also be brought in as consultants if required. The second review is carried out by the UQAIB Board.
• What is the cost?

There is an initial fee of AED 45,000 to review the documentation. Institutions that operate in Dubai pay an annual academic authorization fee which ranges from AED 150,000 to AED 225,000.

• What is the timeframe for processing an application?

The KHDA aims to complete the review of Phase 1 documentation for initial approval and communicate the response to the applicant within sixty (60) days from the date of submission of all documentation.

• How are MOUs with organizations in the host country reviewed?

• Is licensure by the host country required?

Yes, all IBCs that wish to set up in Dubai require an academic authorization from KHDA, which is renewed annually.

• Is any kind of legal review conducted prior to initiation of the program or jurisdictional venue for resolution of disputes determined?

Institutions are required to complete a letter of guarantee confirming, among other things, that the home campus bears the same legal and financial liabilities to the branch students as home students.

• Is the institution permitted or expected to adapt the curriculum or principles of academic freedom or diversity to conform to local laws and customs?

While based on the principle that curriculum at the IBC should match that at the home campus, the UQAIB model permits a certain level of localization of content within programmes. Under the new version of the UQAIB Quality Manual 2.0, institutions that meet certain criteria will be allowed to offer programmes in Dubai that specifically meet Dubai’s needs.

• If prior approval is not required, are international branch campuses or international programs reviewed after initiation? How does this occur?

Prior approval is required followed by a process of annual review (see 3 below).

3. Once approved, what kind of reporting is required, and follow up monitoring conducted?
Once approved, an IBC has to file an annual quality assurance report to UQAIB. They use a template specified in the UQAIB Quality Manual. UQAIB carries out institutional approval and programme registration on an annual basis.

- **Is there a template for follow up reporting and/or visits to the IBC?**

The UQAIB Quality Manual has a template for initial applications as well as renewal applications. The UQAIB review is largely paper-based, and visits are carried out only if required.

- **What is the cost to the institution of reporting or monitoring to the program/campus?**

Institutions that operate in Dubai pay an annual academicauthorization fee, which ranges from AED 150,000 to AED 225,000.

- **Are there specific triggers for intervention by the QA agency? What are they?**

- **Is a complaint process maintained by the QA agency for students and others at the international site?**

The KHDA has a student complaint process. UQAIB requires all IBCs in Dubai to have a student complaint and grievance process that is in line with the process that the institution has at its home campus.

4. **Site visits after initiation:**

UQAIB does not carry out site visits. The UQAIB Board meets in Dubai two to three times a year and carries out a paper-based review of the institutions. There are provisions for a site visit or an extraordinary audit, if it is required.

UQAIB places reliance on the home EQA of the IBC to carry out a visit of the branch campus and to provide UQAIB with the relevant reports of that visit. In cases where the home EQA does not carry out visits to branch campuses, UQAIB would expect it to be included in the review of the home campus.

- **Are site visits required after the international activity is implemented?**

- **At what frequency?**
• Are all international sites visited or only a sample?

• How are visits conducted – to individual sites or programs, to all operating within a region or country?

• Are virtual visits conducted or being considered?

• In the course of a visit, is the host country’s QA agency notified or consulted?

• What is the typical size of the visiting teams?

• What is the duration of a typical visit?

• Are team members given special training for international reviews?

• Are team members compensated?

• What is the cost of the review to the institution?

• How are international sites considered when the home institution is undergoing a comprehensive review?

5. Team Reports
N/A

- Is there a template for site visit reports to international sites?

- Are annual reports from the international site also to be filed with the QAA?

- Are reports public on the agency’s website?

- Are institutions required to publish team reports or QAA actions?

- Who prepares the site visit report? Team or staff?

- Who reviews team reports?

- How are IBC visits and reports connected to comprehensive institutional reviews?

6. Data

- How many international branch campuses or sites are operated by institutions accredited/quality assured by the agency?

UQAIB reviews and quality assures 20 IBCs annually.

- Is enrollment and retention data at the IBC reported for each site and monitored by the QA agency?

UQAIB collects data on student enrollment, progression, and retention. It also collects comparative data on assessment of students between the programme at the home and the branch campuses.
• Does the QAA collect information about the size, composition, qualifications and workload of the faculty at international sites?

UQAIB collects data on faculty including the number, qualifications, and experience of faculty members. It does not collect workload level data.

7. Internal quality assurance requirements:

• What type of home institution monitoring is required by the QAA to ensure comparative quality of the IBCs?

UQAIB has several mechanisms in place to assure that the quality between the branch and home campuses are equivalent:

– UQAIB requires that the home campus has full responsibility for the branch institutions. This includes registration of students, award of degrees, recruitment of faculty, curriculum and programme offering, quality assurance, etc.

– UQAIB places reliance on the home EQA and requires the institution to make available reports by the home EQA.

– UQAIB requires that the institution have internal quality assurance systems for the branch campus that replicate those at the home campus.

– UQAIB collects comparative data on student progression and performance at a programme level and also on selected core courses/modules within each programme.

• Is external review required (e.g., external examiners or program reviews)?

Where a process of external examiner review exists at the home campus, this should also be extended to the branch.

• Is grading monitored?

Yes, UQAIB requires the submission of data on the grade distribution by percentage of cohort.

• Are learning outcomes for each program required to be identified and assessed?

No.

• Are degree qualification frameworks considered for IBCs?

Yes, provided they replicate what is offered at the home campus.

8. QAA actions?
• **What actions are available to the agency prior to and after a program or campus is initiated?**

The KHDA has the authority to reject the establishment of both an IBC or the introduction of programmes. After implementation, if either the institution or the programmes fail to comply with the requirements of UQAIB, the KHDA has the authority to make recommendations and requirements, place programmes or the institution on probation, or ultimately, not renew the academic authorization of the programme or institution.

• **What process exists to ensure the recommendations/requirements are implemented by the institution?**

UQAIB requires evidence to be submitted to demonstrate the implementation of the recommendations and requirements. Institutions can be placed on a probationary status for up to two years, after which they will be denied an academic authorization from KHDA.

• **What power/sanctions are available for institutions that do not comply with the recommendations/requirements?**

Institutions that do not comply with the quality assurance requirements and KHDA regulations will not be issued an academic authorization. This will also prevent them from renewing their commercial business license and hence prohibits them from operating legally in Dubai.

• **Does the agency have reciprocity agreements with other QA agencies? If so, with which agencies?**

UQAIB has agreements with the following agencies:

- QAA, United Kingdom
- WASC and NEASC, USA

UQAIB is in the process of signing agreements with Malaysia and Australia.
Reference