

The cover features a decorative graphic consisting of several overlapping circles in various shades of blue (dark, medium, and light) and thin red lines that intersect to form a triangular shape in the upper left and a larger shape in the lower right. The text is centered in the middle of the page.

Orientation Handbook for NCAAA Review Teams

**National Commission for
Academic Accreditation &
Assessment**

19/12/2013



NCAAA Orientation Handbook

**National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Assessment
(NCAAA)**

PO Box 8252

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia 11482

Telephone +966 1 263 2375 Ext 503

Fax +966 1 263 0874



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Introduction

The National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Assessment (NCAAA) would like to thank you for your willingness to serve as part of an accreditation review. The Commission looks forward to working with you.

To ensure that you have a successful visit, the NCAAA has developed this handbook to provide all of the necessary information required to participate successfully in a quality assurance review of Saudi universities and college programs

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SECTION 1

Introduction to NCAAA and Higher Education in Saudi Arabia



INTRODUCTION

In 2004 the NCAAA was established by the Higher Council of Education as an independent authority with responsibility for accreditation and quality assurance in post secondary education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The responsibilities of NCAAA are extensive and are set out in the Higher Education By-Laws; however a general description of its role in the system of accreditation and quality assurance are outlined below.

The primary role of the NCAAA is to:

- Establish standards, criteria and procedures for academic assessment and accreditation in all post-secondary educational institutions;
- Provide training and support for postsecondary faculty and staff involved in the establishment and development of quality assurance systems;
- Evaluate and provide support for the development of quality assurance documentation and reports required for the accreditation process;
- Manage and coordinate external accreditation reviews of programs and institutions.

The NCAAA mission is:

To encourage, support and evaluate the quality of post secondary institutions and the programs they offer to ensure that:

- 1. the quality of student learning outcomes,*
 - 2. the management and support services provided within institutions, and*
 - 3. the contributions to research and the communities served by post secondary institutions,*
- are equal to high international standards.*

and universities.

The Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) is responsible for supervising, planning and coordinating the Kingdom's requirements with regard to higher education. The NCAAA is a government body responsible to Higher Council of Education and who operates independently of the MoHE.

Since 2003 there has been constant growth and ongoing restructuring and merging of universities and colleges within the Saudi higher education sector. In 2003 only eight public universities existed, however this number has increased with 24 public universities, 8 private universities and 20 private colleges in operation. It is important to note that figures associated with the number of universities

INFORMATION ABOUT SAUDI ARABIA POST SECONDARY EDUCATION

The post secondary education sector is under considerable pressure to expand given increasing birth rates, completion rates in secondary schools and the demand for continuing education. Expansion is also expected to be provided by the private sector through the establishment of private colleges



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and college programs change on a monthly basis given the significant growth within the higher education sector. Up to date information can be found on the following site. [http://www.mohe.gov.sa`](http://www.mohe.gov.sa)

A significant development has been the increase in attention to quality assurance matters, with many institutions and programs seeking accreditation from the NCAAA and from international accrediting agencies.

The higher education system is highly regulated and subject to a number of by-laws and regulations.

The vocational sector is monitored and managed by the Technical and Vocational Training Corporation (TVTC). The number of public vocational and technical institutions is increasing. In 2009 47 public colleges were in operation in addition to more than 60 private specialized technical colleges and institutes. However most of the technical and vocational institutes and colleges are small. About 15% of the post secondary enrollments are in this sector.

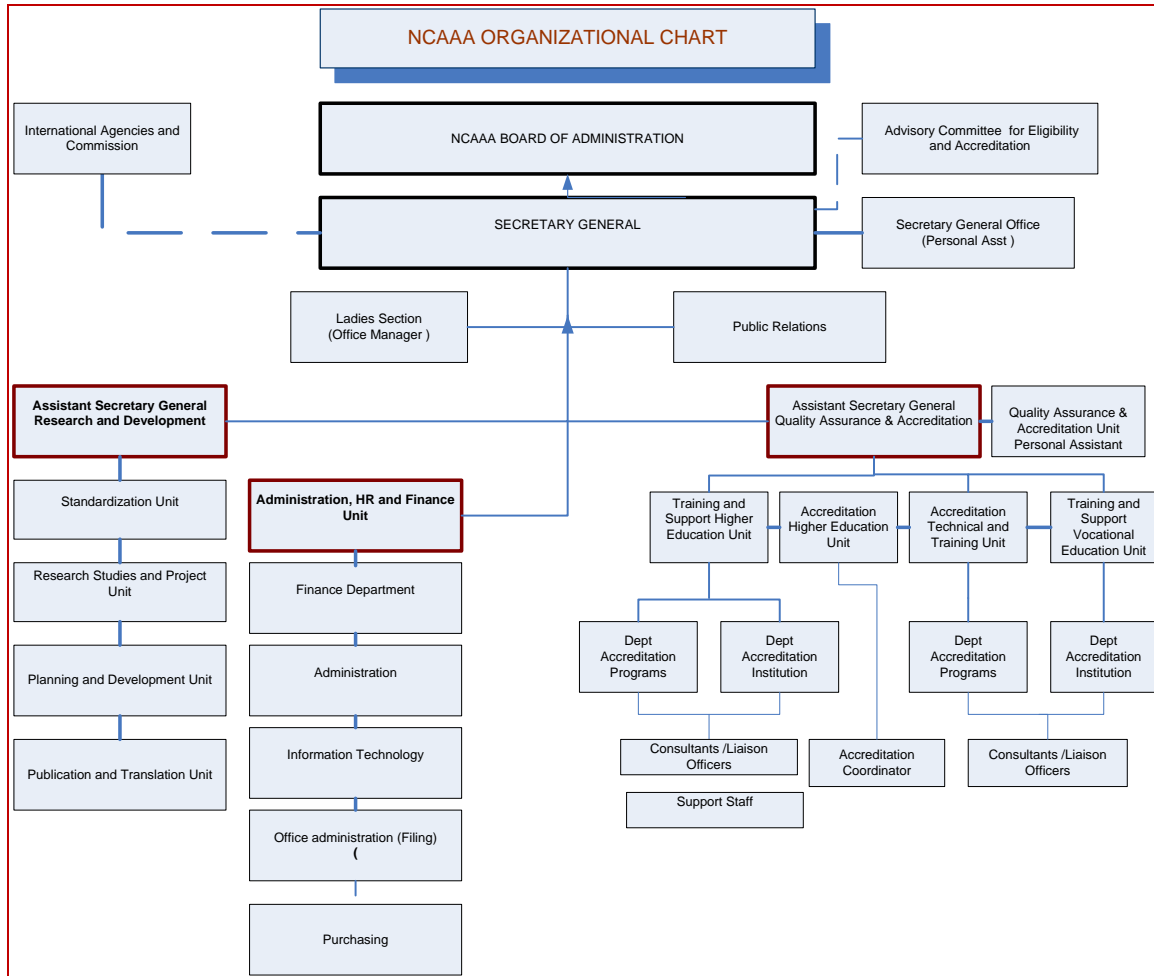
While Saudi Arabia is facing skill shortages in a number of areas, the rate of employment of graduates is not high. The government is adopting a number of measures, including "*Saudization*," to encourage employment in the private sector. It is an important policy consideration for post secondary education to ensure that graduates have the necessary skills and knowledge in a wide range of professional and vocational fields.

More information can be obtained from the following sites:

<http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20100128191639737>



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THE NCAAA ACCREDITATION AND QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM

This comprehensive quality assurance system has been implemented gradually with a substantial number of training programs, pilot and developmental reviews, and extensive consultation.

The NCAAA quality standards for accreditation have been defined in eleven areas of activity for both institutions and programs. The Saudi *National Qualifications Framework* (NQF) provides supporting guidelines and specifies generic standards of learning outcomes within five domains of learning. Supporting documentation includes key performance indicators, student surveys, self-evaluation scales, and templates for program and course specifications and reports.

The standards that have been defined by the NCAAA are similar to the requirements of other quality assurance agencies, but give special attention to matters of particular importance in Saudi Arabia. The standards are expressed in greater detail than in many other quality assurance systems. This is largely because many of the institutions and programs have limited experience with quality assurance practices and understanding of common “best practices” is not assumed. The more detailed sub-standards are intended to draw attention to common practices that are followed in many high quality institutions or programs. However, while the standards are necessarily detailed, they still allow considerable flexibility in response to variations in mission and the characteristics of the students and communities served by the institution.

Further information relating to the accreditation and quality assurance system and the processes and procedures involved are outlined in separate documents published by the NCAAA.

The major documents are:

HANDBOOKS FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCREDITATION IN SAUDI ARABIA

Part 1 – The System for Quality Assurance and Accreditation

Part 1 outlines the principles and processes underlying the system for accreditation and quality assurance describes the eleven standards and provides definitions of key terms.

Part 2 – Internal Quality Assurance Arrangements

Part 2 focuses on the arrangements for internal quality assurance processes, including use of the program and course specifications and details on the self study reports for institutions and programs. Included are guidelines and templates.

Part 3 – External Reviews for Accreditation and Quality Assurance

Part 3 describes the external quality assurance arrangements required for accreditation. These processes relate to applications for approval and accreditation of a new institution, accreditation and re-accreditation of institutions and programs on a seven year cycle.



NCAAA STANDARDS

Published documents include:

- ***Standards for Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions***
- ***Standards for Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Higher Education Programs***
- ***National Qualifications Framework***

The NCAAA accreditation quality assurance standards for higher education describe eleven general standards in the administration and operations of post secondary institutions and programs.

1. Mission and Objectives
2. Governance and Administration
3. Management of Quality Assurance and Improvement
4. Learning and Teaching
5. Student Administration and Support Services
6. Learning Resources
7. Facilities and Equipment
8. Financial Planning and Management
9. Faculty and Staff Employment processes
10. Research
11. Institutional Relationships with the Community

Each of these standards is described and subdivided into major sub-standards. Lists of actions that are generally considered “best practices” are provided. To assist in self evaluation by those responsible for different activities within institutions, rating scales have been included.

Self-evaluation scales are available for use as working documents by institutions and programs to evaluate their performance in relation to the eleven standards and sub-standards.

- ***Self Evaluation Scales for Higher Education Institutions***
- ***Self Evaluation Scales for Higher Education Programs***



NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

The **National Qualifications Framework (NQF)** sets out descriptions intended to ensure consistency within the Kingdom for the standards of student learning outcomes, regardless of institution attended, and to make clear the equivalence of those standards with those for equivalent awards granted by post secondary education institutions in other parts of the world. The NQF provides appropriate points of comparison in academic standards for institutions in their planning and self review processes, for external reviewers involved in institutional accreditation processes and program reviews, and for employers, in understanding the skills and capabilities of graduates they may employ.

The NQF principal elements are levels of learning, academic credits, and domains of learning. There are five domains of learning identified in the NQF.

1. Knowledge
2. Cognitive Skills
3. Interpersonal Skills and Responsibility
4. Communication, Information Technology and Numerical Skills
5. Psychomotor Skills

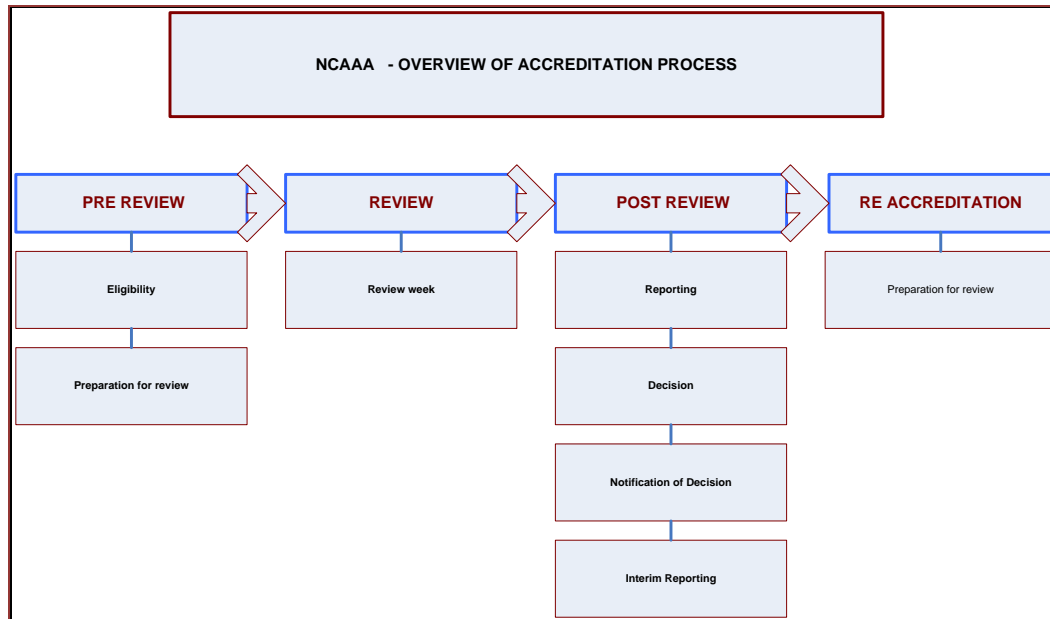
These documents have been prepared specifically for use in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and relate to the circumstances and requirements of this country. However, the standards and criteria are based on good examples drawn from all over the world and adapted to local requirements.

More detailed information relating to external reviews are outlined in this handbook and can also be found in **Handbook 3, Chapter 4 - Role and responsibilities of External Review Panel** and on the NCAAA web site www.NCAAA.org.sa.

THE NCAAA ACCREDITATION AND QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCESS

The NCAAA process involves four major stages commencing with Pre-Review and finishing with Re-Accreditation.

The NCAAA accreditation review process is cyclic and dependent on the accreditation actions provided by a review panel. The total time taken to complete an accreditation review cycle can take up to 18 months or longer and is dependent on how effectively an institution or program progresses through each review stage.



TYPES OF ACCREDITATION

It is a requirement by the Ministry of Higher Education that all institutions and programs be accredited by the NCAAA.

To be accredited, institutions and programs must comply with the generally expected standards of best practice as outlined in the national standards. Accreditation is normally valid for seven years, after which an institution or program will need to be re-accredited. Accreditation actions may include:

- Accreditation
- Conditional accreditation
- Not to accredit
- Accreditation deferred

Each one of these actions is explained on the NCAAA Review Panel Report (RPR) template which is distributed before each review. All NCAAA reviews are conducted by external experts who are higher education professionals from the USA, UK, and Australia and throughout the local and national regions of the Middle East.



SECTION 2

Guidelines for NCAAA Review Panels





INTRODUCTION

NCAAA review panels fulfil an important role that requires considerable commitment. To be fully effective, an NCAAA review panel must be diligent and prepared to invest the time necessary to understand the requirements of the NCAAA and also the institution or program under review.

NCAAA reviewers make a vital contribution to the work of the NCAAA by evaluating and reviewing information provided by institutions or programs against the national standards.

The value of an external review is highly dependent on the credibility, knowledge and experience of its review panel. It is therefore important that all NCAAA reviewers have a current understanding of systems and processes required to conduct reviews in Saudi Arabia.

The NCAAA provides all of the information required to conduct an accreditation review. NCAAA staff and accreditation consultants are available to provide information and support throughout the accreditation process.

When determining the composition of a review team, the NCAAA attempts to balance experience in a number of areas with a wide range of knowledge, skills and personal attributes, such as:

- Sound professional judgment;
- Integrity and reliability;
- The ability to evaluate and question intelligently, based on sound professional knowledge, reasoning skills, and experience;
- The ability to demonstrate highly regarded professional behavior within a team environment.

The NCAAA has a responsibility to ensure the professional and ethical conduct of staff and reviewers when conducting quality assurance reviews.

As an NCAAA reviewer or consultant, you assume part of the responsibility to act in a professional and ethical manner, protecting the rights of the organizations who are involved in a review. In order to comply with the NCAAA professional and ethical standards, it is a requirement that all reviewers read and sign the **Code of Practice** incorporated in the **Declaration Form** prior to participating in a review.



KEY PERSONNEL INVOLVED IN THE REVIEW

Guidance and support is provided by the entire NCAAA staff. Outlined are the roles and responsibilities of the staff directly involved in an accreditation review.

NCAAA ACCREDITATION CONSULTANT

An accreditation consultant (AC) is a professional Ph.D. consultant who communicates, provides information, and coordinates the activities between the institution or program under review and the review panel. The NCAAA has commissioned accreditation consultant(s) to ensure that all the accreditation services, and the work required for accreditation, are complete according to the NCAAA policies, procedures and standards.

Specific roles and responsibilities of accreditation consultant (s) are:

PRE- REVIEW

- Provides information and assistance to the institution or program in preparation for the accreditation review;
- Facilitates eligibility and document review;
- Provides a link between the institution or program and review panel in the preparation of the review;
- Preparation of the review schedule in consultation with the Chair, the institution or program, and the Assistant Secretary General;
- Provides information and support with the NCAAA administration officer in preparation for the review.

DURING THE ACCREDITATION REVIEW

- Provides orientation and presents information to the review panel regarding the NCAAA accreditation standards and processes;
- Attends meetings with the review panel;
- Obtains additional information or evidence needed from the institution or program for the review panel;
- Facilitates changes to the review schedule if necessary;
- Assists the review panel in the preparation of the Review Panel Report (RPR);
- Ensures that recommendations and conditions (if any) are properly written;
- Assists the review panel in preparation for the exit meeting and presentation;
- Receives the first, initial draft RPR on completion of the review.

POST REVIEW

- Follows through with the Chair to obtain final RPR;
- Provides updates on status of the RPR;
- Provides information on the review process as requested by NCAAA.



ADMINISTRATION OFFICER AND OTHER ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

The Administration Officer (AO) and administrative staff are the initial link between the accreditation consultant and the review panel before the accreditation visit. This role includes:

- Manage and coordinate contact with international reviewers for review panels;
- Assist in setting up review panels in consultation with the Assistant Secretary General for Quality Assurance and Accreditation;
- Organize travel, visas and accommodation for review panels;
- Coordinates reviewers with the NCAAA accreditation management system (AMS);
- Coordinates the management of the RPR and follow-up reports;

THE ROLE OF THE REVIEW PANEL

The NCAAA review panel is comprised of individuals that have substantial senior level experience in teaching and/or administration in postsecondary education relevant to the institution or program under review. Panel members must possess a wide range of knowledge, skills, and personal attributes; including sound judgement, cultural sensitivity, high ethical skills, strong interpersonal skills and the willingness to challenge and probe objectively in order to merit the trust and confidence of the institution, the NCAAA, and the wider community. Panel members must demonstrate and show evidence of international experience and currency in quality assurance.

Review panel members must be prepared to follow the NCAAA processes and invest the time necessary to understand and work through review documentation and write a RPR.



SPECIFIC ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE REVIEW PANEL MEMBERS ARE:

PRE-REVIEW

- Complete all the necessary NCAAA administrative documentation to ensure successful travel arrangements;
- Prepare for six days of intense work with long evenings;
- Utilize the NCAAA accreditation management system to access information and documents;
- Evaluate the **Self Study Report (SSR)** and other documents in order to determine in advance questions and areas of investigation using the NCAAA template (**NCAAA Review Questions**);
- Participate fully as a panel member and assist the Chair to complete the preliminary work;
- Commence writing the RPR, using the template, based on the SSRI or SSRP;
- Communicate with the Chair, accreditation consultant, and other panel members.

NOTE: It is important that the *NCAAA Review Questions* template is complete prior to the review as this forms the basis of questions and areas to investigate during the review (a copy of the final list of the question should be given to the lead accreditation consultant).

DURING ACCREDITATION REVIEW

- Practice advanced professional, scientific, and reasonable thinking skills;
- Must not compare institutions or programs with other institutions or programs;
- Respect cultural and religious practices and traditions at all times;
- Refrain from expressing personal bias or pre-conceived ideas;
- Support NCAAA standards, policy, practice, and personnel;
- Convey a professional appearance and demeanor at all times (refer FAQ);
- Attend all scheduled meetings and be on time;
- Work with the Chair to ensure cohesiveness in the panel and a successful outcome;
- Avoid becoming involved in any confrontation during the visit;
- Adhere to the NCAAA code of conduct;
- Work together in the preparation for the exit meeting and presentation;

POST- REVIEW

- Work with the team Chair to complete the final RPR draft;
- Participate in discussions regarding the RPR if queries are made by the NCAAA;
- Complete the NCAAA evaluation sheet.



THE ROLE OF THE REVIEW CHAIR

NCAAA Chairs are recognised for leadership, experience, currency in quality assurance and experience with the NCAAA standards and review process. The Chair has a crucial role in driving the NCAAA review process, ensuring that all relevant issues are included and discussed. It is important that the Chair of the NCAAA review panel is familiar with the NCAAA standards and relevant documents, audit requirements and possible accreditation actions.

SPECIFIC ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CHAIR ARE:

PRE-REVIEW

- Contact each panel member (normally by email) to establish a basis of introduction on receipt of the SSR and associated documentation;
- Work with the review panel to allocate standards between the members that are to be examined prior to the review;
- Work with the panel to evaluate the SSR and record questions and areas of investigation using the NCAAA template (*NCAAA Review Questions*);
- Ensure that the panel completes the NCAAA questions or concerns template according to the prescribed timeline and collates them into one master document for use during the review and for submission to the NCAAA;
- Advise the accreditation consultant of any special requirements for the arrangements and in preparing the review schedule;
- Request additional information via the accreditation consultant from the review institution or program;
- Meet with the review panel on arrival to discuss the conduct of the visit with particular emphasis on being positive and supportive at all times.

During the Review Visit

- Carry out assigned responsibilities and direct the panel members to complete their responsibilities;
- Direct panel organizational meeting to structure the visit, clarify the responsibilities, and to build positive working relationships;
- Use the master questions and areas of investigation as a basis for discussions and interviews;
- Be the spokesperson for the panel, a responsibility is shared with the accreditation consultant;



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- Encourage open and constructive communication in the panel about issues and concerns that emerge;
- Ensure that the panel stays on track and does not digress to irrelevant subjects or topics;
- Ensure that all meetings and interviews commence and conclude on time, according to the review schedule;
- Ensure the preparation of the initial drafts of the RPR address the NCAAA standards and sub-standards with accompanying commendations, suggestions and recommendations that are measurable for assessment;
- Ensure that all documentation is destroyed on completion of the review.

Post-Review

- Work with the panel to complete the final draft of the RPR;
- Address issues related to the RPR during the period of the review cycle (time will be dependent on the nature of the accreditation action).

NOTE

It should be understood that the NCAAA will normally follow the advice that it has received from the review panel, however it is not bound to do so in all respects, and may seek further advice on particular matters if it believes it is necessary to do so.

CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS

An important cultural and traditional part of Saudi Arabia is male and female separation. This practice applies in all types of businesses. For example, in many shopping malls and in some individual stores or in restaurants and coffee shops there is a separate “single section” for males. Nearby there is a separate “family section” for females and families. Family sections include husbands with wives and children. A review panel with both males and females or if there are just females should go to the family section, whereas, a group of males must go to the single section.

In a majority of instances of educational institutions or programs, male and female students are on separate campuses or sites on the same campus. Some institutions or programs mix genders, particularly in medical science areas. Thus most review panels are comprised of both males and females and the schedule is designed according to the specific requirements of the institution.



THE REVIEW PROCESS

The NCAAA review process is scheduled over a 6 day period.

- **Day 1** Orientation and organizational meetings
- **Day 2- 5** Review site visit
- **Day 6** Writing RPR and presentation

BEFORE THE REVIEW

Panel members must familiarize themselves with the standards and requirements for quality assurance and accreditation as specified in the documents provided by the NCAAA before the visit starts.

In order to facilitate the review process the NCAAA accreditation consultant(s) are assigned to work with the institution or program, the review panel, and the Chair. Contact details regarding the accreditation consultant(s) are forwarded to all review panel members as soon as the review panel commitments are complete.

The following pre-visit documentation will be provided by the NCAAA accreditation management system for each institution or program participating in the accreditation review.

- Name, contact information, and profile details of the review panel members
- Review schedule
- Profile information regarding the institution or program
- Self Study Report
- Program and Course Specifications and Reports
- Strategic Plan
- Self-Evaluation Scales Report
- Template for the external RPR
- Power Point template for exit report
- NCAAA Expenses Claim Form
- NCAAA Travel Booking Form
- Disclosure Declaration Form
- Review Evaluation Form
- Other attachments and evidence



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PRE VISIT PREPARATION

The Chair, appointed by the NCAAA, will coordinate the assignment of responsibilities to the panel members for document review and RPR writing.

It is expected that panel members:

- Treat all documentation as confidential;
- Read the materials and identify matters that require investigation and complete the **NCAAA Review Questions** template;
- Request additional information, documents or evidence relating to the institution or program SSR;

Make contact with the Chair as required. It is expected that each panel member will download Skype 4.1 <http://www.skype.com> so that direct communication can be made using the computer. "Skype to Skype" calls are no charge. More details will be provided by the **Administration Officer**.

- It is recommended that panelist begin writing their assigned RPR sections prior to the visit in order to better use the visit time to assess evidence and verification of documents.

DAY ONE – ORIENTATION AND ORGANISATIONAL MEETINGS

- Orientation and organizational meetings are conducted prior to the commencement of the institutional or program review. The first meeting will provide information required for the review and updates of the NCAAA review process. During the second meeting the Chair will complete organization arrangements and discuss the visit strategy. The panel will also discuss the questions that have been prepared in advance to the visit.
- The location of the meeting will be stated in the review schedule or a notice will be provided on arrival to the hotel.
- On accepting the role as a reviewer, all matters pertaining to the institution or the program, the deliberations during the review and the contents of the reports must be considered as confidential.

NOTES

- Panel members are encouraged to bring their own laptops. If a laptop is unavailable please notify the NCAAA in advance so that arrangements can be made to have a computer at your disposal during the visit.
- The NCAAA does not supply secretarial support, therefore all reviewers are expected to type the sections of the report assigned by the Chair using the NCAAA template (please do not change the template settings, fonts, or font size).
- Transportation to and from the institution or program is provided by the review institution and NCAAA.



DURING THE REVIEW

Once on site, adherence to the schedule is the responsibility of the panel members and the accreditation consultant. If at any modifications to the review schedule are required, the Chair must discuss the suggested changes with the accreditation consultant. Changing the schedule or cancelling meetings is strongly discouraged. Although there are times when the Chair must assign a panel member to investigate a specific question for the panel, otherwise all panel members are expected to attend all of the scheduled meetings. Skipping a meeting to write the RPR is unacceptable.

NOTES

- It is the responsibility of the accreditation consultant to take an active part in all of the panel's deliberations to ensure that everyone is kept informed of the NCAAA standards and protocol, especially with regard to finalizing the panel recommendations (and condition(s) if any). If any issues or concerns arise, please inform the accreditation consultant.
- The schedule provides time for the panel to meet and interview all stakeholders during the review. Full advantage should be taken of these times to discuss and reach preliminary conclusions or to identify additional investigations that need to be undertaken.
- Panel members are assigned to investigate particular standards in depth during the initial preparation and during the review. In addition, members are to contribute to the overall evaluation.
- The panel members are expected to respect the culture and tradition of Saudi Arabia (Refer sections 4 and 5 in this handbook).
- Panel members should determine their evaluations and decisions based solely on the evidence presented to document compliance with the NCAAA standards and sub-standards. Under no circumstances are evaluations determined on the basis of comparisons with other institutions or programs.
- According to the guidelines, each review panel must produce an initial draft RPR prior to departure using the NCAAA report template. The content of the RPR must be discussed and agreed upon by the panel on completion of the review and prior to departure.
- Normally on the last morning of the review the panel members discuss and agree on the precise wording of their commendations, recommendations and suggestions. They also agree on the compliance state for each standard and make an overall accreditation status recommendation. In the event that the panel recommends "conditional accreditation" the panel must write out the condition(s) that are separate and distinct from the panel's recommendations.
- Panel members must not indicate in any way the panel's accreditation recommendation to the institution or to the program. All aspects of the RPR are considered confidential.



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- Before the exit presentation is given for institutional accreditation, a separate, private exit meeting is held at the end of the review with the Rector or CEO, the Chair, and the NCAAA Assistant Secretary General to discuss the basic finding of the panel. The NCAAA lead accreditation consultant attends the exit meeting for program accreditation.
- The panel exit presentation, using the NCAAA PowerPoint template, is given to those determined by the institutional or program. Presentations are given to highlight key commendations, recommendations and suggestions of the RPR and provide the opportunity to thank individual leaders for their cooperation and hospitality (there is no Q & A time).
- *All communication between the institution or program personal and review panel members is to take place through the lead accreditation consultant, whether it is prior to the visit or after the visit. No member of the review panel should contract the institution on a consultant basis for at least one year following the review process.*

AFTER THE REVIEW

- On completion of the visit, panel members who wish to leave any program documents should refer to the NCAAA to arrange appropriate disposal of the materials. Materials must not be left in hotels.
- All panel members are requested to complete an evaluation form to provide feedback to the NCAAA regarding the total review process.
- It is the responsibility of the Chair to submit the second RPR draft to the NCAAA lead accreditation consultant **within two weeks of the review visit**. The RPR will be edited for inadvertent factual errors and formatted to ensure document consistency.
- In the event there are substantive changes to the RPR suggested, the RPR will be returned to the Chair for revision, editing, clarifying, and approval. The Chair may contact panel members to assist.

SECTION 3

Frequently Asked Questions





1

What steps are involved when travelling to Saudi Arabia?

All travel arrangements are coordinated by the NCAAA administration section upon confirmation of the review dates. In order to serve NCAAA in Saudi Arabia a business visa must be issued.

NOTE: It is absolutely essential that you have a valid and appropriate visa for Saudi Arabia in your passport before you travel.

In order to process your travel arrangements the following information is required:

- **Dates of departure and return to your country**
- **Copy of your passport, including an ID photo**
- **A short version of your CV**

This information can be uploaded into the NCAAA accreditation management system, faxed or forwarded as an email attachment. On receipt of the information an application for a visa will be completed and travel arrangements will be made.

It is important to read the *Travel Policy and Guidelines* document attached to the Orientation Handbook.

All travellers are advised to obtain **travel insurance**. Before obtaining independent travel insurance, please check with NCAAA for further details. You may visit the following site for travel insurance <http://www.worldnomads.com>

In summary, the NCAAA covers the costs of Business Class travel for international segments of the journey and costs for ground transportation to and from home. Reimbursement for local travel will be provided with submission of receipts and the NCAAA travel reimbursement form.

Once all travel details are finalized an electronic ticket will be issued by NCAAA and sent to reviewers. Upon receive of the electronic ticket; please confirm flight details by calling the relevant airline.

If you wish to make your own travel arrangements, please notify the NCAAA of the estimated cost and economic option of the travel route. Reimbursement of costs will be provided on receipt of the ticket documentation and cost. If you wish to deviate from the most direct route, please notify the NCAAA immediately with all information on the dates and stops. The NCAAA will include the additions to the flight plan and notify you of any additional charges.



IMPORTANT NOTES

- *Your passport must be valid for a minimum period of six months from the date of entry into Saudi Arabia and also have at least two blank, side by side, pages.*
- *The regulations in Saudi Arabia prohibits the importation of any narcotics, alcohol, pork products, religious books and material, obscene literature or videos or literature containing pictures of scantily dressed women.*

On Arrival in Saudi Arabia

A representative from the NCAAA or the review institution or program will be at the airport to meet and greet you. The representative will assist in the organization of luggage.

In the event that your airline is delayed, please contact the NCAAA representative so that alternative arrangements can be made. The name and contact details of the NCAAA representative will be forwarded with the travel documentation.

In the unlikely event that your representative is not at the airport, please contact:

Mr. Mashari Alsikan

Administration Officer

Tel. +966-01-12632375/ ext.100 or 888

Mobile - +966 (0) 500559855

On arrival in the airport and before departing the grounds, all female reviewers must wear an abaya. This will be provided by your airport representative if one is not available with you.

Airport porters are always available to push trolleys and carry bags. If this service is used, a tip of SAR 10 is expected for each bag.

Departing Saudi Arabia

The NCAAA will have all information regarding your departure and will work with the concierge of the hotel to ensure a timely and safe trip to the airport.

2

What accommodation arrangements are organized for reviewers?

High quality hotels are provided by the NCAAA. These hotels have a wide range of facilities and services to meet the needs of each group. It is important to note there are separate facilities for



male and female guests, such as the gym. In some hotels there are floors designated just for females.

The NCAAA will cover the costs for:

- All meals and refreshments
- Internet
- Laundry

The electricity current is usually 240 volts. An adaptor may be needed for specific electrical items. The hotel will usually provide adaptors as a part of the service, however it is advisable that a multi functional (British, US and European) adaptor be bought in the event that one is unavailable in the hotel.



What is the currency used in Saudi Arabia?

The currency for Saudi Arabia is the Saudi riyal (SAR). The fixed benchmark exchange rate is to the US dollar and is set at 3.75 riyals for one US dollar.

Coins come in 5, 10, 25 and 50 halala and SAR 1 denominations. Notes are in SAR 1, 5, 10, 20, 50, 100 and 500 denominations. Please be careful to check notes because many countries in the Middle East utilize similar looking currency.

Dependent on the country, fluctuations will vary in the exchange rate. In order to find out the currency value checks this site. <http://www.xe.com/ucc/>

Saudi SARs are not always available in all foreign countries for advance exchange and many Saudi banks and hotels will not exchange currencies from all countries. To avoid exchange problems, exchange your local currency to US dollars before coming to Saudi Arabia and then it is easy to exchange US dollars into SARs.

Once you arrive, the hotel will exchange US dollars for SARs and often will make exchanges for currency from any of the Gulf States, the Euro, and a few other prominent economic countries.

It is wise to have some local currency to cover small purchases and if needed, taxi fares.

In some Saudi Arabian airports currency exchange facilities are unavailable. SARs may be obtained in places as Dubai or other foreign airports. However, where currency exchanges and banking facilities are available the exchange rates are unlikely to be favourable. More competitive rates can be obtained from major city financial establishments.



4

What are the IT and mobile phone requirements in Saudi Arabia?

All reviewers are encouraged to bring their own laptops, particularly for working outside the institution or program. It is important to ensure that your system has current virus protection software, particularly if sharing USB's throughout the review process. Phone cards and local SIMS cards can be purchased in Saudi Arabia. If you require a local SIM card, please discuss this with the accreditation consultant or the administration officer. Often the institution or program will lend mobile phones to reviewers for local communication needs.

5

What is the NCAAA reviewer rate?

The NCAAA will pay Business Class fares and a consulting rate of \$US 500. per day during the period of the review, in addition to two days for travel and for reading and question preparations. If reviewers are participating in a number of reviews, the daily rate will also be paid for the period of non-review days. An additional amount of \$US 1,000. is paid to the Chair of the panel.

Payment for services rendered will be paid in two transactions:

- 1. Half the consultancy payment with expenses on completion of the review. This amount will be paid within 10 days of the review.***
- 2. The remaining amount will be paid once the Chair has submitted the revised draft which is in accordance with the NCAAA report guidelines and requirements.***

6

What are the business etiquette and protocol requirements for Saudi Arabia?

Business etiquette for the review panel requires that all meetings outlined in the schedule provided will start on time and end on time.

Men should always shake hands when greeting and parting from Arab men. Women should shake hands with women. However, women must never shake hands with men unless invited to do so. If a woman initiates a handshake with a man, then the man may follow through and shake her hand. If a woman does not initiate a handshake, a slight bow or other recognition is sufficient for men.

In some instances, you may see men holding hands or kissing each on the cheek. These expressions are acceptable customs in Saudi Arabia. Holding hands is a traditional expression of friendship between men and should not be interpreted in any other way. It is a sign of solidarity and kinship. Kissing cheeks, long handshakes and clutching hands are meant to reflect goodwill, devotion, and most important, equality in status; as noted by Fuad Ishak Khuri, a social anthropologist, in his book, "The Body in Islamic Culture" (2001).



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Dress Etiquette

Most Saudis males wear long white thobes. Westerners are expected to wear a suit and tie.

Women must be certain that their collarbones and knees are covered and that their clothes are not form-fitting. Abayas must be worn at all times in public and also in business meetings with men. In some instances, a scarf or headsets must be worn so that the hair is covered. Advice will be provided regarding this requirement prior to the review period.

Hands & Feet

As parts of the Islamic tradition, people accept refreshments whenever they are offered, but note that it is preferred that you use your right hand for drinking and eating.

Similarly, you should avoid showing the soles of your shoes or feet, which some consider as a sign of disrespect.

IMPORTANT NOTES

Business Cards

Business cards are **NOT** to be distributed during or outside the review (Refer Disclosure declaration Section 7).

Abayas

Female reviewers will be provided with an abaya on arrival. Abayas must be worn at all times in public and also where men are present.

Clothing underneath the abaya must be modest with shoulders covered in addition to knees.

Abayas must not be called any other names, such as robes, coats etc.

Shopping or Walking About

Female reviewers are not encouraged to wander in the streets unless accompanied by a male.

Use of Alcohol

Reviewers traveling to or from Saudi Arabia may decide to purchase refreshments that contain alcohol; however NCAAA will not reimburse any alcohol products. This policy includes instances where NCAAA reviews are conducted outside of Saudi Arabia. It is important to note that the NCAAA will **not** cover the cost of refreshments that contain alcohol.

7

What medical requirements are needed for Saudi Arabia?

Visit your doctor (ideally, 4-6 weeks) before your trip to get any vaccines or medicines you may need.

As stated above, reviews can be demanding in terms of time spent travelling to Saudi Arabia in addition to working long hours. It is therefore important that you are in good health. In the event of a medical emergency, Saudi Arabia has excellent doctors and state of the art medical facilities available.

Please ensure that you have obtained travel insurance to cover costs of any medical requirements.

8

Where can I shop and see sites in Saudi Arabia?

Shopping in Saudi Arabia is a wonderful experience. The shopping malls are great places to visit and for entertainment. People enjoy spending time strolling at malls. This allows buyers to choose from a wide variety merchandise. All types of products are available from all over the world and they are sold without a sales-tax.

It is important to note some fundamental differences in the way that females shop in Saudi Arabia. In most areas, sales persons are men. In 2013 it was decreed by the King that women may accept jobs in sales where clothing, cosmetics, lingerie and supermarket goods are sold. There are few female change rooms in clothing shops. To accommodate for this, change rooms may be found in shopping mall bathrooms. You may have to purchase the items before being able to try on the garments. Sizes can be exchanged or an immediate refund will be provided if garments are not suitable.

In Riyadh, there is a ladies floor in the Kingdom Mall. No men are allowed on this level. Some malls are only for women.

Those who love to shop can try out the Souks or open markets that are stocked with traditional Saudi goods; like antiques, jewelry, incense burners, brassware, bronze daggers and many more culturally distinctive items.

There are also shops in Saudi Arabia that are famous for imported perfumes or Oud, clothes, cosmetics, cameras and other commodities. Shopping for beautiful gold, silver, diamonds and white gold ornaments is a necessary part of Saudi Arabian tradition for all women folks. Sipping a cup of special Turkish coffee at the mall's food court is quite refreshing while shopping.



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Shopping hours

Saturday –Thursday from 09:00-12:00 and 16:30-22:30 are normal shopping hours. These hours differ in various parts of the country. There are limited shopping hours on Friday late afternoons and evenings.

Site-seeing in Saudi Arabia

There are many wonderful, exciting things to do in Saudi Arabia and historic sites to visit. Information regarding these activities can be obtained through the hotel or by visiting the following site.

<http://www.scta.gov.sa>

<http://www.hayatour.com/html/>



SECTION 4

Introducing Saudi Arabia





GENERAL INFORMATION

Saudi Arabia (officially Kingdom of Saudi Arabia) is a Western Asian country and the largest country of the Middle East. It has an estimated population of 28 million, and its size is approximately 2,800,000 square kilometers (1,080,000 sq mi). The capital of Saudi Arabia is Riyadh.

Saudi Arabia's geography is diverse, with forests, grasslands, mountain ranges and deserts. The climate varies from region to region. Temperatures can reach over 120 degrees Fahrenheit (50°C) in the summer (June – September), while in the winter (December– February) temperatures in the north and central parts of the country can drop below freezing. Saudi Arabia gets very little rain, only about four inches a year on average during winter.

Arab and Islamic Traditions

Saudi traditions are rooted in Islamic teachings and Arab customs, which Saudis learn about at an early age from their families and in schools.

The highlights of the year are the holy month of Ramadan and the Hajj (pilgrimage) season, and the national holidays that follow them. The holy month of Ramadan, during which Muslims fast from dawn to dusk, culminates with the Eid-Al-Fitr holiday, in which it is customary to buy presents and clothes for children and visit friends and relatives.

The other highlight is the Hajj season, during which millions of Muslim pilgrims from around the world visit Makkah. The Hajj season concludes with the Eid Al-Adha holiday, in which it is traditional for families to slaughter a sheep in memory of Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son.

The Saudi Way of Life

Saudi people are dignified and hospitable people. Work and social life are strictly separated by gender. Outside the family circle genders do not mix at all. Most Saudi women cover their faces in public. Women are not to drive.

Saudis will not generally be offended by a social mistake stemming from ignorance. They value personal contact and exchanges of small favors in their everyday affairs.

Photography

To ensure the right of privacy and security permission must be obtained if you wish to take photos of anyone, any buildings, installations or other local places.

Saudi Dietary Notes

Islamic dietary laws forbid the eating of pork and the drinking of alcohol, and this law is enforced strictly throughout Saudi Arabia. Arabic unleavened bread, or khobz, is eaten with almost all meals. Kabsah (rice with meat or chicken) lamb, grilled chicken, falafel (deep-fried chickpea balls), shawarma (spit-cooked sliced lamb), and Ful medames (a paste of fava beans, garlic and lemon) are some of the others foods eaten within Saudi Arabia.

In Saudi Arabia it is traditional hospitality to offer Arabic coffee and dates to visitors, which is the customary practice in both casual and formal meetings between friends, family and even strangers.



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More information can be obtained from the following websites:

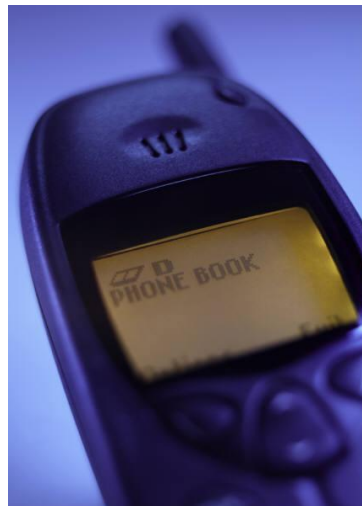
<http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/global-etiquette/saudi-arabia-country-profile.html>

<http://wondersofsaudiarabia.blogspot.com/p/culture-traditions-and-art.html>



SECTION 5

Contact Information





Contact information

Dr Abdullah Almusallam

Secretary General

Telephone +966 1 263 23 75 Ext 200

Fax - + 966 1 263 0874

Email - musallam@ncaaa.org.sa

Dr Saad S. Al Zahrani

Assistant Secretary General for Quality Assurance &Accreditation

Telephone +966 1 263 23 75 Ext 300

Fax - + 966 1 263 0874

Email - drssz@ncaaa.org.sa

Ahmed Alasiri

Director of the Office of the Secretary General

Telephone +966 1 263 23 75 Ext 100

Fax - + 966 1 263 0874

Email – ahmed@ncaaa.org.sa



SECTION 6

Supplementary Information

Disclosure Declaration

Reviewers expense claim form

Travel Form

Travel policy



Disclosure Declaration

NCAAA is responsible to the universities, colleges, and other constituencies for ensuring the professional and ethical conduct of its staff, reviewers, and others working on behalf of the Commission. During the period of appointment, you assume the responsibility to act in a professional and ethical manner, protecting the rights of the organizations under review, disclosing conflicts of interest, safeguarding intellectual property, and avoiding disclosure of confidential information.

All persons assuming work on behalf of the NCAAA must read and agree to the following requirements and complete the *Conflict of Interest Declaration* form on page 3.

Those who work or provide services on behalf of the NCAAA:

Professional Conduct

Each person must act in a professional and ethical manner, protecting the rights of the universities, colleges, organizations and persons involved and in so doing must strive to be objective, fair, honest, constructive and diligent.

Conflict of Interest

Each person must disclose in advance any information that could potentially limit the capacity to make objective, professional judgments. Potentially conflicting or competing interests include, but are not limited to, past or present financial, professional or personal relationships with the persons or organizations involved, its employees or competitors.

No one should accept gifts, gratuities, or benefits beyond modest hospitality, except when to do so would be offensive or embarrassing. In this case, timely disclosure must be made to the NCAAA.

Confidentiality and Nondisclosure

Each person must not disclose or use any information acquired or possessed during the term of their appointment; which concerns or relates to the activities or policies, management, financial affairs, planning, staffing or current and future dealings. All information provided by the NCAAA, universities, staff or other constituencies' shall be treated as confidential and shall be used only as directed by the NCAAA. This information shall not be reproduced or disclosed for any purpose without the expressed permission of the NCAAA.



Intellectual Property

Each person must take all reasonable steps to safeguard intellectual property and any other commercial-in-confidence material, electronic media or information disclosed during the course of their appointment.

Client Focus

Each person must ensure clear and transparent interactions and display respect for the personal rights of others in the process. Ensuring a client-focused approach requires polite, respectful, considerate and non-discriminatory practices in dealing with the NCAAA staff, universities, colleges and other constituencies.

Accountability

Each person must not act in any way that prejudices the reputation of the NCAAA or compromises the integrity of quality assurance process.

Post Appointment Consultancy

Each person must not issue business cards or carry out any educational consultancies, advisory work, or related activities with the entities listed on this *Conflict of Interest Declaration* form for a period of **one year** without the expressed permission of the NCAAA.

Cultural Sensitivity and Appropriateness

Everyone must act and behave in accordance within the cultural requirements of Saudi Arabia which includes:

- Wearing an abaya in all public places and in meetings with males (women only)
- Wearing appropriate and modest clothing underneath the abaya (no shoulders or knees exposed)
- Not challenging or questioning the culture in terms of national dress, segregation, religious requirements and work culture.

Respect for team members

Everyone must accept individual differences and treat team members and associated staff with respect; regardless of race, religion, gender, size, age or country of origin.



CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATION

Please disclose any information that could potentially limit your capacity to make objective, professional judgments or reasonably appear to influence your judgments. Potentially conflicting or competing interests include, but are not limited to, past or present financial, professional or personal relationships with the persons or organizations involved, its employees or competitors.

Also, please do not accept gifts, gratuities, or benefits beyond modest hospitality, except when to do so would be offensive or embarrassing. In this case, you should make timely disclosure to the NCAAA.

This agreement is applicable for the term of appointment and involves the following university.

.....University

I have a real or perceived conflict with the university that I have checked above.

I affirm that I have no real or perceived conflict of interest with the university involved in these proceedings.

In the past two (2) years I have undertaken consultancies and participated in accreditation reviews with the following Saudi Arabia institutions.

.....

.....

.....

.....

Signature _____ **Print Name** _____

Date _____

Contact Information

Email _____

Telephone _____

Comments:

NCAAA EXPENSES CLAIM FORM

DATE SUBMITTED

Name of Reviewer	
Postal Address	
Name of Review University	
NCAAA Staff member responsible	
Dates of Review/s	

Bank Name	
Bank Address	
Account Name	
IBAN or Swift Code	
Account Number	

EXPENSES SECTION 1 – Consultancy only					
Date	Descriptions	Amount	Total	Project code	Account code
EXPENSES SECTION 2 - Airfares, accommodation Meals, drinks, taxi etc					

I declare that the above information is true and correct and the above expenses are 100% business related.

Signature of the Reviewer /Applicant _____

NOTE Please attach all receipts/invoices

NCAAA TRAVEL BOOKING FORM

Review dates <i>(NCAAA to complete)</i>	
Location (Institution and City) <i>(NCAAA to complete)</i>	
Reviewer Name <i>(as per passport)</i>	
Nationality <i>(as per passport)</i>	
Departures dates	
Return dates	
Preferred travel routes (e.g. the most suitable departure airport, coming from a visit somewhere else, or need to travel elsewhere for other commitments)	
Airline	
Airline preference <i>NOTE - where possible the NCAAA will accommodate individual requests however allocation will be based on availability of aircraft</i>	

Note – Please refer to the NCAAA Travel guidelines when completing this form.



Travel Policy and Guidelines

1. Purpose

The NCAAA travel policy and guidelines are designed to provide reasonable and economical travel arrangements for international travellers. Such travel arrangements take into account the purpose and nature of the business and the extent of travel required.

2. Objectives

The objectives of the travel policy and guidelines are to:

- Provide a clear and consistent understanding of the policy and procedures for NCAAA travel;
- Ensure the safety and well being of all persons travelling on NCAAA business;
- Maximise the NCAAA ability to negotiate discounted rates for corporate travel;
- Manage travel expenses in accordance with the Ministry of Higher Education policy and other relevant regulations.

3. Scope

Scope relates to all domestic and international travel undertaken by reviewers employed by the NCAAA.

4. TRAVEL BOOKINGS

- All travel quotations or bookings associated with travel on NCAAA business must be sourced/made through the NCAAA contracted travel agent; except where there is a contractual obligation to use an alternate supplier. Unless prior approval is obtained, NCAAA will not guarantee the payment of invoices or reimbursement for any travel and related services booked or arranged through other (non-contracted) travel management companies, or booked directly with airlines.
- Where approval has been provided to use an alternative supplier, reimbursement of costs will be provided on receipt of the ticket documentation and cost.

AIRLINE TRAVEL

NCAAA reviewers will be provided comparably priced Business Class fare travel.

Reservations should be made a minimum of 30 days in advance of the travel date unless extenuating circumstances occur. Where possible, the NCAAA will accommodate specific requests to travel on particular airlines, however in the event of unavailability other alternatives will be provided.

It is expected that all travellers contact the relevant airline for any special arrangements, such as seating arrangements, special food arrangements, frequent flyer points and confirmation of flights.

Where possible, the NCAAA will organize hotels for layovers and also transport to and from the airport.



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Arrival time in Saudi Arabia must ensure that reviewers obtain sufficient rest and to meet other team members.

Departure from Saudi Arabia must not occur before the end of the last day of the review unless extenuating circumstances warrant an early departure.

VARIATIONS ON DIRECT AIRLINE TRAVEL ROUTES

Deviations from the most direct route are allowed, however any additional costs will be charged to the person travelling.

TRAVEL TO AND FROM THE AIRPORT

It is expected that all NCAA staff, including reviewers, use the best means of travelling to and from the airport, taking into consideration cost, time and transport availability. Travel may include:

- **PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION**
The cost of necessary public transport is reimbursable. It is expected that short trips, less than one hour, will be economy class; particularly travelling by train.
- **TAXI**
A taxi may be used to and from the airport. Cost must be considered when choosing this method of travel. Where the cost exceeds the cost and availability of a rental car, the rental car should be selected. All charges must be presented with a receipt.
- **LIMOUSINE**
Luxurious limousines are not allowed to be used as a selected mode of transportation; however where no other alternative transport is available, approval to use must be obtained from the NCAA Secretary General.
- **PRIVATE AUTO**
Where possible a private auto should be used. Payment of this type of transportation will be made based on the relevant country government rate. Receipts must be presented for parking and tolls charges.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

NCAA has a primary responsibility is to protect the safety and well being of all persons travelling on NCAA business.

All travellers are advised to obtain travel insurance. Before obtaining travel insurance, please contact NCAA. Travellers may visit this site for travel insurance <http://www.worldnomads.com>

MEALS WHILE TRAVELLING

Reviewer's meals in route and at the destination location will be paid over and above the per diem where receipts are produced. The NCAA will not reimburse reviewers for any personal expense, which



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include, but are not limited to, entertainment, or meal expenses not directly related to or associated with the conduct of the NCAA's business. Nor will the NCAA reimburse meal expenses that are lavish and extravagant and have refreshments not in accordance with Islamic culture.

ACCOMODATION

High quality accommodation will be provided. If the traveller extends the trip beyond the days required completing the business purpose of the trip, those days will be considered personal and will be charged to the traveller at the full rate of the room plus tax. If the traveller has family members along on the trip, the cost of the rooms, if booked individually, will be charged according to the above.

NON REIMBURSABLE EXPENSES

The NCAA will not reimburse the following expenses:

- Tips
- Telephone
- Gifts , cards or flowers for special recognition
- Any items bought for personal use (including toiletries, personal care items, etc)

