

**MANAGEMENT OF INTERNAL REVIEW PROCESSES FOR THE
ACCREDITATION OF ACADEMIC PROGRAMS IN UNIVERSITIES**

**GESTÃO DOS PROCESSOS DE AVALIAÇÃO INTERNA PARA ACREDITAÇÃO DE
PROGRAMAS ACADÊMICOS EM UNIVERSIDADES**

**GESTIÓN DE PROCESOS DE REVISIÓN INTERNA PARA LA ACREDITACIÓN DE
PROGRAMAS ACADÉMICOS EN UNIVERSIDADES**

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ABSTRACT: The study aims at identifying the reality of the management of internal review processes for the accreditation of academic programs in Saudi universities. A mixed-method approach was used in collecting primary data through the questionnaire and the interview. The questionnaire returned 298 valid responses from academic staff randomly selected from six Saudi universities. Further, six deans of colleges were interviewed. The questionnaire data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, while the interview results were thematically coded and synthesized. The overall results of the study the internal evaluation process related to accreditation of academic programs in the universities is primarily based on the overall university academic plan created at the central level. Implementation follows the planning during which various university offices at college and departmental levels were additionally involved. The last phase of the program accreditation is the recurrent evaluation of the system to ensure that the program offerings are in sync with global best practices cultured to the needs of the Saudi Arabian economy.

KEYWORDS: Internal evaluation. Academic programs. Higher education.

RESUMO: O estudo visa identificar a realidade da gestão dos processos de revisão interna para o credenciamento de programas acadêmicos em universidades sauditas. Uma abordagem de método misto foi usada na coleta de dados primários por meio do questionário e da entrevista. O questionário retornou 298 respostas válidas de acadêmicos selecionados aleatoriamente em seis universidades sauditas. Além disso, seis reitores de faculdades foram entrevistados. Os dados do questionário foram analisados usando o SPSS, enquanto os resultados das entrevistas foram codificados e sintetizados tematicamente. Os resultados globais do estudo mostram que o processo de avaliação interna relacionado com a acreditação de programas acadêmicos nas universidades baseia-se principalmente no plano acadêmico universitário geral criado a nível central. A implementação segue o planejamento durante o qual vários escritórios universitários em nível de faculdade e departamental foram adicionalmente envolvidos. A última fase do credenciamento do programa é a avaliação

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recorrente do sistema para garantir que as ofertas do programa estejam sincronizadas com as melhores práticas globais cultivadas para as necessidades da economia da Arábia Saudita.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Avaliação interna. Programas acadêmicos. Ensino superior.*

RESUMEN: *El estudio tiene como objetivo identificar la realidad de la gestión de procesos internos de revisión para la acreditación de programas académicos en universidades saudíes. Se utilizó un enfoque de método mixto en la recopilación de datos primarios a través del cuestionario y la entrevista. El cuestionario arrojó 298 respuestas válidas de personal académico seleccionado al azar de seis universidades saudíes. Además, se entrevistó a seis decanos de universidades. Los datos del cuestionario se analizaron utilizando el Paquete Estadístico para las Ciencias Sociales, mientras que los resultados de las entrevistas se codificaron y sintetizaron por temas. Los resultados generales del estudio El proceso de evaluación interna relacionado con la acreditación de los programas académicos en las universidades se basa principalmente en el plan académico universitario general creado a nivel central. La implementación sigue la planificación durante la cual también participaron varias oficinas universitarias a nivel de facultad y departamento. La última fase de la acreditación del programa es la evaluación recurrente del sistema para garantizar que las ofertas del programa estén sincronizadas con las mejores prácticas globales adaptadas a las necesidades de la economía de Arabia Saudita.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Evaluación interna. Programas academicos. Educación más alta.*

Introduction

Quality education is viewed as a necessary condition for aspirations to higher levels of quality. As a result, universities have introduced academic accreditation in their programs as one of the effective ways to increase their efficiency, boost their standing in the educational process, assure continuity, effectiveness, and competition among academic institutions. Accreditation is based on codified norms and techniques developed by certified scientific entities and applied as per the standard operating procedures recommended (ALMALKI, 2020).

According to Ibrahim (2014), quality at universities may be accomplished by self-evaluation and internal review to verify the availability of specified requirements, followed by external accreditation, which is generally undertaken by non-profit organizations. The internal review of programs entails the periodic inspection and assessment of academic activity by qualified personnel to improve practice and adherence to specific standards and principles governing programmatic academic work within a given accountability system. One of the essential purposes of a review is to monitor academic practitioners' conformity with nationally

or globally accepted norms. Therefore, an internal review has gained importance as validating knowledge and correct practices in academic work (CROSS; NAIDOO, 2011). According to Ben *et al.* (2017), the subject of reviewing an academic program to verify that it meets the standards of quality and accreditation is not a routine process but rather a well-thought-out, organized process based on management practices and documented applications system.

However, the quality of education and academic accreditation in universities has become a crucial requirement and is necessitates implementation in academic programs and educational institutions. Believing in the material and moral value of its application, Albaqami (2015) stated that the educational environment in Saudi Arabia is affected by ensure total quality. The applications of self-study, review, external evaluation, quality certificates, and accreditation becomes a part of the development policies. However, Avena, Potenza, Gold (2015) added that the Higher Education Quality Index issued by the World Economic Forum in Davos 2017–2018 revealed that Saudi university education ranked 41st globally out of 137 countries. It is close to some countries that may be considered modest in their financial capabilities and education budgets.

Furthermore, the study conducted by Alsisy (2020) found a discrepancy in achieving quality and obtaining academic accreditation in Saudi universities. The National Centre for Evaluation and Academic accreditation issued by the Education and Training Evaluation Commission confirms the results, showing 43 academic programs obtained full accreditation in 6 universities. This number is modest compared to the number of programs offered in 29 public universities, and does not achieve the 2030 vision which called for the universities' interest to improve their operations and outputs and link them to the needs of the labor market (SAUDI ARABIA'S VISION, 2030). Therefore, it requires those in charge of academic programs to seek accreditation, mainly depending on what is implemented and recorded in the self-study report.

Moreover, Demirel (2016) stated that the internal verification process of the availability of program accreditation standards is the most challenging part of the accreditation. That is because the internal verification process relied on the results of the external visit and the issuance or non-issuance of the program's eligibility for conditional accreditation. Therefore, paying attention to the internal review and providing qualification and continuous training for all internal reviewers and assessors. Furthermore, Wattanasap (2019) specified that the internal review operations department is concerned with forming work teams, selecting and training reviewers, planning for a self-report review, evaluating the performance level of each process (efficiency) and the results (effectiveness) of achievements,

and finally approving the results of strengths and weaknesses and what they need to develop and improve. The review depends on the evaluation of self-reports and evidence as written reports, requiring more skills for the internal review and effective management.

In European countries, interest in evaluating the quality of education and its follow-up began after the Bologna Declaration in 1997. In the United Kingdom, the internal quality system is evaluated through external accreditation standards to improve the quality system with development according to a specific system, and improvement in procedures and processes (MARQUES; POWELL, 2020). The activities related to the internal organization system are evaluated according to the quality assurance measurement system. The results showed the importance of preparing a quality guide according to the European external evaluation standards and the role of self-evaluation and internal review in development (MATTAR, 2021).

At the local level, some Saudi universities have included the internal review of academic programs in the tasks of the Deanship of Quality and Development. The efforts may vary in Saudi universities to plan internal review processes, set regulations and guidelines, distribute tasks, organize workshops and meetings, and approve boards of reviewers from one university to another. Despite that, they are still in the initial stages. Elkhateeb *et al.* (2021) revealed that the weakness of follow-up and internal review plans for implementing quality and accreditation plans is one of the most critical obstacles to the practice of quality and accreditation standards facing Saudi universities from the deans of quality and development. Based on the preceding argument, the problem of the study highlights the need to identify the management of internal reviews for the accreditation of academic programs in Saudi universities in the light of some international experiences by studying their implementation and challenges.

In the light of the information provided above, following research questions of the study.

What is the reality of managing the planning process for the internal review of programmes in Saudi universities?

What is the reality of managing the implementation process of the internal review of programmes in Saudi universities?

What is the reality of managing the evaluation and follow-up process for the internal review of programmes in Saudi universities?

Literature Review

This section discusses Arab and international studies' scope, aims, methodologies, and findings. From the earliest to the most recent, this research is ordered chronologically. We have no similar Arab studies on internal evaluation for academic program accreditation. Several studies done in the context of Saudi Arabia relating to academic programs, internal university evaluations, and academic accreditation and its concerns were examined. Furthermore, research from other countries was reviewed to evaluate internal program assessment and their academic accreditation.

Studies in Foreign Context

The so-called program reviews conducted by the Evaluation Agency Baden-Württemberg and the Staff Unit for Quality Development at the University of Stuttgart (Germany) in the form of a comparative before and after methodology for policies and strategies as a comparative documentary approach are discussed by Leiber, Moutafidou, Welker (2018). It is a case study of the impact evaluation of internal quality assurance. It was discovered that assessments began as productive talks about programs but the integration of internal and external evaluations into the program review are considered better. Pun *et al.*, (2019) demonstrated that program reviews of academic units are used in higher education settings to receive input, make data-driven decisions about effectiveness and sustainability, and engage stakeholders. A content analysis methodology was used to evaluate the results, and a sample of 53 processes representing a range of small and large public institutions in the United States in categories conferring associate's, bachelor's, and master's degrees were examined. The study's findings indicated that the review was utilized to accomplish the goals such as developing curriculum, employing them in decision-making, accountability, accreditation, organizing, and recording data.

Finally, Wattanasap e Research (2019) looked at accreditation from the reviewers' perspective. Their research clarified the nature of the reviewers' work by looking at how they typically deal with the performance appraisal process, verifying the accreditation procedure in universities worldwide. The study took a documentary method, looking at papers and articles about quality, internal review, and academic accreditation. The study discovered that the reviewers' common approach is the Deming cycle (plan, do the examination, and act) and that the reviewers' evaluation is based on the process performance and the quality of the outputs.

Studies in Saudi Context

Internal review and its most important sectors, criteria, and implementation were evaluated, and a model for internal review in Egyptian institutions was developed. A descriptive technique was employed with the views of ten expert to attain this purpose. The study resulted in several conclusions, the most important of which is the lack of internal review units in Egyptian universities making the application of internal review generally weak, and the review limited to what the National Authority for Quality Assurance of Education and Accreditation does in terms of external review to accredited institutions (HUSSEIN; SAADI; FORAWI, 2017). Furthermore, the goal was to determine the prerequisites for building academic programs for special education departments in Saudi universities that adhered to quality standards and were accredited. A total of 45 faculty members from King Khalid University, Jazan University, and Najran University were included in the study. The data was analyzed using statistical methods, and the study yielded several conclusions, the most important of which was that faculty members are typically unaware of the quality standards for establishing study programs (ULKER; BAKIOGLU, 2019).

Boukrara (2019) for his part, discussed the most important models and experiences in assessing educational programs and courses at foreign institutions. The materials were written in a descriptive style. The study's primary conclusions are that evaluating educational programs and making decisions in educational colleges is a continuous process that follows scientific standards. Considering the global competitive environment, this evaluation assists in enhancing educational system outputs, educational programs and courses in educational colleges should adhere to a scientific evaluation model. In addition, Algunmeeyn *et al.* (2021) identified the obstacles in achieving academic accreditation standards in graduate programs in Jordanian universities and the ways to overcome these obstacles from the academic leaders' perspective.

Methodology

Based on the problem statement of the study and to achieve the study objectives, answer the research questions, collect data, the appropriate approach for the current study is the blended approach (mixed-method approach) which is based on collecting, analyzing, and "mixing" both quantitative and qualitative data in one study or in a series of steps to understand a specific research problem (MEISSNER *et al.*, 2011). The main reason for using

this methodology is that the combination of quantitative and qualitative methods provides a better understanding of the research problem and research questions than using either method separately (KLASSEN *et al.*, 2012).

The population of the study

The study population is defined as "a systematic scientific term intended for everyone to whom the research results can be generalized, whether it is a group of individuals, books, or school buildings" (ALSHATWI *et al.*, 2010). Accordingly, the study population for the interviews consists of the six deans and vice dean of quality development, and accreditation at the university (colleges and internal review) at King Saud University, Qassim University, King Khalid University, Imam Abdul Rahman Al-Faisal University, King Abdulaziz University, and Imam Muhammad bin Saud Islamic University. The respondents are selected on convenience sampling technique based on the availability of the respondents for the interviews.

Research Instruments

Interviews are the initial method for collecting data in this study. A semi-structured interview tool collected qualitative information from the selected respondents of the study. In comparison to other tools, interviews help explore practices and experiences in more depth, which cannot be obtained by any other means. The interview aims to understand the participants and allow mutual interaction and clarification based on semi-open questions (CRESWELL *et al.*, 2018). The qualitative section of the study involved interview data from six respondents. The answers provided by the respondents were analyzed through coding for identification of themes. The statements provided by the respondents are mentioned in quotes in the discussion on qualitative aspect in the proceeding sections. The themes identified from the responses were used to develop the questions for the questionnaire used in the quantitative part of the study.

The second data collection tool used in this study is a questionnaire. Using the interview answers, theoretical framework, previous studies, and scientific references related to the subject of the study, we prepared a questionnaire to collect data related to the research questions of the study. The quantitative section of the study used sample of 298 from the population to collect data. The questions asked were based on the themes identified through coding from the qualitative data collected. The collected data was analyzed with statistical techniques to assess the trends in the data. The results are given in the table 1.

Statistical Analysis Techniques

Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze the data collected based on the responses of the study members. The statistical analysis included Pearson's correlation coefficient to check internal consistency; Cronbach's alpha to check the reliability of the scales, frequencies, and percentages; arithmetic averages to calculate the average degrees of the responses of the study members to the questionnaire statements and standard deviations to identify the extent of the dispersion of the degrees of the study members' responses around the sections of the questionnaire.

Data Analysis and Discussion

The results of the study are presented in the following section, which is organized by study's research questions. The research questions are presented first, followed by answers, which are based on the results of the qualitative and quantitative analysis of the data, its interpretation, and its relationship to the results of previous studies.

To answer the first question i.e., what is the ground reality of the management of internal review for academic accrediting programs in Saudi universities? The qualitative aspect of the study is presented first.

Results

Qualitative Analysis

We conducted individual interviews with six quality leaders from the universities chosen for this study to answer this research question. The interview texts were analyzed, and subcategories were used in formulating the questionnaire's sections. Each study participant member (1–6) was given a number beside a symbol (m). The individual interviews conducted were analyzed to obtain detailed data on the management of internal reviews for the accreditation of academic programs in Saudi universities. After transcribing the interviews, the number of texts that were analyzed reached 2329 texts, these texts were coded to identify the ground reality of managing the internal review processes for the accreditation of academic programs. Three main categories with several subcategories were identified. Table 1 shows the main categories and subcategories and the frequency of the categories that appeared in the individual interviews.

Table 1 - Frequency of categories in the individual interviews in the reality section

Main Categories	Subcategories	Freq.	Total
Planning	Internal policies for the program review	6	8 6%
	Regular internal review	6	
	Committees participate with the Deanship of Quality in the review process	3	
	Criteria for the acceptance of program review	2	
	Guides for the internal program review	5	
	Regulatory body for managing review	6	
	Criteria for the selection of internal reviewers	6	
	Qualifications of the reviewers	5	
	Head of reviewers' team	5	
	Partnership to share experiences	4	
Execution	Program review form	2	3 1%
	The independence of the reviewer	5	
	Specific documents required for the review	6	
	Visit reviewers to check	4	
	Independent external reviewer	4	
	The students' role is indirect	5	
	Coordination of the revisions in the academic program	5	
	Accreditation criteria used	6	
	A specified time for the implementation	5	
	Independent budget for independent opinion	1	
Evaluation and follow-up	Contents of the final report	5	1 3%
	How to adopt the final report	6	
	Confidentiality of the review results	6	
	Recommendation to apply for accreditation	6	
	Ongoing communication and support in the review process	5	
	Follow-up on recommendations	5	
	Duration of follow-up recommendations	1	
	Regular meetings	3	
	Criteria for evaluating reviewers	1	
	Share the annual report	3	

Source: Devised by the authors

Results of Qualitative Analysis

It is clear from Table 1 that the highest percentage of iterations was in planning, which is the first process, reaching 36% in 48 iterations for ten subcategories, this may be due to the nature of the requirements of the planning process, i.e., preparation and practices, on which other processes are based. Contrarily, the evaluation and follow-up process had the lowest percentage of repetitions, at 31%, this may be attributed to the program's participation in this process, which reduces the responsibility of the quality leaders participating in the interview. The participants' statements were quoted and written as mentioned in their language for scientific integrity.

First, we look into the ground reality of planning in the internal review for the accreditation of academic programs.

All participants repeated several categories. The first of them shows that there are internal policies and procedures organized for the internal review of programs at the university level. M1 stated the following:

The university system assumes that, in each section, I mean in every program, a committee called the Accreditation Committee are those who undertake accreditation affairs and prepare self-study, and they are the ones who get back to us if they need any support, and at the same time, we follow up with them until the end.

M2 highlighted that

From the point of view of quality, programs should be addressed to complete the main requirements, which are 12 in number. That is preceded by training the quality members residing in the programs, reviewing their files, developing a comprehensive plan for them in environmental analysis, writing recommendations and improvement plans, and achieving requirements. The second step is for colleges to raise files and study them. In the Deanship of Quality and after studying it, we visit and make sure that the written word is present on the ground and that there is direct evidence.

M3 stated,

We start by scheduling visits, reviewing programs, and setting a practical plan. We establish a training program for reviewers and distributed teams in which we are experts, and the reviewers who participate for the first time will qualify them and ensure that the reviewers' specialization is close to the program and that the team does not belong to the specialization, ensuring that there is no conflict of interest. Initially, the role of the reviewers was solely educational. In order to spread the quality culture, they attend the program and sit among the leaders and members. The reviewer sits in the evidence room and evaluates it in the third and fourth rounds. The sixth session was created simultaneously as the appointment as Dean, and it stipulated that members as the reviewers get monthly reports prior to their visit, with discussions with students and members takes place during the visit.

According to M4,

The university has the policy to assure quality at the university, college, and program levels. The mechanism by which this evaluation and tool are conducted by fulfilling the accreditation requirements, standards, and criteria in them, based on the standards of the National Accreditation Centre. Evaluation is conducted at the institutional and program levels based on the university's mission and the mechanism by which this evaluation and tool are conducted by fulfilling the accreditation requirements, standards, and criteria in them, based on the standards of the National Accreditation Centre.

M5 said,

In our university, we felt that we had to invest in faculty members for two needs. First, we build a house of expertise, and second, we benefit from evaluating our programs. Therefore, we offer them a series of development programs similar to the one offered by the commission. The specialized experts passed several existing requirements and had experience with accreditation requirements, such as performance indicators, evaluation and comparison measures, and course descriptions. In addition, the internal reviewers have been trained on the advanced program; joined the six people in the development and quality committee in the department; supported them; and participated in preparing the self-study, training, and preparing them for accreditation.

M6 stated,

There is more than one body: the Deanship of Quality and the Centre for Educational Curricula. We share some standards, and the center takes from the academic body the hours, its compatibility, and its name with the National Qualifications Framework. In terms of evaluation, we commit to national accreditation standards. It is every five years on a schedule at the center. So, whenever this period passes, the program asks for a review.

It was also repeated that there is a fixed time review cycle to review programs, whether directly by scheduling them by the university policy or indirectly by requesting reports and updates from period to period. M1 clarified this when he said,

According to the program's average, the review cycle is every four or five years. The student is tracked from admission through graduation in the review cycle, the usual program review. The National Centre expects that the review will take place every five years. However, we submit yearly reports and development stages to the programs every five years. Do you mean that they are mandatory? Yes, it is mandatory. This is the internal quality system of the university and the system of the accreditation body.

Conversely, M2 stated,

It varies according to whether the program will be submitted for accreditation. It is obligatory to pass the review and fulfil the 12 requirements. If it is not, it requires the minimum related to the teaching and learning standard, which is the description of programs and courses, annual reports, and performance indicators. Specifically, on the learning outcomes, and their cycle according to the graduation of the first batch, an improvements may be required from the program sometimes, if they are radical or secondary, and they are discussed with the Quality Deanship for approval and go through several committees for approval and final approval.

Furthermore, M3 emphasized that

It is mandatory, and we do not wait for the programs to request it. It is annual, and every year, it looks at what was done regarding the previous Action Plan. The programs and colleges are honored according to their performance.

M4 also emphasized,

It is mandatory through the policies imposed by the university and pursued by the Deanship of Quality and the University Vice Presidency for Academic Affairs; its cycle is every five years, and self-evaluation is every two and a half years.

M5 also highlighted that

It is obligatory, of an optional type. We ask each agent for development and quality in the colleges to submit a report on the annual programs, and in this way, we push them to review the programs and prepare opinion surveys from students annually. According to what the commission said, it is after the first graduate, and then begins after him.

M6 stated, *"The improvement is according to the years of study. It is compulsory every five years, and it may be every three years depending on the type of program and college"*.

The regulator and supervisor of the management of the internal review of the programs were also repeatedly mentioned as M1 stated, *"We have a Board of Assessor under the Quality and Academic Accreditation Unit, which is under the Deanship of Quality"*.

M2 referring to Plan and Program Committees and the Academic Accreditation and Classification Committee said, *"She is authorized to do this task and to provide the courses"*.

M3 and M5 agreed that, *"The committee members lead the permanent committees for quality and development and review teams"*.

Moreover, M4 mentioned *"Quality management and academic accreditation"* and said, *"The university has the initiative of the Board of Assessors. The reviewers were chosen, qualified, invited before the commission, and used for external review. The Deanship benefits from them as internal reviewers"*.

M6 also mentioned, *"Documents are reviewed in the Deanship, and comments are sent to them"*.

The participants also repeated a set of criteria for selecting reviewers, agreeing that the candidates should have a certain level of knowledge, courses, experiences, and practical practices and be one of the quality leaders in faculties or committees.

M1 stated,

The candidate must have obtained at least three quality courses and be part of the Quality Committee and participated in the preparation of the self-study. That is to ensure that he can transfer knowledge to the Quality Committee's team members, which are the two main conditions in addition to other qualifications available to its members, such as the Vice Dean for Quality and Head of the Quality Unit, or the candidate could be a quality agent who qualifies them so that they have the background and the ABCs of quality and KPIs; he should have the BASIC because it begins at level 3, where it is assumed to have 40% of the time;

In addition, M2 indicated, *"It is headed by the Dean of Evaluation and Quality and the Vice Dean for Accreditation and Classification and is one of the active members who have obtained courses in quality or provided courses in terms of accreditation and learning outcomes"*.

M3 mentioned,

We make sure that the participant in the review has worked in quality as an agency, accreditation, or experience, or joined the evaluator program. He is experienced in addition to training, and he is also trained in the program, and we have a plan to put a test after the training program.

M4 believed,

Their program should pass the accreditation, or they should be quality agents and also attended the courses designated in the accreditation body, such as self-study, analysis, and the internal reviewer's workshop, those who are interested in teaching or have research in the field of quality and development, and we see them participate in quality activities and have interest, discuss, and announce qualification courses have taken care of the balance between colleges, as it included three scientific, theoretical, and health committees.

M6 indicated, *"There is more than one person who has competence and experience and is familiar with the standards and requirements of the national and international centers, and sometimes, the external review may be practiced. Our team has a level of training and experience"*.

On the other hand, the least frequent criteria for accepting the progress of programs for review, where there are specific priorities. As M1 stated,

A balance is established between everyone by looking at the program, and we call it according to their priority. If it is a program in a major college and serves everyone, we give it a priority, and if the college itself offers several programs, we ask the college itself to nominate the most dynamic program, the most demanded in the market, and the most students based on the one who applies. We then put the annual (budget), which is in the range of approximately 10–15 programs, and the Deanship provides them with the support they need through Consultants.

M2 indicated that *"There are differentiating conditions that achieve 100% of the requirements, and there are priorities for the programs if, for example, they have not obtained accreditation before"*.

Others justified their statement by saying that there are no specific standards for the programs because they are mandatory and required and that the programs encourage them, hence asking why specific requirements were placed.

Second, we consider the ground reality of implementation in the internal review for the accreditation of academic programs.

Several categories obtained six iterations, the first of which shows that there are several required documents, evidence, and proofs that the program must fulfil to implement the review process; as mentioned by M1, this includes *"self-study, in addition to assessment standards, annual review report, and description of courses. The course report is the required list in the accreditation"*.

M2 referred to the licensing of the program, the study plan, the annual report for the last two years with indicators, self-study, course and program description, self-evaluation report and metrics, a report on graduates, program regulations, advisory committees, how they were formed, the records interconnected for them to end with recommendations, and others. Moreover, M3 indicated self-study and its annexes, and reports, course and program descriptions, course and program report, self-evaluation measures, and other requirements. M4 emphasized the 13 requirements of program licensing and self-study, as well as self-evaluation documents, descriptions, course and program reports with recommendations, work plans, advisory committees, councils, plans, and other requirements. M5 mentioned self-study and description of the course and program, course and program report, and self-evaluation measures. In addition, M6 mentioned the 12 requirements for licensing the program and the study, as well as self-study documents, self-evaluation documents, descriptions, course and program reports with recommendations, action plans, advisory committees, councils, plans, and other requirements.

All participants also agreed to use the standards of the National Centre for Academic Accreditation of Programs as criteria for conducting the internal review of programs, saying, *"There are six academic accreditation criteria for undergraduate and seven for graduate programs,"* added M4 and M6, as well as the criteria for academic program accreditation of the National Centre in addition to some international accreditation standards according to Donors.

It is noted that the minor repetition is the allocation of a budget for the independent opinion mentioned by a participant (M2) needs an independent opinion in the self-study, annual report and self-evaluation measures. The meeting was held with his Excellency, the President of the University, and the budget estimate for the independent opinion is equal to 10,000-15,000 before it is managed as an advance. It was suggested that each program be given this budget not to be delayed, preferably close to the specialty or the same specialization, and it is obligatory to attach the CV so that it has sufficient experience in quality and a course in internal reviewing or four courses in quality and is from outside the university.

Third, we assessed the ground reality of evaluation and follow-up in the internal review for the accreditation of academic programs. All participants repeated several categories as phrases, and the first of these categories explain the mechanism for approving the program report.

M1 stated, *"After the program responds with its opinion to the comments and improvements, it is approved by the Quality Deanship"*.

M2 indicated,

Directly after the meeting, a discussion and an amplified presentation are done. Then, reports were written, compiling several reports and comments with examples. The Deanship approves the report, informing the party of this practice and its competence. We have obtained more than or nearly 280–300 hours of training as leaders, in addition to practical and applied experiences.

M3, M4, and M6 agreed that, *"after the program responds with its opinion to the comments and improvements, it is approved by the Deanship of Quality"*.

In addition, M5 explained that, *"after fulfilling the conditions and completing the review, the program sends it to the Deanship of Quality, which reviews and approves it and sends them if there are comments"*.

The results of the review were kept confidential and shared only with program leaders and members, The Dean of the College, the Vice Dean for Quality and Development, the Head of the Program, the Development and Quality Committee, and the Head of the Department, as M1 stated. M2 said, *"The indicators are announced, while the critical report is sent to the Dean of the College. The Dean of the College then sends it to the Vice Dean for Quality and Development, the Head of the Department, the Quality Committee, and the members."*

M3 stated, *"In fact, we send it to the Dean of the College, and he sees it whomever he wants"*.

M4 indicated that the head of the department, the Dean of the College, and the quality agents in the program see it. M5 confirmed that it is one that is briefed by the Deanship of Quality, the Vice Deanship for Academic Affairs, the Vice Dean for Academic Affairs, the Dean of the College, and the Vice Dean for Development and Quality, whom the Development and Quality Committee may refer to the department head to consider and determine the action plan because it requires agreement or disagreement. If the recommendations were approved, the next step is the internal work in the Deanship and the College and sharing the results that have only been reviewed with all, as stated by M6.

The last thing that was frequently mentioned was the recommendation to apply for external accreditation for the review programs, where M1 stated that,

There are some programs that we recommend not to continue, while the Deanship of Academic Affairs takes its decision in it, and the administrative procedures are normal from the Dean of Quality to the Undersecretary of Development and Quality, to the Dean of the College, to the Head of the Department, to the Quality Committee. Thus, communication takes place, and we communicate with the accreditation body as a deanship and sign contracts with the number of programs to carry out the procedures.

M2 indicated that *"if the program meets the requirements 100% and does not have any comments, zero comments from the review, a request is submitted to the university president to communicate with the authority. If the university president agrees, he will sign the contract for the visit"*.

M3 stated,

The Standing Committee for Quality agrees upon a value. The program is accepted for accreditation if it is approved in the review. We also recommend some distinguished programs that fulfill the conditions to apply for accreditation. Usually, the program sends us a request for approval to apply for accreditation, and we recommend that to the University Planning Agency and Development. Then, the procedures for signing the accreditation begin.

M4 mentioned, with a nod of the head, *"Yes, we recommend that for the programs that fulfil the conditions, and we provide them with logistical and advisory support provided by the program and the Dean of the College and Quality Committee"*.

M5 stated,

After the documents are completed, and the requirements are met, the department council is referred to the college council, and then after it is approved, it addresses the agency or the Deanship of development and quality that studies the request and their needs and the extent to which the requirements are completed, even if by 60%–80%; it is submitted to His Excellency, and in the case of approval, the Quality and Accreditation Agency shall communicate with the authority, and if it agrees, the contract for the visit shall be signed with it.

M6 indicated that the application should be based on the university's plan and budget.

Quantitative Analysis

To answer the first question of the questionnaire (i.e., what is the ground reality of the management of internal review for the accreditation of academic programs in Saudi universities?), the means and standard deviations of the responses of the study respondents, who were the quality leaders and internal reviewers (n=298) in Saudi universities, were calculated on the dimensions of the ground reality of the management of internal review operations and then arranged according to the mean as follows:

Table 2 - Arithmetic averages and their arrangement for the reality of the management of internal review for the accreditation of academic programs in Saudi universities (n = 298)

Dimensions	Number of statements	Average	Standard deviation	Degree of approval	Ranks
First dimension: the reality of managing the planning process for the internal review of programmes	10	3.62	0.93	Agreed	
Second dimension: the reality of managing the implementation process of the internal review of programmes	10	3.31	0.87	Agreed to some extent	
Third dimension: the reality of managing the evaluation and follow-up process for the internal review of programmes	10	3.20	0.87	Agreed to some extent	
General means of reality	30	3.38	0.79	Agreed to some extent	

Source: Devised by the authors

The results in Table 2 show that the general arithmetic average of the responses of the study participants to all dimensions of the ground reality of the management of internal review for the accreditation of academic programs in Saudi universities was 3.38, with a standard deviation of 0.79, which is an arithmetic average that falls in the third category of the five-point scale, i.e., to some extent agreeable. In addition, it is considered at medium approval from the perspective of the study respondents. This may be attributed to the recent

experience in the field of internal review for the accreditation of academic programs in Saudi universities, as indicated by the participants in the interview.

The section on the management of internal reviews for the accreditation of academic programs in Saudi universities includes three dimensions: planning, execution, and evaluation follow-up. Their arithmetic averages ranged between 3.20 and 3.62, falling into the third and fourth categories of five-point grade agree to some extent.

The standard deviation values of the dimensions of the reality of the management of internal review for the accreditation of academic programs in Saudi universities ranged between 0.93 and 0.86, which are values less than one, reflecting that there is homogeneity around the responses of the study members.

The reality of managing the planning process for the internal review of programs ranked first, with an average of 3.62, i.e., an agreeable degree, while the second dimension, "the reality of managing the implementation process for internal reviewing of programs", is at second place, with an average of 3.31, i.e., a degree of agreement to some extent. The third dimension, "the reality of managing the evaluation and follow-up process of the internal review of the programs", ranked third and last, with an arithmetic average of 3.20, i.e., a somewhat agreeable degree. This result indicates that the approval of the study members' responses to the practice of this axis in planning is higher than in the implementation and then evaluation, which is the last, this is consistent with what the participants in the interview mentioned, which requires more efforts to improve the cycle of quality.

Conclusion

The results of the data analysis are summarized as four findings. First, the study members' approval of the statements of the internal review operations department's section of reality for the accreditation of academic programs in Saudi universities reached a degree of agreement to some extent. It is regarded as a medium approval from the study members' perspective. Implementation is ranked second, with some agreement, followed by evaluation and follow-up, ranked third and fourth, respectively, with some agreement.

Second, most of the respondents agreed to use the criteria of the National Centre for Academic Accreditation for Programs as criteria for evaluating programs in the internal review. At the same time, the phrase "students participate in the internal review teams for programs" was ranked last, with a degree of agreement to some extent.

Third, in the evaluation and follow-up dimension, the highest phrase "requires that the program's final report include the independent opinion, strengths, and recommendations" was somewhat agreeable. In contrast, the phrase "periodic meetings are held between the review team members and quality leaders" came in the last rank, with an agreeable degree to some extent.

"The reality of managing the planning process for the internal review of programs" ranked first with an average of 3.62, with an agreeable degree. The second dimension, "the reality of managing the implementation process for internal reviewing of programs", came in second place, with an average of 3.31, with a degree of agreement to some extent. The third dimension, "the reality of managing the evaluation and follow-up process of the internal review of the programs", ranked third and last, with an arithmetic average of 3.20, with a degree of agreement to some extent. This result indicates that the approval of the study members' responses to the practice of this section in planning is higher than that in the implementation, evaluation, and follow-up, which is the last; this is consistent with what the participants in the interview mentioned, which requires more efforts to close the cycle of quality.

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