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QUALITÄTSSICHERUNG DURCH
AKKREDITIERUNG VON
STUDIENGÄNGEN E.V.

FINAL REPORT

SULTAN QABOOS UNIVERSITY

HISTORY

HISTORY (BACHELOR OF ARTS)

HISTORY (MASTER OF ARTS)

February 2026



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DECISION OF THE AQAS STANDING COMMISSION ON THE STUDY PROGRAMMES

- “HISTORY” (BACHELOR OF ARTS)
- “HISTORY” (MASTER OF ARTS)

OFFERED BY SULTAN QABOOS UNIVERSITY, MUSCAT, OMAN

Based on the report of the expert panel, the comments by the university, and the discussions of the AQAS Standing Commission in its 28th meeting on 23 February 2026, the AQAS Standing Commission decides:

1. The study programmes “**History**” (Bachelor of Arts) and “**History**” (Master of Arts) offered by **Sultan Qaboos University**, Oman, are accredited according to the AQAS Criteria for Programme Accreditation (Bachelor/Master).

The accreditation is conditional.

The study programmes essentially comply with the requirements defined by the criteria and thus the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) and the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) in their current version. The required adjustments can be implemented within a period of twelve months.

2. The conditions have to be fulfilled. The fulfilment of the conditions has to be documented and reported to AQAS no later than **31 March 2027**. The confirmation of the conditions might include a physical site visit within the period of twelve months.
3. The accreditation is given for the period of **six years** and is valid until **31 March 2032**, provided that the conditions listed below are fully met. Otherwise, the accreditation may be withdrawn.

Conditions

Both programmes

1. SQU must submit comprehensive course syllabi, including mapping of ILOs, self-study workload, ECTS and CH counts, assessment forms, literature references, course descriptions, and learning and teaching methods, for all courses (both mandatory and elective).
2. SQU must make its regulations for external credit recognition more transparent and publicly available.
3. SQU must publish and distribute comprehensive information for all stakeholders.

Additionally for the History (Master of Arts) programme

4. SQU must modify the currently publicly available information on the admission criteria to include the pre-required subject-specific competencies.

The following **recommendations** are given for further improvement of the programmes:

Both programmes

1. It is recommended that SQU clarify all programme-level ILOs in terms of their connection to course-level ILOs in the syllabi.
2. It is recommended that SQU make explicit the theoretical versus practical focus of each programme, to ensure that students are better informed about their differences and faculty can shape their syllabi accordingly.
3. It is recommended that the workload and ECTS equivalencies be made more visible and accessible for students.
4. It is strongly recommended to include English and/or other research languages more in the programmes.
5. It is recommended that SQU make the policy regarding student participation in course evaluations and surveys explicit in writing so that it is accessible to all relevant parties (faculty, students, administrators).
6. Assessment methods should be made even more diverse to reflect a wider range of methodological competencies.
7. It is recommended that the efforts to encourage students to take part in student exchanges should be expanded and that already existing opportunities for student exchange and the benefits of taking part in these programmes be promoted more openly.
8. It is very strongly recommended issuing a document outlining the competencies of graduates similar to a diploma supplement.
9. It is recommended that SQU intensify their internationalisation and diversification efforts with regard to the teaching staff by offering more English language training for the teaching staff of the programmes, inviting external stakeholders to the classroom as guest lecturers, and considering international expertise when hiring new staff.

Additionally for the History (Bachelor of Arts) programme

10. It is strongly recommended maintaining the current admission requirements for English language proficiency.

With regard to the reasons for this decision, the AQAS Standing Commission refers to the attached expert report.

EXPERT REPORT**ON THE STUDY PROGRAMMES**

- “HISTORY” (BACHELOR OF ARTS)
- “HISTORY” (MASTER OF ARTS)

OFFERED BY SULTAN QABOOS UNIVERSITY, MUSCAT, OMAN

Visit to the university: 9-11 December 2025

Panel of experts

Prof. Dr. Jakob Kraiss	Professor of Recent and Contemporary History of North Africa, University of the Bundeswehr Munich (Germany)
Prof. Dr. Paul Love	Professor of North African, Middle Eastern, and Islamic History, Al Akhawayn University, Ifrane (Morocco)
Mr Holger Kieburg	Archaeological Museum Frankfurt (Germany) (representative of the labour market)
Mr Simon Beckmann	History student at the University of Münster (Germany) (student representative)

Coordinator

Jana Newiger	AQAS, Cologne, Germany
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I. Preamble

AQAS – Agency for Quality Assurance through Accreditation of Study Programmes – is an independent non-profit organisation supported by nearly 85 universities, universities of applied sciences, and academic associations. Since 2002, the agency has been recognised by the German Accreditation Council (GAC). It is, therefore, a notified body for the accreditation of higher education institutions and programmes in Germany.

AQAS is a full member of ENQA and also listed in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) which confirms that our procedures comply with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), on which all Bologna countries agreed as a basis for internal and external quality assurance.

AQAS is an institution founded by and working for higher education institutions and academic associations. The agency is devoted to quality assurance and quality development of academic studies and higher education institutions' teaching. In line with AQAS' mission statement, the official bodies in Germany and Europe (GAC and EQAR) approved that the activities of AQAS in accreditation are neither limited to specific academic disciplines or degrees nor a particular type of higher education institution.

II. Accreditation procedure

This report results from the external review of the programmes **“History”** (Bachelor of Arts) and **“History”** (Master of Arts) offered by **Sultan Qaboos University**.

1. Criteria

Each programme is assessed against a set of criteria for accreditation developed by AQAS: the AQAS Criteria for Programme Accreditation (Bachelor/Master). The criteria are based on the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) 2015. To facilitate the review each criterion features a set of indicators that can be used to demonstrate the fulfilment of the criteria. However, if single indicators are not fulfilled this does not automatically mean that a criterion is not met. The indicators need to be discussed in the context of each programme since not all indicators can necessarily be applied to every programme.

2. Approach and methodology

Initialisation

The university mandated AQAS to perform the accreditation procedure in July 2024. The university produced a Self-Evaluation Report (SER). In July 2025, the institution handed in a draft of the SER together with the relevant documentation on the programmes and an appendix. The appendix included e.g.:

- an overview of statistical data of the student body
- the CVs of the teaching staff
- information on student services
- course descriptions
- academic regulations

AQAS checked the SER regarding completeness, comprehensibility, and transparency. The accreditation procedure was officially initialised by a decision of the AQAS Standing Commission on 8 September 2025. The final version of the SER was submitted in October 2025.

Nomination of the expert panel

The composition of the panel of experts follows the stakeholder principle. Consequently, representatives from the discipline, the labour market, and students are involved. Furthermore, AQAS follows the principles for the selection of experts defined by the European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA). The Standing Commission nominated the aforementioned expert panel in November 2025. AQAS informed the university about the members of the expert panel, and the university did not raise any concerns against the composition of the panel.

Preparation of the site visit

Prior to the site visit, the experts reviewed the SER and submitted a short preliminary statement including open questions and potential needs for additional information. AQAS forwarded these preliminary statements to the university and to all panel members in order to increase transparency in the process and the upcoming discussions during the site visit.

Site visit

After a review of the SER, a site visit at the university took place from 9-11 December 2025. On site, the experts interviewed different stakeholders, e.g. representatives of the management of the higher education institution, the programme management, teaching staff, as well as students and graduates, in separate discussion rounds and consulted additional documentation as well as student work. The visit concluded with the presentation of the preliminary findings of the group of experts to the university's representatives.

Reporting

After the site visit had taken place, the expert group drafted the following report, assessing the fulfilment of the AQAS Criteria. The report included a recommendation to the AQAS Standing Commission. The report was sent to the university for comments.

Decision

The report, together with the comments of the university, forms the basis for the AQAS Standing Commission to take a decision regarding the accreditation of the programmes. Based on these two documents, the AQAS Standing Commission took its decision on the accreditation on 23 February 2026. AQAS forwarded the decision to the university. The university had the right to appeal against the decision or any of the imposed conditions.

In March 2026, AQAS published the report, the result of the accreditation as well as the names of the panel members.

III. General information on the university

Sultan Qaboos University (SQU)

Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) was founded in 1986 with the following five colleges: Science, Engineering, Medicine, Education, and Agriculture. Over the years, further colleges got established: Arts and Social Sciences (1987), Commerce and Economics (1993), which was later renamed to Economics and Political Sciences, Law (2006), and Nursing (2008). The SER states that these nine colleges currently offer 38 PhD programmes, 74 postgraduate diplomas/Master's programmes, and 63 undergraduate programmes. SQU also hosts several research and support centres. The organisational structure of SQU includes a university council at the top which oversees the vice chancellor who in turn oversees the academic council. There are further three deputy vice chancellors installed for academic affairs and community service, administrative and financial affairs as well as postgraduate and research. SQU also has four central deanships in place that supervise admission and registration, student affairs, postgraduate studies, and research. The objectives of SQU are fourfold and focus on excelling in the areas of higher education, research, community service, and cooperation with other academic institutions.

College of Arts and Social Sciences (CASS)

The College of Arts and Social Sciences (CASS) was established in 1987. It includes 12 departments, among them the Department of Mass Communication. The CASS is headed by a dean who is supported in his work by three assistant deans for undergraduate studies, postgraduate studies and research, and training and community service. The SER further states that the CASS encompasses a college board, a college administrator and their assistant, and a technical supervisor.

Department of History

The Department of History was established in 1987 when the Bachelor's programme was initiated. In 2002, the Department introduced the corresponding Master's programme in History to keep up with the academic developments in the field of historical studies as the SER states. The PhD programme has been running since 2011. The organisational structure of the Department comprises the Department Council which oversees the Head of Department, the Department Coordinator and several academic committees such as the Graduate Studies Committee, Academic Affairs Committee, and the Examination Committee. The Head of Department is supported by coordinators for the three programmes of the Department respectively.

IV. Assessment of the study programmes

1. Quality of the curriculum

Bachelor's/Master's degree

The intended learning outcomes of the programme are defined and available in published form. They reflect both academic and labour-market requirements and are up-to-date with relation to the relevant field. The design of the programme supports achievement of the intended learning outcomes.

The academic level of graduates corresponds to the requirements of the appropriate level of the European Qualifications Framework.

The curriculum's design is readily available and transparently formulated.

[ESG 1.2]

1.1 History (Bachelor of Arts)

Description

The full-time Bachelor's programme has been running since 1987 with an average annual intake of 30-40 students and a regular study period of 8 semesters, according to the SER. It has last been internationally accredited in 2019. Graduates are supposed to be researchers and specialists in history who can understand the present and contribute to building a future grounded in historical knowledge. Against this background, the SER identifies the following five objectives of the programme:

1. To provide students with a broad knowledge of history, covering ancient, medieval, modern, and contemporary periods at the local, regional, and global levels.
2. To develop critical and independent thinking skills through reading and analysing historical sources and interpreting historical events and phenomena using historical research methodologies to understand the present and anticipate the future.
3. To prepare academically and professionally qualified graduates for careers in education, scientific research, media, diplomacy, and cultural and heritage institutions.
4. To promote cultural and historical identity by reinforcing awareness of the history of Omani, Arab, and Islamic societies and connecting it to global historical contexts.
5. To equip students with scientific research skills in the field of historical studies, with a commitment to research ethics and quality, and the use of modern tools and digital technologies.

These objectives are mapped with the programme-level Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) as well as SQU's graduate attributes for undergraduate programmes and the OQF. The programme-level ILOs are divided into four categories:

1. Knowledge and Understanding: Provide students with in-depth methodological knowledge of historical issues and advanced research methods for analysing various types of historical sources.
2. Cognitive and Research Skills: Develop the ability for critical analysis, interpretation of historical phenomena, and contextualising events within their temporal and spatial settings.
3. Practical and Professional Skills: Enable students to apply historical knowledge in professional fields such as education, media, research, and cultural administration.
4. General Skills: Enhance communication, teamwork, and time management skills, as well as the use of modern technologies in research and presentation through digital tools and resources supporting historical research.

The curriculum of the Bachelor's programme consists of the following elements:

University Requirements: 6 Credit Hours (CH) of compulsory courses and 6 CH of electives

College Requirements: 17 CH of compulsory courses and 3 CH of electives

Major Requirements: 58 compulsory CH and 6 elective CH from department courses (core disciplinary knowledge of the programme)

Free Electives: Allow students to explore topics aligned with their personal interests or career goals

Minor Requirements: Students choose one of the minors offered by various departments within the college (24 CH). These courses cover complementary areas that support general skills, aiming to broaden students' knowledge and equip them with the competencies required for the labour market (e.g., academic writing, information technology, leadership skills)

Graduation Project: Students can conduct independent research

The curriculum is designed to equip students with both theoretical skills and knowledge as well as practical competencies for the labour market. It is said to comply with the Oman Qualifications Framework (OQF) Level 8 which is equivalent to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) Level 6. The major courses are said to cover Ancient History, Islamic and European Medieval History, as well as Modern and Contemporary History, with an emphasis on National History. Students also take general courses such as “Introduction to the Study of History”, “Research Methodology”, “Historical Texts in English”, and “Project”, which constitutes the graduation project in the final academic year. The minor option was integrated in the curriculum to complement the students’ subject-specific knowledge and skills and broaden their career options. Graduates can also enrol in the Teacher Preparation Programme if they wish to pursue a career in education.

Expert evaluation

The Bachelor’s programme History at SQU has a curriculum that is designed to meet the needs of a target labour market into which its graduates are anticipating entry: teaching-oriented careers and primarily state-run academic adjacent careers in heritage, museum studies, and archival library-based research positions. There is significant evidence that programme objectives of ensuring students are well prepared to carry out historical research, work with sources, and prepare historical narratives for public and academic consumption are well met. Students and faculty expressed satisfaction with the existing curriculum both in surveys and discussions with the expert team, and the available syllabi and sample work of students suggests that the essential skills of historical analysis are acquired by graduation. The experts thus assess that the curriculum of the programme complies with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) Level 6 for Bachelor’s programmes. The curriculum has a strong regional focus, preparing students to become specialists in the history of Oman and the Arabian Peninsula. This, in turn, meets the immediate needs of the market by preparing students to be future teachers, museum specialists, archivists, cultural consultants, and related historically oriented careers.

This achievement of programme-level ILOs and acquisition of skill sets was further reinforced by labour market representatives, who were enthusiastic in their support of the programme and its graduates, and they suggested that the programme responds to their needs with curricular changes and cooperation in multiple forms of professional development for students.

On site, the experts learned that the Bachelor’s programme is currently in a transition phase of implementing a new curriculum. Due to this situation, the experts had access to information on the current curriculum as well as to some preliminary information on the future curriculum. While the experts identified certain areas for improvement in the current curriculum, it is likely that these improvements will be implemented with the new curriculum which has yet to be approved and implemented. While the expert team was thus enthusiastic about the proposed changes in the new Bachelor’s curriculum in terms of newly added courses, given that it is still in the planning stages the following findings address the currently implemented curriculum.

Against this background, the expert panel assesses for the current curriculum that the documentation of the Bachelor’s programme poses some challenges. The expert team only had access to a small number of full syllabi of the current curriculum during the site visit, compared to a larger list of titles and brief course descriptions which are supposed to be introduced with the new curriculum. While the currently offered courses satisfy the needs of the labour market in terms of skills, the available syllabi suggest that some of the methodologies and theories informing the courses could perhaps be updated to reflect more recent developments in the field. Some of those changes are likely to be reflected in the proposed curriculum, but that remains a theoretical improvement for the future since the curriculum is still in its planning stages.

The programme-level ILOs are outlined in the SER, however, it is difficult to map their success at the course level without detailed syllabi. In addition, only a few syllabi include bibliographical references or an indication

of the expected workload, since only credit hours which correspond to teaching hours and time of attendance in class are indicated without giving any information on the expected workload in terms of self-study. SQU must therefore submit comprehensive course syllabi for all courses (both mandatory and elective) of the programme (**Finding 1**).

Those examples of syllabi that the expert team had access to suggest that course-level ILOs are usually mapped to the defined programme-level ILOs, that they are relevant to the market, and that they are often, but not always, linked to specific forms of assessment. For example, it is not clearly documented how “critical thinking” is practically demonstrated and assessed at the course or assignment levels. Against this background, the expert team recommends that SQU clarify all programme-level ILOs in terms of their connection to course-level ILOs (**Finding 1a**). With respect to the skills, all impressions from the experts’ discussions with stakeholders suggest that students are well-equipped for the job market upon graduation.

There appeared to be some confusion among students about whether the Bachelor’s programme was distinguished from the Master’s with respect to theory and practice. Based on the sample tests and other forms of assessment seen by the expert team, courses at the Bachelor’s level tend to follow a formulaic assessment format at the end of the course, comprising multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions. While a rather traditional format, it does ensure the basic acquisition of knowledge. More complex thinking is well demonstrated in the Historical Research Methods course, which could prove a strong model for enhancing assessment methods in other Bachelor’s-level courses. The expert team therefore recommends that SQU make explicit the theoretical versus practical focus of each programme, to ensure that students are better informed about their differences and faculty can shape their syllabi accordingly (**Finding 1b**). With respect to the workload in local CH and ECTS equivalencies, there is a formula for calculating equivalencies, but the expert team recommends that it be more visible and accessible for students (**Finding 1c**), for example by adding both to the syllabus of each course and on the university’s website.

A final important point regards languages other than Arabic, which seems to be of interest to the labour market and students and something that is lacking in the current curriculum. The expert team strongly recommends the inclusion of English and/or other research languages (**Finding 2**) to expand students research skills and make them more competitive for the labour market.

Conclusion

The criterion is partially fulfilled.

1.2 History (Master of Arts)

Description

The Master’s programme has been running since 2002 with an average annual intake of 5-8 students. It can be studied both full- and part-time over a regular study period of 2 and 4 semesters respectively, according to the SER. The programme has last been internationally accredited in 2019. It aims to produce graduates that are capable of producing historical knowledge and analysing diverse historical issues through academic methodologies. Against this background, the SER identifies the following five objectives of the programme:

1. Provide students with advanced knowledge in historical studies, with an emphasis on specialised areas (e.g., Islamic history, modern and contemporary history).
2. Develop historical research skills by training students in the use of historical methodologies and the analysis of primary and secondary sources.
3. Enhance critical thinking by enabling students to discuss historical issues within diverse epistemological and methodological frameworks.

4. Promote scholarly output aimed at serving society through the integration of history with contemporary Omani realities, and the use of historical heritage to foster national identity.
5. Foster lifelong independent learning skills through open-ended questioning, critical reading, and the acquisition of diverse knowledge.

These objectives are mapped with the programme-level Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) as well as SQU's graduate attributes for graduate students and the OQF. The following seven programme-level ILOs are outlined in the SER:

1. Apply advanced and comprehensive knowledge in the field of specialisation and utilise it in various fields.
2. Communicate effectively with different segments of society, both specialists and non-specialists.
3. Collect, analyse, and manage reliable information using appropriate research techniques and relevant skills.
4. Design historical research projects individually or in groups and analyse and publish results.
5. Demonstrate critical thinking in research and professional practices with ethical and cultural awareness.
6. Demonstrate positive attitudes toward continuous self-learning and professional development.
7. Exhibit leadership, responsibility, and influence in areas related to their specialisation.

The curriculum of the Master's programme consists of compulsory courses and electives (24 CH) as well as the thesis project (6 CH). The courses are said to cover Arabic-Islamic History, as well as Modern and Contemporary History and National History. For the thesis, a supervisory committee consisting of a main and a co-supervisor (and if required an external supervisor) is appointed based on the thesis subject. The curriculum is designed to equip students with theoretical skills and knowledge for the academic field. It is said to comply with the Oman Qualifications Framework (OQF) Level 9 which is equivalent to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) Level 7.

Expert evaluation

Regarding SQU's Master's programme in History, the experts can reiterate a number of points already made with respect to the Bachelor's programme. As with the Bachelor's programme, the experts learned on site that the Master's programme is currently in a transition phase of implementing a new curriculum. Due to this situation, the experts had access to information on the current curriculum as well as to some preliminary information on the future curriculum. While the experts identified certain areas for improvement in the current curriculum, it is likely that these improvements will be implemented with the new curriculum which has yet to be approved and implemented. While the expert team was thus enthusiastic about the proposed changes in the new Master's curriculum in terms of newly added courses, given that it is still in the planning stages the following findings address the currently implemented curriculum.

Those examples of syllabi that the expert team had access to suggest that course-level ILOs are usually mapped to the defined programme-level ILOs, that they are relevant to the market, and that they are often, but not always, linked to specific forms of assessment. Against this background, the expert team recommends that SQU clarify all programme-level ILOs in terms of their connection to course-level ILOs (**Finding 1a**). With respect to the skills, all impressions from the discussions with stakeholders on site suggest that students are well-equipped for the labour market upon graduation. Master's courses seem generally well-suited to deepen theoretical and practical knowledge in relevant historical fields, especially for students to become teachers, museum specialists, archivists, cultural consultants, or work in related historically oriented careers. The feedback of graduate students was positive in terms of acquired methods and skills, employability opportunities, and they seemed to have a strong sense of what distinguished them from the Bachelor's level. The profile of the Master's programme also appears to have been sharpened and refined since the previous international

accreditation by AQAS in 2019. The expert panel thus assesses that the programme complies with EQF Level 7 for Master's programmes.

Students mentioned some confusion regarding the focus of theory and practice on the Bachelor's and Master's level, respectively. The question whether the Master's programme is, in fact, more practice-oriented could not entirely be clarified in the discussion rounds on site. Hence, to reiterate the recommendation for the Bachelor's programme, the experts recommend that SQU make explicit the theoretical versus practical focus of each programme (see **Finding 1b**) to ensure that students are better informed about their differences and faculty can shape their syllabi accordingly. In this context, it might also be beneficial to introduce more options for specialisation to students to give them the chance to build their academic profile even before they start working on their Master's thesis. Students suggested fields for specialisation with regard to labour market needs, for instance Museum Studies.

As is the case with the Bachelor's programme, documentation on the course level is lacking for the Master's programme. Equivalent to the Bachelor's programme, the Department is still in the process of implementing a new curriculum for the Master's programme as well. The expert team only had access to a small number of full syllabi of the current curriculum during the site visit, compared to a larger list of titles and brief course descriptions which are supposed to be introduced with the new curriculum in the future. This caused some confusion, especially when combined with the discrepancies between those lists and the list of courses in the current curriculum. While the current courses satisfy the needs of the labour market in terms of skills, the few available syllabi suggest that some of the methodologies and theories informing the courses could perhaps be updated to reflect more recent developments in the field. Some of those changes are likely to be reflected in the proposed curriculum, but that remains a theoretical improvement for the future since the curriculum is still in its planning stages as the expert panel found out on site. Against this background, SQU must submit comprehensive course syllabi for all courses (both mandatory and elective) of the programme (see **Finding 1**).

As for the workload and ECTS equivalencies, SQU follows a formula for calculating equivalencies, but that formula should be more visible and accessible for students. Thus, the expert panel recommends that the workload and ECTS equivalencies be made more visible and accessible for students (see **Finding 1c**), e.g., by adding this information to the course syllabi.

Finally, the issue of English language classes appears even more pertinent to the Master's than to the Bachelor's level as students stressed the need to become familiar with recent international research debates in view of their thesis. The expert panel thus strongly recommends more inclusion of English in the curriculum (see **Finding 2**), e.g., by introducing more courses which familiarise students with ongoing debates in English.

Conclusion

The criterion is partially fulfilled.

2. Procedures for quality assurance

Bachelor's/Master's degree

The programme is subject to the higher education institution's policy and associated procedures for quality assurance, including procedures for the design, approval, monitoring, and revision of the programmes.

A quality-oriented culture, focusing on continuous quality enhancement, is in place. This includes regular feedback mechanisms involving both internal and external stakeholders.

The strategy, policies, and procedures have a formal status and are made available in published form to all those concerned. They also include roles for students and other stakeholders.

Data is collected from relevant sources and stakeholders, analysed, and used for the effective management and continuous enhancement of the programme.

[ESG 1.1, 1.7 & 1.9]

Description

The SER states that SQU's Quality Assurance Office was established in 2010 to support and coordinate the quality assurance procedures and policies. The vice chancellor is in charge of QA processes at SQU. He is supported by the director of the quality assurance office who oversees the work of the deputy directors for (1) administration, financial, and technical quality, (2) academic programmes and community service, and (3) institutional and scientific research.

At college level, the SER states that CASS has created quality indicators and practices to meet its own institutional demands. The Quality Assurance and Accreditation Committee (QAAC) was established in 2011 as part of CASS's implementation of the six steps of the Total Quality Management (TQM) System. The committee consists of the accreditation officer, rapporteur, and executive supervisor of academic accreditation from each CASS department. Its staff carries out administrative work and fosters a productive workplace environment for instruction and learning. The QAAC also attends to student needs.

To evaluate the effectiveness of assessments, SQU employs semester reports (including course effectiveness, student performance, and alignment with programme objectives) to the head of department, student and faculty feedback at the end of each semester (Course and Teaching Survey, CTS), focus groups, accreditation reviews, and documentation and reporting on progress and challenges in connection with the programmes.

Several committees and boards are responsible for the coordination of the programmes. Among others, they are the Academic Affairs Committee, the Department Council, the External Advisory Board, and the Specialisation Coordination Committee. These bodies support the coordination of the programmes via consultations, course documentation, specialisation plan updates, and the collection of stakeholder feedback.

On the programme level, the Departmental Development and Quality Assurance Committee is responsible for reviewing the programmes which are based on the OQF and SQU's guidelines to ensure that courses align with the programmes' learning objectives, supported by continuous feedback from both internal and external stakeholders as well as regular reviews. Quality assurance processes include course and faculty evaluation as well as faculty teaching surveys and benchmarking. Stakeholder feedback is collected via surveys (e.g., end-of-semester course evaluation surveys) and meetings (e.g., open discussions with students). Both curriculum and course descriptions are regularly reviewed to ensure they remain up to date and relevant to academia and the labour market.

In response to the last accreditation of the Bachelor's and Master's History programmes, the SER states that certain modifications were implemented. Among others, course descriptions and the curriculum were modified and updated and the programmes' relevance for the labour market was reviewed. In this context, the revision of the curriculum of the Bachelor's programme was identified as a priority for the Department to strengthen the programme's academic quality, broaden students' historical knowledge and research skills and comply with both domestic and international standards. The revised curriculum has been in place since 2023.

The Department further adheres to SQU's policies that aim at fostering an academic environment based on equality, justice, and academic integrity. This includes policies on prohibition of all forms of discrimination and promoting values of tolerance and mutual respect.

Expert evaluation

Based on the documentation provided and the on-site discussions, the expert team assesses that quality assurance policies and processes at SQU are especially strong, in large part because the Department has the

support of the central university administration's Quality Assurance and Accreditation Office. The work of that office is comprehensive on both the university-wide and college level and cascades down to the Department in ways that are apparent (e.g., through student satisfaction surveys, templates for course plans, and mapping documents that demonstrate the interrelated nature of course ILOs, PLOs, University-level objectives, and national objectives). There is a strong quality-oriented culture that includes the regular collection of feedback from all stakeholders, ranging from the students up to the faculty, administration, and labour market representatives. This is further reinforced by an external advisory board, comprised of alumni and labour market representatives. That body offers a regular forum for feedback and modification to curricula. Concretely, this takes the form of collaborative workshops with external organisation. Strategies, policies, and procedures are all quite clearly laid out, much of it is even available on the website. Data on quality assurance is collected and documented from multiple stakeholders, including students and external stakeholders having the opportunity to participate in departmental committees, which includes them in programme development and other QA processes.

At the same time, the expert team noticed that while students are included in several ways (course evaluations, student satisfaction surveys), there seems to be a discrepancy between opinions and understanding among different levels of the administration – and students – as to whether these evaluations are mandatory. While administrative-level discussions suggested it was not mandatory and indeed that it *should not* be, the students who spoke with the expert team were explicit in saying that their access to the Student Information System (SIS) was contingent on their completion of course evaluations at the end of the term. Whether they are mandatory or voluntary, the expert team recommends SQU make this policy explicit in writing so that it is accessible to all relevant parties (faculty, students, administrators) (**Finding 3**).

Conclusion

The criterion is fulfilled.

3. Learning, teaching and assessment of students

Bachelor's/Master's degree

The delivery of material encourages students to take an active role in the learning process.

Students are assessed using accessible criteria, regulations, and procedures, which are made readily available to all participants and which are applied consistently.

Assessment procedures are designed to measure the achievement of the intended learning outcomes.

[ESG 1.3]

Description

Teaching and learning methods implemented in the programmes are said to be tailored to the needs of the diverse student body and the programmes' objectives, combining theoretical learning with practical application. They include lectures, flipped classroom, theory-practice integrated lectures, workshops, field trips and academic visits, and presentations which is supported by the use of technology and e-learning. In addition, the teaching and learning methods are said to be selected to also accommodate students with special needs. For example, students with special needs are reportedly integrated with their peers who assist them in tasks such as preparing joint research projects and converting course materials into accessible formats. This is further outlined in the guide of SQU's Special Needs Support Unit. To provide an interactive learning environment, students engage in project-based and student-centred learning. According to the SER, this is supported by SQU by providing fully equipped classrooms, e-learning systems, and several other learning resources.

Additionally for the Master's programme, integrating theoretical knowledge gained through teaching and applied knowledge developed through research is a key feature of the programme according to the SER. To achieve this, research activities are embedded in core courses (e.g., "Historical Research Methodology"), academic seminars are organised, and students are encouraged to present their research at conferences.

Guest lectures from labour market representatives are included in the programmes via seminars, lectures, and workshops as well as specialised guest sessions.

As for assessments, methods are said to include short objective tests, essay-type tests, portfolios, online exams, midterm exams, quizzes, reports, presentations, projects, assignments, final exams as well as continuous assessments throughout the semester (e.g., classroom observations and checklists). The choice of exam type is reportedly based on the nature and objectives of each course. The SER states that exams typically include multiple-choice questions, definitions, short-answer questions, and essay questions. In terms of exam organisation, midterm exams are usually held between weeks 6 and 9, while final exams are conducted during the official examination period at the end of the semester. The Department's Examinations Committee is in charge of the preparation of exams and monitoring the schedule. Exam schedules are uploaded to student accounts and are also included in the study plan issued to students to avoid scheduling conflicts. The SER further states that students may retake exams based on valid reasons or excuses they submit.

Additionally for the Master's programme, the research proposal of students is said to be evaluated by faculty members during the first seminar. Prior to submitting the thesis for final defence, students are required to present a second seminar to discuss the findings of the research project.

Expert evaluation

Learning and teaching methods are somewhat difficult to assess given the lack of syllabi that would outline the ILOs at the course level and allow them to be matched to the programme-level ILOs. As stated above, the experts therefore recommend clarifying the programme-level ILOs in relation to individual course-level ILOs, detailing the teaching, learning and assessment methods of projected outcomes in the field of skills such as "critical thinking" (see **Finding 1a**). However, in the discussions on site, the experts learned that teaching and learning methods match the course content and vary adequately to accommodate different learner types. Student-centred learning is facilitated using formats such as flipped classroom which was also confirmed by students. Despite the organisation of workshops with labour market representatives, which is commendable, it is not entirely clear to what extent students are encouraged to transfer their skills to contexts outside the university on a regular basis. As mentioned before, the university must therefore submit comprehensive course syllabi for all courses (both mandatory and elective) (see **Finding 1**).

As for assessments, despite the lack of documentation the experts were further able to assess on site that criteria for assessment appear to be transparent, comprehensible, and clear to the students due to comprehensive information in the Student Information System (SIS) and the Learning Management System (LMS). In the examples of detailed syllabi that were available to the experts, the methods and criteria for assessment are clearly laid out. However, the experts learned on site that exams and assessments focus on the testing of knowledge rather than skills. While assessment methods thus cover different formats throughout the study programmes such as multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions, they should be made even more diverse to reflect a wider range of methodological competencies (**Finding 4**). For example, some written exams could be replaced with oral exams or papers.

Exam schedules and regulations, including the possibility of rescheduling in case students experience conflicts between different dates of exams, are available to students and are comprehensive. Overall, students seemed satisfied with the system of exams and assessments in place. Yet, evaluations of workload to simultaneously

prepare for classes and midterm and final exams varied strongly. This harks back to the recommendation to make the workload (not just attendance hours but also self-study time) more visible and accessible for students e.g., by adding it to the course syllabi (see **Finding 1c**).

Conclusion

The criterion is fulfilled.

4. Student admission, progression, recognition and certification

Bachelor's/Master's degree

Consistently applied, pre-defined, and published regulations are in place which cover student admission, progression, recognition, and certification.

[ESG 1.4]

Description

Admission

The SER states that admission to the Bachelor's programme is handled centrally through the Higher Education Admission Centre (HEAC) under the Ministry of Higher Education, Research, and Innovation. Admission criteria are detailed in the HEAC Student Guidebook, which is distributed to students in their final school year. To get admitted to the History undergraduate programme, students must further complete the Foundation Programme and pass three introductory courses, one of which must be "Introduction to the Study of History" (HIST 1025). According to the SER, a proposal is currently under review to allow students to be directly admitted to the programme via the centralized HEAC admission portal.

Candidates who apply for admission to the Master's programme should have a Bachelor's degree in History or a related subject and must have a cumulative GPA of at least 2.75. English language proficiency is required as well (minimum score of 4.0 IELTS Academic test; 28-30 TOEFL IBT). The SER outlines a structured process for the selection of suitable candidates based on the regulations of the Deanship of Postgraduate Studies. Accordingly, candidates undergo an initial screening after submitting their application to verify that they are eligible. Subsequently, applications are forwarded to the Department which conducts admission tests or interviews. Admission criteria are thus GPA, performance in the test/interview, work experience, and research activities. Applicants scoring 70% or higher are eligible for admission. If candidates are already employed, they must present a letter for study leave issued by their employer.

Progression

According to the SER, SQU has a monitoring system for student learning progress in place which is overseen by academic advisors and the Assistant Dean for Academic Affairs. Courses are said to be coordinated to ensure content consistency and avoid scheduling conflicts. Course schedules are designed with flexible timing to accommodate students' personal and professional commitments, with classes held in the evening from 4:15 p.m. to 7:05 p.m. for graduate programmes. Each student cohort is assigned a study plan that outlines the courses they will take each semester. Students register for courses according to the official course schedule issued at the beginning of each semester. To further ensure student progression, each student is said to be assigned an academic advisor upon acceptance into the Department of History. Advisors and students are responsible for ensuring adherence to the study plan. Communication between students and advisors is further facilitated via SQU's Student Information System (SIS), which enables advisors to provide feedback, recommendations, and course registration guidance. For Master's students, dedicated meetings are said to be held at the beginning of each academic year between students, the Head of the Department, the Programme Coordinator, and faculty supervisors to offer orientation and guidance.

The SIS also provides comprehensive student data, including academic status, semester GPA, cumulative GPA, completed credit hours, and remaining hours to graduate. In addition, advisors use SIS to communicate with students under academic probation (GPA below 2.00) to address challenges and provide support. Master's students receive detailed academic feedback during the probation period. If a student submits an unsatisfactory progress report, a committee is formed by the Dean of the College to review the case and suggest appropriate support mechanisms. If the issues persist, the student is asked to withdraw from the programme.

Recognition

According to the SER, SQU has mechanisms in place to recognize external learning. The requirements and procedures for transfer to the History programmes from external institutions are said to be accessible on SQU's website.

Certification

To graduate, students of the Bachelor's and Master's programme must complete all programme requirements. Master's students must additionally defend their thesis successfully. Upon graduation, the degree Bachelor/Master of Arts in History is awarded respectively. Graduates are issued a Graduation Certificate which includes their full name, programme, specialisation, GPA, and completion date.

Expert evaluation

The admission and selection for both study programmes follow pre-defined criteria and procedures that are publicly available. The formal requirements for Bachelor's level admissions are determined at the national level, and are clear and publicly available on SQU's website. According to the SER, there is currently a proposal by SQU under review to change the admission criteria of the Bachelor's programme by dropping the requirement of basic English language skills, among other things. Because it is necessary for historians to be able to work confidently with scientific literature written in English and also because English is already integrated in the current curriculum (course "Historical Texts in English"), the experts strongly recommend maintaining the current entry requirements for English language proficiency for admission to the Bachelor's programme (**Finding 5**).

The formal requirements for Master's level admissions are clear and publicly available on SQU's website, too. On top of that, SQU provides the brochures *Undergraduate Academic Regulations* and *Postgraduate Academic Regulations* both in English and Arabic, which elaborate on the formal admission criteria and also provide information about exams and graduation in great detail. There has been significant improvement with respect to the admission criteria for the Master's programme compared to the previous international accreditation in 2019. However, while the formal requirements in general are publicly available and eligible applicants are evaluated by the Department of History through a dedicated evaluation form that also contains a personal interview to assess the competencies of applicants, subject-specific prerequisites for the Master's programme are not published. SQU must therefore modify the currently publicly available information on the admission criteria to include the prerequired subject-specific competencies (**Finding 6**). This would also help to inform and attract prospective students who graduated from other universities and would like to apply for the Master's programme at SQU.

Data on attrition is collected systematically, which suggests that student progression is tracked. It is a positive sign that there is an academic advisor for every student. As the experts noticed on site that students did not really mention this opportunity for supporting their progression, it would be beneficial to invest more effort in ensuring that students make use of the benefits this system has to offer. This could for example be done by promoting it more in class and/or in the SIS. The Department of History further has mechanisms in place to coordinate courses and to avoid overlaps by means of a designated scheduling committee responsible for this.

Each student cohort is assigned a specific study plan, and registration takes place at the beginning of each semester with one week for students to reconsider the courses they elected. The expert panel has no reason to assume that there are any issues with the course management on an organisational level leading to students not being able to study within the expected period. The experts also learned on site that SQU holds an annual forum for postgraduate students which includes both academic and social activities and helps the teaching staff to keep up with student progression. The experts deem this highly commendable.

Regarding the recognition of prior learning and recognition of credits from other higher education institutions, the responsibilities are divided between the Deanship of Admissions and Registration as the deciding authority, the Office of the Assistant Vice Chancellor for International Cooperation which checks and advises on the equivalence of courses and credits, and the lecturers who check for the equivalence of content. A potential issue for the recognition of study achievements from international universities is the Credit Hour (CH) system implemented by SQU compared to the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) as the CH system only accounts for attendance without considering self-study time. There are, in fact, partially documented calculations in place to include self-study time in the allocation of credit hours which would reconcile both credit systems if implemented extensively. However, these calculations are currently neither publicly available nor transparent to the teaching staff and students. While the experts thus commend that SQU has implemented mechanisms for recognition at a high institutional level and that the Assistant Vice Chancellor for International Cooperations supports recognition of credits and courses, these policies and processes do not always seem to reach the Departments, which also includes students, in a transparent and operable way. The discussion with students during the site visit has also shown that this makes studying abroad and partaking in student exchanges more difficult. In fact, the experts learned that only very few History students at SQU decide to study a semester abroad. Therefore – and as it was already stated for the previous accreditation – SQU needs to support and facilitate student exchange which must include making its regulations for external credit recognition more transparent and publicly available (**Finding 7**). This could for example be done by introducing a credit conversion table which helps both incoming and outgoing students to understand and align both systems.

As for certification, SQU issues an official degree certificate upon graduation stating the specific degree awarded and possible minors or honours classification. Graduates also receive a transcript of records. While these documents contain some general information on the obtained qualification, students currently don't receive a document outlining the ILOs of their study programme and the acquired skills and competencies like diploma supplements do. The previous accreditation report already emphasised the importance of a diploma supplement for both the international and the national labour market as well as for opening opportunities to studying abroad. This has not, however, yet been fully implemented even though the expert panel finds that SQU's graduates would benefit greatly from such a system. However, there are plans on the national level to implement such a document in the future, as the experts learned on site. The expert panel strongly supports these plans and reiterates the recommendation to issue a document outlining the competencies of graduates similar to a diploma supplement (**Finding 8**).

Conclusion

The criterion is partially fulfilled.

5. Teaching staff

Bachelor's/Master's degree

The composition (quantity, qualifications, professional and international experience, etc.) of the staff is appropriate for the achievement of the intended learning outcomes.

Staff involved with teaching is qualified and competent to do so.
Transparent procedures are in place for the recruitment and development of staff.
 [ESG 1.5]

Description

The SER states that teaching staff at the Department of History currently includes 11 faculty members, of whom 9 hold doctoral degrees and 2 hold Master's degrees. They are said to represent diverse academic backgrounds and nationalities, with most possessing extensive experience in university-level teaching and academic research. Teaching and supervision for the Master's programme are assigned to faculty members at the rank of Assistant Professor and above.

If contracts expire, the Department reportedly ensures continuity by either renewing contracts for a period of one to three years or recruiting new staff. Recruitment is carried out in accordance with university regulations and departmental needs. Academic job vacancies are said to be announced on SQU's website and in newspapers. Application is open to all qualified candidates who meet the specified job requirements. The selection process includes an initial screening of applications, two interviews at College and Department level, and the final selection by SQU's Academic Recruitment Committee.

As for staff development, SQU is said to sponsor employees to pursue postgraduate qualifications at universities abroad. Faculty members reportedly receive training through online and in-person workshops and courses such as the Active Learning Workshop. Additionally, university-wide workshops have been conducted to introduce and regulate the use of Artificial Intelligence tools in teaching and research. The SER further states that there is a dedicated professional development programme in place for new lecturers to improve teaching skills.

To advance their research, teaching staff is engaged in research projects, according to the SER. These projects are conducted individually or in collaboration with fellow faculty members, graduate students, or external scholars. They also reportedly publish in peer-reviewed journals. The SER further states that financial support is available for participation in conferences and research leave. Academic staff involved in research projects are granted 28 days of annual research leave. In addition, they are granted a one-year sabbatical leave every six years to conduct research in collaboration with other universities.

Expert evaluation

The number of faculty seems more than sufficient for incoming cohorts, ensuring a low student to faculty ratio. The expert panel has received a list of faculty members, though with a differing degree of detail regarding their specialisations and academic activities. There is very strong representation of regional specialisations among faculty in Oman, Arabian Peninsula, and surrounding regions. The same can be said of historians of Islam. The coursework comprising the minors is offered primarily by people outside the Department. Particularly with respect to the planned new curriculum, this includes even several interdisciplinary courses which are still described as subfields of history (e.g., environmental history). This might result in methodological confusion, although at present it cannot be assessed in more detail as it concerns mainly the future curriculum.

The regular cooperation between the Department and external stakeholders in the form of workshops is definitely a strength of the programmes since it both complements faculty strengths and fills gaps in skills needed by students. However, this involvement of external stakeholders, including labour market representatives, could be put to use in more than the current ways to ensure a more regular involvement of the labour market in delivering the programmes.

Teaching faculty have many opportunities to support professional development and to obtain research funds and financial support for participation in international conferences. Given these rather positive conditions, already the previous accreditation report has noted the potential opportunities for improving research output of the teaching staff, especially in English. Based on the information in the CVs provided by SQU, publications, especially in internationally visible outlets, remain a field that could be strengthened among present faculty. The existing level of English language proficiency among the programmes' teaching staff also appears to limit opportunities for exposing students to English in the classroom or in their own research projects.

Recruitment and hiring procedures generally appear to be transparent and systematic. Yet, a possible structural problem might consist in the fact that SQU has the only History department in the country. That means that the Department evaluated here essentially has to rely on its own graduates to develop its faculty. This can have advantages in terms of familiarity with the academic environment and consistency in delivering the programmes. However, the experts see that this can also potentially lead to disadvantages when it comes to intellectual originality, new avenues in research and teaching, or fresh external input more generally. While there are several international faculty members, a further diversification in this regard could help SQU's international standing in the long run.

Against this background, the experts recommend that SQU intensify their internationalisation and diversification efforts with regard to the teaching staff by offering more English language training for the teaching staff of the programmes, inviting external stakeholders to the classroom as guest lecturers, and considering international expertise when hiring new staff (**Finding 9**).

Conclusion

The criterion is fulfilled.

6. Learning resources and student support

Bachelor's/Master's degree

Appropriate facilities and resources are available for learning and teaching activities.

Guidance and support is available for students which includes advice on achieving a successful completion of their studies.

[ESG 1.6]

Description

The SER states that SQU offers access to printed and digital library resources, general and specialised computer labs, study halls and other facilities. The main library at SQU is said to be the most extensive library in Oman in terms of space, collection, and number of users with access to a total of 505,693 books, 45,121 electronic journals, and 59 databases. The library is committed to maintaining international standards by regularly updating collections, policies, and services to enhance user satisfaction and research outcomes. In addition, there are several more and specialised libraries available on campus such as the College libraries.

CASS provides four lecture halls equipped with whiteboards, LCD projectors, and sound systems. Students also have access to multiple computer labs equipped with software for text and data analysis across its various buildings. Each lab has 30 desktop computers, LCD projectors, and printers, offering students tools for online research, access to digital resources (including the library databases), and assignment printing. The college building's ground floor houses faculty offices, where students can seek guidance and assistance. To

accommodate students with disabilities, ramps, elevators, adaptive workstations as well as assistive technologies such as screen readers, and transcription services are provided.

Undergraduate students can reportedly access programme information through the Deanship of Admissions and Registration. There is also an Orientation Week at the beginning of each academic year to help students adapt to university life. Additionally, academic advising services are provided for all students, according to the SER. Students are assigned to an academic advisor who offers guidance and support in both academic and non-academic matters. Office hours are allocated in each faculty member's schedule, during which students can visit for academic consultation and support. For Master's students, the Deanship of Postgraduate Studies offers workshops and training sessions in academic writing skills. An annual forum for postgraduate students is available, which reportedly includes a variety of academic and social activities.

SQU's Student Counselling Centre provides several support and counselling services such as individual and group therapy, career counselling, and various workshops. The Student Services Centre offers various services and facilities for students such as cultural and educational services and entertainment. The Academic Support Unit for Students with Disabilities focuses on providing academic support to students with disabilities at the university level. Students with children, urgent situations, health issues, or other significant personal commitments can request flexible class schedules or extensions for assignments. International students receive support through the orientation programme which is said to be tailored to their needs and introduce them to local academic environment and culture. Language support services are also available for non-Arabic-speaking students.

SQU further offers support through the Religious Guidance and Counselling Department for all students. Students can also engage in a variety of sports and recreational activities. In addition, SQU offers medical services free of charge for students, nutrition services, and both internal and external housing for students.

Expert evaluation

The learning resources are outstanding. There is no evidence for the classroom size not being adequate and the facilities the expert panel inspected during the site visit were in excellent condition. The central and branch libraries offer a large and diverse set of resources to support teaching, learning, and research. For example, students and staff have access to a large number of databases, e-book libraries, print collections including documents and manuscripts, which collectively suggest they are very well equipped for research. The libraries offer workstations and well-equipped rooms for group work which can be reserved online in advance via the SIS. Moreover, students are encouraged by faculty and supported by the library – e.g., through workshops – in using these resources for their learning and research. The departmental relationships with National Archives, Ministries, and museums in the entire country offer valuable additional opportunities for learning and research. Representatives of the labour market confirmed that students have access to and can use multiple resources of information.

An especially remarkable feature of the College and Department the expert panel was very impressed by on site are the facilities and resources for students with disabilities and special learning needs. There is a designated learning and working room in the CASS which offers special tools. Furthermore, students with special needs are supported by the Special Needs Support Unit which also provides information about access to its resources and equipment in published form via an extensive guide.

Comprehensive guidance and support are available for all students through different means. Institutional and individualised student advisory services are available for students on all levels (SQU, College, and Department) and are offered frequently and consistently. The Deanship of Admissions and Registration in collaboration with the colleges and departments organises an orientation week at the beginning of each semester.

Various support centres are set up, e.g., for Career Guidance and Student Counselling. Information on access to these services is made publicly available. Every student is assigned a student advisor to monitor their progression and offer advice on their studies. Lecturers offer frequent office hours and are available for students even outside of office hours. Lecturers also support students with finding internships. Master's students explicitly praised the support with conducting and publishing research the lecturers provide to them. Overall, student support services seem to be in a very good condition and well-functioning, as is suggested by the low attrition quota of less than 5% per cohort. Also, there has been clear progress in responding to a recommendation from the previous accreditation report with respect to establishing an alumni network.

International students are supported by an International Office, and the Department offers a special course in English for non-native Arabic speakers who are studying the mandatory history requirement that is part of the other programmes. The general impression is that the mechanisms in place to support international students are working. However, there are currently only 17-18 international students enrolled at CASS which seems to be a very low number in comparison to the 2450 active students at CASS in total. Likewise, the number of outgoing students is extremely low. The on-site discussion with the students suggested that it is possible for students to partake in student exchanges, but they did not know much about it and felt that other colleges had priority in this regard. It seems like the College and especially the Department might benefit from more opportunities for study abroad and other (shorter) forms of student exchange. Therefore, the expert panel recommends that the efforts to encourage students to take part in student exchanges – also at an early stage of study – should be expanded and that already existing opportunities for student exchange and the benefits of taking part in these programmes be promoted more openly (**Finding 7a**).

Studying at SQU is free for undergraduate students. No fees are paid for tuition, meals, and accommodation and transportation on campus. The tuition fees for postgraduate students amount to 2,500 OMR (ca. 5,500 €). However, the Deanship of Student Affairs overseeing the students' financial situation can provide free accommodation and a tuition fee waiver if students in need apply for it and fulfil certain conditions. There are also numerous sponsorships and scholarships some of which include not only a waiver of fees but also a monthly allowance, including a scholarship allocated to social waiver students. Information on these financing options is made available to potential recipients in an adequate way via the website of the Deanship of Postgraduate Studies. Furthermore, the Deanship of Student Affairs is responsible for the student employment programme which gives students the opportunity to get a source of income by working at various colleges, centres, and computer labs.

Conclusion

The criterion is fulfilled.

7. Information

Bachelor's/Master's degree

Impartial and objective, up-to-date information regarding the programme and its qualifications is published regularly. This published information is appropriate for and available to relevant stakeholders.

[ESG 1.8]

Description

The SER outlines that SQU and the Department of History leverage several communication channels to disseminate information to students and stakeholders. The University's and College's official websites are the main repositories for this information, with Arabic and English being the primary languages. In addition,

newsletters and social media platforms are used to keep stakeholders updated. SQU is said to also organise open days and information sessions for prospective students.

SQU's official website offers information and applications pertaining to several faculties such as the procedural framework for student admissions, applicable to both domestic and international candidates. The Department's website is said to contain all essential information on the study programmes including student handbooks. In addition, SQU employs a range of online applications to facilitate communication with students and faculty members and to assist faculty in managing administrative matters.

Expert evaluation

The programmes demonstrate several effective channels for public information and external communication. The university, the College, and the Department of History actively use their websites and social media platforms to disseminate information to stakeholders and the general public. Responsibilities for updating online content are clearly regulated at the university level, which supports consistency and reliability of information. The website was even updated during the visit. In addition, the weekly newsletter issued by the central Communication Department provides regular insight into institutional activities and events and contributes to the university's public visibility.

The availability of a Student Information System (SIS) and a Learning Management System (LMS) further facilitates access to information for students and staff. An important strength from the perspective of professional practice is the regular involvement of external stakeholders from the labour market in curriculum design and implementation. This engagement not only ensures the relevance of programme content to professional needs but also functions as a form of public information sharing and transparency regarding the programmes' orientation and objectives.

Information and regulations concerning students with disabilities and other special needs are publicly accessible, clearly structured, and easy to locate. This is positively noted by external stakeholders as it signals institutional awareness of diversity, inclusion, and equal access, which are increasingly relevant considerations in professional environments.

At the same time, the accessibility of programme-specific information requires further improvement. Essential documents such as detailed course syllabi, information on quality assurance processes, and transparent workload calculations are not consistently available to all stakeholders. Students receive information about the courses via course descriptions ("course syllabi") which are made available to students at the beginning of each semester. The students also confirmed that they have access to course descriptions. These course syllabi contain a description of the contents of the course, teaching and learning methods, types and weight of assessments, intended learning outcomes and their alignment with the programme learning outcomes, the so-called characteristics of SQU graduates, and the characteristics of the national qualification framework, the responsible lecturer with their contact information, and a course schedule. The course syllabi, as far as they have been provided to the expert panel in the annex of the SER, were quite detailed and comprehensive. However, they were incomplete, as only a few course descriptions of current history courses were made available to the expert panel and not even one of the course descriptions of the planned and updated courses of the programmes could be shown to the experts because they haven't been developed yet. Moreover, of the course descriptions provided in the annex of the SER, only a few have bibliographical references. The course descriptions also don't include a complete indication of the expected workload, since only credit hours which correspond to teaching hours and time of attendance in class are indicated without giving any information about the expected workload in terms of self-study. For both programmes, SQU must therefore publish and distribute comprehensive information, most importantly, but not limited to, course syllabi on both programmes (**Finding 10**). Greater visibility of this information would enhance transparency, support informed engagement

by external partners, and strengthen confidence in the programmes' alignment with professional and academic standards.

Conclusion

The criterion is partially fulfilled.

V. Recommendation of the panel of experts

The panel of experts recommends accrediting the study programmes “History” (Bachelor of Arts) and “History” (Master of Arts) offered by Sultan Qaboos University, Oman, with conditions.

Commendation

Both programmes under review offered by the SQU’s History Department are well structured and prepare students very well for careers in the field. Visible changes have been implemented and are still underway in both programmes since the last international accreditation procedure in 2019 which highlights SQU’s commitment to academic excellence. Labor market representatives are satisfied with the skills and competencies of graduates and appeared to be enthusiastic in their support of the programmes and its graduates. SQU’s comprehensive and effective quality assurance system cascades down to the College and Department level, thus ensuring that national and international standards of teaching and learning are met. The teaching staff of the programmes is adequately qualified and seems motivated and engaged with students. Learning, teaching and assessment is transparently organised, diverse, and student-centred, with state-of-the-art online information and learning management systems supporting student progression. Facilities and learning and research resources for both programmes under review are outstanding. Academic as well as non-academic support services are adequately available for the entire student body, including students with special needs and international students.

Findings

1. For both programmes, SQU must submit comprehensive course syllabi for all courses (both mandatory and elective).
 - a. Additionally for both programmes, the expert team recommends that SQU clarify all programme-level ILOs in terms of their connection to course-level ILOs in the syllabi.
 - b. Additionally for both programmes, the expert team recommends that SQU make explicit the theoretical versus practical focus of each programme, to ensure that students are better informed about their differences and faculty can shape their syllabi accordingly.
 - c. Additionally for both programmes, the expert team recommends that the workload and ECTS equivalencies be made more visible and accessible for students.
2. For both programmes, the expert team strongly recommends the inclusion of English and/or other research languages.
3. For both programmes, the expert team recommends SQU make the policy regarding student participation in course evaluations and surveys explicit in writing so that it is accessible to all relevant parties (faculty, students, administrators).
4. For both programmes, assessment methods should be made even more diverse to reflect a wider range of methodological competencies.
5. For the Bachelor’s programme, the experts strongly recommend maintaining the current admission requirements for English language proficiency.
6. For the Master’s programme, SQU must modify the currently publicly available information on the admission criteria to include the prerequired subject-specific competencies.
7. For both programmes, SQU needs to support and facilitate student exchange which must include making its regulations for external credit recognition more transparent and publicly available.
 - a. Additionally for both programmes, the expert panel recommends that the efforts to encourage students to take part in student exchanges should be expanded and that already existing opportunities for student exchange and the benefits of taking part in these programmes be promoted more openly.

8. For both programmes, the expert panel recommends issuing a document outlining the competencies of graduates similar to a diploma supplement.
9. For both programmes, the experts recommend that SQU intensify their internationalisation and diversification efforts with regard to the teaching staff by offering more English language training for the teaching staff of the programmes, inviting external stakeholders to the classroom as guest lecturers, and considering international expertise when hiring new staff.
10. For both programmes, SQU must publish and distribute comprehensive information for all stakeholders.