

AMDISA  
**SOUTH ASIAN  
QUALITY ASSURANCE  
SYSTEM (SAQS)**

*for Management Schools*



**Accreditation  
Procedures**

**Booklet - I**



**South Asian Quality Assurance System (SAQS)**

**Association of Management Development Institutions in South Asia (AMDISA)**

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# ACCREDITATION PROCEDURES

## CONTENTS

<b>FOREWORD</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>I. INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>II. PRELIMINARY INQUIRY</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>III. FORMAL APPLICATION</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>IV. ELIGIBILITY</b>	<b>7</b>
1. Eligibility Briefing	
2. Eligibility Criteria	
3. The Eligibility Decision	
4. After Eligibility	
<b>V. SELF-ASSESSMENT</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>VI. PEER REVIEW VISIT</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>VII. ACCREDITATION AWARDING COMMITTEE'S DECISION</b>	<b>13</b>
1. Full Accreditation	
2. Conditional Accreditation	
3. Rejection	
<b>VIII. GUIDED DEVELOPMENT</b>	<b>15</b>
1. Year I of Guided Development	
2. Subsequent Years of Guided Development	
3. Resubmission in view of SAQS Accreditation	
<b>IX. ALTERNATIVES TO GUIDED DEVELOPMENT AND REACCREDITATION</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>ANNEXURES</b>	
<b>A. A DIAGRAM OF THE SAQS PROCESS</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>B. DOCUMENTS</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>C. TIMING AND DEADLINES</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>D. FEE SCHEDULE</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>E. SAQS MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE</b>	<b>23</b>



## FOREWORD

I am indeed very happy that the revised edition of the South Asian Quality Assurance System (SAQS) documents has been brought out. They are in the form of four Booklets titled : SAQS Accreditation Procedures, Guidance Handbook on SAQS Quality Criteria, Guide to Self-Assessment, and Peer Review Guide, supplemented by SAQS Data Sheet, Master's Degree in Management, Brief for Mentors, SAQS Self-Assessment Checklist, and List of SAQS Committees and Experts.

The first (2003) edition of these documents was based substantially on the EQUIS (European Quality Improvement System) of EFMD (European Foundation for Management Development). During 2003-06, EFMD-AMDISA project on Quality Assurance, sponsored by the Asia Link Programme of the European Commission, provided very useful and constructive opportunities to improve and indigenize SAQS through a series of 13 regional workshops, and its implementation in three reputable management schools, two in India and one in Pakistan. This edition reflects the collective learnings gained from these regional interactions and experiences.

The goal of SAQS is to evolve a globally benchmarked Quality Assurance System adapted to the specificity and needs of South Asian management schools and their environments. It provides interested and eligible management schools seeking accreditation a list of collectively evolved quality criteria and details of the assessment process and procedures. These serve as bases for their self-assessment and identification of quality improvement opportunities. The process is aided by trained and experienced SAQS Mentors and Peer Reviewers from the South Asian region. Based on the self-assessment process and recommendations of the visiting Peer Review Team to the institution, the SAQS Accreditation Awarding Committee makes a final decision.

Prof Arif A Waqif, Director, Academic, AMDISA undertook a comprehensive revision and updation of the SAQS documents. These were then deliberated upon in the SAQS Committee. Subsequently, the SAQS Council recommended that the books revised and updated by Prof Arif A Waqif may be reviewed and finalized by a Committee comprising Prof Syed Zahoor Hassan, Vice- Chancellor, Lahore University of Management Sciences, former AMDISA President and Member, SAQS Council, Dr A H Kalro, Executive Director, AES Post Graduate Institute of Business Management, Ahmedabad, and Chairman, SAQS Committee and Member, SAQS Council, and Prof Arif A Waqif, Director, Academic, AMDISA (Convenor). The SAQS documents have thus gone through a comprehensive updation, revision and review process.

I would like to place on record my deep appreciation for the painstaking effort put in by Prof Arif A Waqif in revising and updating the SAQS documents. Grateful thanks are also due to Prof Syed Zahoor Hassan and Dr A H Kalro for comprehensively reviewing the draft SAQS documents.

June 2008  
Dhaka

Prof Hafiz G A Siddiqi  
President, AMDISA

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

These Booklets and Supplementary Materials document the details of the SAQS processes and learnings obtained as of date. I am grateful for the kind Foreword by Prof Hafiz G A Siddiqi, AMDISA President.

Initially, the earlier texts of the Booklets and Materials were suitably edited and modified, and included some process clarifications from Mr C Ramakrishna, AMDISA Executive Director. This draft was then finalized on the basis of many valuable comments and suggestions received from Prof Syed Zahoor Hassan, former AMDISA President, and Dr Amarlal H Kalro, SAQS Committee Chairman. Their inputs are gratefully acknowledged.

The revised and finalized drafts were efficiently prepared and proof-read by Mr T Ganeswara Rao, SAQS Secretary and Ms K Subhashini, Project Assistant. Thanks are due to them also.

June 2008  
Hyderabad

Arif A Waqif  
Director, Academic  
AMDISA

## I. INTRODUCTION

SAQS is the quality assurance scheme run by the Association of Management Development Institutions in South Asia (AMDISA) as a service to the management education profession worldwide.

SAQS is the South Asian system of quality assessment, improvement, and accreditation of higher education institutions in management and business administration. Its fundamental objective, linked to the mission of the AMDISA, is to raise the quality and standard of management education. AMDISA facilitates standard setting, benchmarking, mutual learning, and the dissemination of good practice across borders.

SAQS considers that diversity is a value to live with and protect and that there is no “one best model” for a Business School. The objective of SAQS is not the standardization of degree programme formats, of course content, or of strategic choices. It accepts that each country has its own approach to management and business education and that the length, design, content and learning objectives of programmes will differ from one country to another, and even sometimes within countries. Furthermore, SAQS is not primarily focused on the MBA or any other specific programme. Its scope covers all management programmes offered by a School from the first degree up to the Ph.D as well as training programmes. In summary, SAQS is founded on the principle of recognizing diversity and the strengths of different approaches to higher education in management.

The SAQS Quality Label is intended to provide recognition beyond the domestic environment to Schools that, in addition to satisfying high quality standards in their national market, are also credible in the international arena.

SAQS assesses Schools as a whole. It assesses not just degree programmes but all the activities and sub-units of the School, including research, e-learning units, executive education, consultancy and community outreach. Schools must be primarily devoted to management education.

SAQS looks for a balance between high academic quality and the professional relevance provided by close interaction with the practicing and corporate worlds. A strong interface with the world of business is, therefore, as much a requirement as a strong research potential. SAQS attaches particular importance to the creation of an effective learning environment that favours the development of students’ managerial and entrepreneurial skills, and fosters their sense of global responsibility. It also looks for innovation in all respects, including programme design and pedagogy.

SAQS is dynamic and forward looking with a concern for new trends and developments in management education. It is conceived as a learning process for the whole community in management education, and as an international forum for defining the relevant criteria.

SAQS is supported by a broad international body of academics and professionals. Deans and Directors of reputed academic Schools, Managing and HR Directors of major corporations, heads of national professional associations, consultants, and assessment experts form the pool from which the international Peer Review Teams and Mentors are

drawn. EFMD – EQUIS and AACSB International have contributed to the development of SAQS.

The AMDISA-SAQS accreditation process is composed of several distinct stages. The diagram in Annexure A outlines this process, shows the way in which the different stages are linked, and provides a brief description of each stage. The different stages are:

1. Preliminary Inquiry
2. Formal Application
3. Eligibility
4. Self-Assessment
5. International Peer Review
6. Accreditation Awarding Committee Decision
7. Guided Development (optional)

Annexure B contains a list of documents about the SAQS process. Annexure C indicates the timing in the process and some of the deadlines to be met. Finally, Annexure D lists the applicable fees in the SAQS process.



## II. PRELIMINARY INQUIRY

Since this stage is previous to the SAQS process itself, it has been labeled here as Stage O. It involves the first contact between the School and AMDISA at the initiative of either.

During the first contact, the representative of AMDISA informs the School briefly about the SAQS process and answers questions that the School may have in this respect. The School provides preliminary information to the AMDISA representative so that non-binding preliminary advice can be offered to the management of the School about the likelihood of being declared eligible for SAQS (see Section 2 under Eligibility Criteria).

The initial contact can take place in written or verbal form, formally or informally. When the initial contact takes place in written form, it will be followed as soon as possible by a verbal exchange. This initial verbal exchange will take not more than one hour and frequently much less if the School already has some familiarity with SAQS and/or if the AMDISA representative already knows about the School. This verbal exchange can usually take place by telephone or video conference, but it is always preferable to hold it in person if the occasion arises naturally.

On the basis of the information gathered from the School, the AMDISA representative, after exchanging views with at least one other representative of SAQS/AMDISA, will provide the School with advice about whether the School is likely to be declared eligible or not.

If SAQS is believed to be appropriate for the School, the AMDISA representative will encourage it to access the information on AMDISA available at the AMDISA website (<http://www.amdisa.org>), offer to send the School the standard introductory package of documents about SAQS accreditation, and encourage it to apply for Eligibility.

If it is believed that the School will probably not qualify for Eligibility, it will be informed about the reasons and will be offered the possibility of receiving further strategic advice from a SAQS expert. In either case, however, the School may decide to go ahead with an application for Eligibility.

In sum, before a School decides to enter the SAQS process it will have to be clearly informed that:

- Whatever the views offered by the AMDISA representative, they have been offered simply as advice. The School can still apply for eligibility and the advice offered to the School at this stage will not be part of the information on which eligibility will be based.
- The pursuance of further strategic advice from a SAQS expert before entering the SAQS process will not affect any decision to be taken in the future, except to the extent that such advice may improve the level of quality on which the decision is based. There are alternative ways to improve this level of quality which do not necessarily involve SAQS experts, and which may or may not prove to be more effective.
- In order to formally enter the SAQS process, the School should be a member of AMDISA.
- At the School's request, a standard package of information on AMDISA and membership of it, as well as a standard introductory package of publications describing SAQS in more detail will be sent to them. By formally applying to enter the process, a School management implicitly acknowledges that it has read the documents in the standard SAQS introductory package (see Annexure B).

### III. FORMAL APPLICATION

In this stage the School formally applies to enter the SAQS process. This requires a formal application letter to the AMDISA Executive Director / SAQS Director and submission by the School of a completed Data Sheet.

In applying the School is assumed to be familiar with the written publications sent to it as part of the standard SAQS introductory package. Specifically, it is deemed to be familiar with the SAQS criteria and with the SAQS process and fee schedule.

The Data Sheet is a short questionnaire that sets out basic factual information about the School which allows a preliminary formal assessment of the quality of the School against the SAQS criteria. The Data Sheet is provided to this effect by the AMDISA Executive Director/SAQS Director in the standard SAQS introductory package.

The Data Sheet should be completed in a clear and concise manner. The AMDISA Executive Director/SAQS Director can provide assistance as required on filling in the Data Sheet. When the Data Sheet is received, the AMDISA Executive Director/SAQS Director will analyze it for clarity, consistency and completeness. The AMDISA Executive Director/SAQS Director may request clarifications if necessary.

## IV. ELIGIBILITY

Being declared eligible signifies that the School's application to enter the SAQS process has been formally accepted and that SAQS will work with the School towards the twin objectives of quality improvement and future accreditation.

This phase is designed to make sure that Schools enter the SAQS process with a full understanding of the criteria and with a reasonable prospect of accreditation within a three year period. It is important to avoid misunderstanding at this early stage so as to forestall the danger of subsequent disappointment and frustration. In cases where a School is not considered eligible to go down the accreditation track, strategic advice from a SAQS expert can be provided on request.

The eligibility phase consists of a preliminary fact-finding and advisory process, and may involve a one-day visit to the School by a SAQS expert, followed by a decision by the SAQS Committee. A School will be declared eligible whenever the SAQS Committee believes that the School satisfied the Eligibility Criteria mentioned below, that it can expect to benefit from the quality improvement process, and that it is in a position to make regular progress towards SAQS accreditation with a significant probability of success within a three-year period.

A major objective of this initial screening of a School's application is to measure the distance that separates it from the desirable standard within each of the principal SAQS criteria. Where possible, the SAQS Committee will also attempt to provide an estimate of the time required to reach the SAQS standard if the School devotes the time, effort and resources that are reasonable to expect from a School of its kind.

It must be understood, however, that the declaration of eligibility to enter the process does not constitute any guarantee or any formal prediction of the School's ultimate success in achieving accreditation.

### 1. Eligibility Briefing

Once the Data Sheet has been received and approved by the AMDISA Executive Director/SAQS Director, a formal on-site briefing session by a SAQS expert either at AMDISA Secretariat or at the School will be scheduled. This briefing session should take place as soon as possible and usually not later than two months after receipt of the finalized Data Sheet. Under extraordinary circumstances, the briefing session may take place by phone or by video conference.

The objectives of this briefing session are:

- To make sure that the management of the School understands the SAQS criteria and procedures.
- To advise the School on its apparent standing as compared to the level of quality expected for SAQS accreditation.
- To inform the School about the potential outcomes of an eligibility decision and the possible courses of action following each.
- To collect information about the School, and more specifically, information that may be difficult to obtain from the Data Sheet provided. This information will be the basis for a one- or two-page report on the School written by the SAQS expert, formulating a recommendation on eligibility to be presented to the SAQS Committee.

- To help the School's management to launch the SAQS process internally by briefing selected key members of the School and answering questions in open forum.
- To guide the School's management to set up task forces to prepare the SAQS Self-Assessment Report and to brief the SAQS project leader within the School on how to manage the process effectively.

## 2. Eligibility Criteria

The SAQS Committee will declare a School eligible to enter the SAQS quality improvement and accreditation process if it can demonstrate that it satisfies the three preliminary conditions set out below. This screening process is designed to ensure that a School:

- Falls within the School's scope of the SAQS scheme.
- Is recognized as a School of good standing in its national market.
- Has a reasonable prospect of satisfying SAQS criteria within three years.

a) Basic School's criteria: In order to be eligible to enter the SAQS quality improvement process, a School must demonstrate that its activities fall within the scope of Schools covered by the scheme.

The School must demonstrate that it:

- Is an AMDISA member, or has applied for membership and can satisfy the membership criteria.
- Is a degree awarding School.
- Has a mission which is appropriate for a higher education School.
- Has a primary focus on education for general management or business administration.
- Has autonomy in the design and running of its programmes.
- Has clear boundaries which make it possible to distinguish it from other units within the wider structure.
- Has a faculty qualified in the principal management disciplines.
- Has graduated at least three batches in its main degree programme.

The School must establish that it has achieved recognition within its own country either through a well-respected national accreditation system, or by clear evidence that it has a well-established reputation for quality at the appropriate level. It should therefore supply evidence that it:

- Is accredited or recommended by a relevant national body, or
- Can establish that it is a quality School within its own national market.

b) Likelihood of achieving accreditation within the three-year period: While it is not expected that a School will meet SAQS standards at the moment of the Eligibility decision, it must be able to demonstrate that it has the will and the resources to make continuous progress towards this goal, and that SAQS accreditation is an achievable objective within a three-year period. From this point of view, it is particularly important that its strategic objectives are consistent with the main characteristics of SAQS as set out in the document entitled Guidance Handbook on SAQS Quality Criteria (Booklet-II).

### c) SAQS Quality Standards

- A strong global orientation
- Close links with the corporate world, and
- High standards of general quality.

### **3. The Eligibility Decision**

The SAQS Committee meets four times a year to make Eligibility decisions. A School can expect to be presented to this Committee for Eligibility at the next available date if its Data Sheet is received and approved by the AMDISA Executive Director/SAQS Director at least two months in advance of this date.

The AMDISA Executive Director / SAQS Director will present the School's Data Sheet together with the Eligibility briefing report to the SAQS Committee for decision on Eligibility. The Committee will take the recommendation in the report into account, but will not be bound by it in making its final decision.

SAQS believes that the choice of mission, objectives, and strategy of any School should not be made exclusively or mainly to satisfy SAQS requirements. The choice can be made under the inspiration of the SAQS quality criteria but should not be made simply to satisfy them. In some cases the choice of strategy may mean that the School will not be able to satisfy some of the SAQS quality standards and will therefore not be eligible for SAQS accreditation.

The decision to declare a School Eligible will be accompanied by a preliminary assessment of its situation with respect to the SAQS standards. This assessment will reflect the views of the members of the SAQS Committee, informed by the report of the SAQS expert, with respect to areas of concern or possible difficulties that may be encountered along the road to future accreditation. It will also provide a tentative indication to the School as to the estimated number of years that it will take to become ready for accreditation. More specifically, it will indicate whether accreditation is likely to take place immediately after Peer Review or not.

Based on this opinion, it is the responsibility of the School to decide whether it is reasonable to proceed and whether it wishes to proceed. This Eligibility decision is not to be interpreted as a formal prediction of future success, which necessarily remains within the hands of the School itself.

The decision to declare a School Not Eligible will be founded on clear evidence that the School does not meet the Basic Institutional Criteria or the National Standing Criterion, or that it will not be ready for SAQS accreditation within three years unless extraordinary time, effort and resources are devoted to the task.

The outcome of the Eligibility decision will be reported to the School in writing by the AMDISA Executive Director/SAQS Director. A Mentor, an expert in SAQS Accreditation System, will be identified to guide the School. He will be available to the School as and when required. His travel expenses will be met by SAQS for two visits only.

### **4. After Eligibility**

If a School is declared Eligible, it is free to advance to Stage 3 of the SAQS process: Self-Assessment.

## V. SELF-ASSESSMENT

During the Eligibility briefing the School will have been advised on how to initiate the Self-Assessment process. The aim of this advice is to ensure that the School understands what is expected and how best to proceed.

The School will carry out an extensive self-evaluation and draft a Self-Assessment Report (SAR) in accordance with the guidelines established in the document Guide to Self-Assessment. The SAR is intended to be self-critical rather than promotional, and analytical as well as descriptive. The objective of the Self-Assessment and the accompanying report is to assist the SAQS accreditation process, not simply to accumulate a mass of data. However, the information produced must be sufficient to allow an understanding of the School's situation and to support the work of the international Peer Review Team.

This self-evaluation process is designed to help the School gain a clearer understanding of its strategic position by assessing its strengths and weaknesses, by measuring the principal constraints and opportunities determined by its environment, and by looking realistically at the coherence between its ambitions and its resources. The process is also designed to lead the School to judge the overall effectiveness of its own processes.

With these objectives in mind, there will constantly be a balance between facts and their interpretation. On the one hand, all factual and descriptive information should be interpreted and eventually assessed. On the other hand, all claims, judgements and statements should be backed by the facts necessary to corroborate them.

This stage of the process is expected to take between six months and a year. During this period, the School may request advice and assistance in preparing its SAR. This will usually be given by its Mentor by phone or email, or a personal visit. However beyond the visit, if a representative of the School is willing to travel to meet the SAQS expert or the expert is available to travel to meet a representative of the School and the latter is willing to cover the expenses involved, the recommendations can also be provided in person. In this latter case, AMDISA will not charge any fee as long as the visit does not exceed one day. If the School wants the SAQS expert or Mentor to spend more than one day, the per day fee established for Strategic Advice will be applied for every day after the first.

Six copies of the Self-Assessment Report, written in English, are required. Two of them should be submitted to the AMDISA Executive Director/SAQS Director and the other four should be sent directly to the respective Peer Reviewers whose names and addresses will be notified to the School.



## VI. PEER REVIEW VISIT

The Peer Review (PR) Team's visit lasts three days, during which the SAQS Peer Reviewers meet and interview a wide variety of people representing the different activities and interests of the School.

As soon as the School has a certain idea about the time it will spend on the Self-Assessment phase, it should ask the AMDISA Executive Director/SAQS Director to schedule the PR visit. The date of the visit should be determined at least 4 months in advance. In estimating the date for the PR visit, the School must take into account that the SAR should reach the AMDISA Executive Director/SAQS Director at least four weeks before the date on which the PR visit will start. The date of the PR visit will be negotiated between the School and the AMDISA Executive Director/SAQS Director, since it often must take into account the availability of the potential members of the PR Team.

The PR Team that carries out the on-site visit is composed of four members, three from the South Asian academic community, typically Business School Deans or Directors, and one corporate representative. A member of EQUIS/EFMD accreditation Team, may accompany in addition to the four South Asian members. One of the members of the PR Team should be familiar with the national and institutional environment of the School to be evaluated. Usually this local expert of the PR Team is one of the three academics. The other two academic members of the PR Team are drawn from different countries so as to ensure a truly international perspective. The corporate representative will be selected from a panel of three to be provided by the School. One of the members of the PR Team will be appointed Chairperson by the SAQS Committee. On receipt of the SAR, the Chairperson may contact the other members of the PR Team to prepare for the visit. In all cases, the PR visit should begin with a private meeting of the members of the PR Team, usually to take place on the evening before the PR visit begins, to discuss the way in which they will organize their work during the visit and to determine the issues on which emphasis should be placed.

Six weeks before the PR visit, the School will send to the AMDISA Executive Director/SAQS Director a proposal for the schedule of the visit prepared in accordance with the guidelines provided in the Peer Review Guide (Booklet-IV). This schedule will be reviewed by the AMDISA Executive Director/SAQS Director and propose changes if necessary. When the schedule is considered satisfactory, it will be sent to the Chairperson of the PR Team for comments or approval.

The Peer Reviewers receive not only the SAR of the School but also its Data Sheet, the report of the SAQS expert who performed the briefing visit for Eligibility, and a copy of the letter to the School declaring it Eligible. The tasks of the Peer Reviewers and the characteristics and expectations of the PR visit are described in detail in the document Peer Review Guide which is always sent to the Peer Reviewers before the visit takes place. This document also indicates which other documents are usually sent to the Peer Reviewers before the visit.

At the end of the PR visit, the Chairperson presents to the top management of the School the PR Team's preliminary conclusions and recommendations for quality improvement during an oral feedback session.

The Chairperson then writes the PR Report setting out the PR Team's assessment of the School against the SAQS quality criteria and providing recommendations for the future development. These recommendations will be of two types:

- **SAQS recommendations:** These are binding requirements or conditions that the School must satisfy in order to reach the level of quality necessary of SAQS accreditation. The School will be expected to follow these recommendations.
- **Non-binding recommendations by the PR Team:** These are suggestions which the PR Team, based on the professional experience of its members, believes to be helpful for the School to achieve its strategic objectives. The School is not obliged to follow these recommendations.

The draft report, after receiving a consensus approval by all members of the PR Team, is then sent by the AMDISA Executive Director/SAQS Director to the School to confirm factual accuracy.

The final version of the PR report may indicate to the School that the PR Team believes that it may be ready to obtain SAQS Accreditation immediately. As a consequence, the School may decide to apply for SAQS Accreditation. If it does, the PR Team will send the PR Report together with one page memo with a supporting recommendation for accreditation to the Chairperson of the Awarding Committee.

If the final version of the PR report does not give any indication with respect to SAQS Accreditation, by default the School should assume that the PR Team believes that the School is not yet ready for SAQS accreditation. In this case, the School can still apply for SAQS Accreditation. However only the PR Report will be sent to the Accreditation Awarding Committee without any supporting recommendation for SAQS accreditation. In these circumstances, SAQS accreditation is highly unlikely.

A School for which the PR Report does not convey that it is ready for accreditation and which decides not to apply for SAQS Accreditation, can work on its own to make the necessary improvements to attain SAQS accreditation at a later date, or can opt to do this with the assistance of a SAQS Mentor by asking the AMDISA Executive Director/SAQS Director for Guided Development.



## VII. ACCREDITATION AWARDING COMMITTEE'S DECISION

The AMDISA Executive Director/SAQS Director presents the report and the recommendation of the PR Team to the SAQS Accreditation Awarding Committee which makes the final decision on SAQS accreditation. The outcomes can be Full Accreditation, Conditional Accreditation, or Rejection. The outcome will be communicated to the School within 48 hours after the recommendation of the Peer Review Team is confirmed by the Awarding Committee.

### 1. Full Accreditation

This is the accreditation for Schools which, in the Peer Review Team's judgment, meet all the SAQS standards. It is an accreditation awarded for a five-year period.

In the month following the award of Full SAQS Accreditation, the School should select at least three major objectives to be pursued during this five year period. The purpose of this selection of objectives and the reporting of progress made is to ensure that even Schools granted Full Accreditation continue to develop in the spirit of the SAQS emphasis on continuous improvement.

The selection of these objectives will be based on the recommendations provided by the PR team in its Report. The School is free to select other objectives which are not based on these recommendations as long as a convincing rationale is presented. One example of this rationale could be misalignment of the PR Team's recommendations with the strategy of the School. The selected objectives will be sent to the AMDISA Executive Director/SAQS Director for approval, based on their appropriateness and on the degree of challenge they present to the School.

Any School receiving Full Accreditation will be expected to submit a 10-15 page Progress Report to the AMDISA Executive Director/SAQS Director 30 months after accreditation by the Awarding Committee. The Report will describe clearly and succinctly the progress made on the achievement of the objectives selected by the School and approved by SAQS. The School can opt to produce four to five page annual Progress Reports instead.

At any time, but especially at the time of sending one of these reports, the School can propose to change one or more of the objectives within its current selection. The reason for this can be:

- The objective has already been achieved, or
- The objective is no longer aligned with the strategy of the School.

### 2. Conditional Accreditation

This is the accreditation for Schools which, in the opinion of the Peer Review Team, are below the SAQS standard of quality in a reduced subset of SAQS criteria. Both the degree to which quality is below the SAQS standard and the number of SAQS criteria affected determine whether the School will receive Conditional Accreditation or will simply have its accreditation rejected. Conditional accreditation is awarded for a three-year period.

The letter communicating the Awarding Committee's decision to the School will indicate the conditions that must be satisfied during the three year period if SAQS accreditation is to be

maintained. Any School receiving Conditional Accreditation will be required to submit a 5-10 page Annual Progress Report to SAQS at the end of the Year 1 and Year 2 after being awarded the accreditation. The report will describe clearly and succinctly the progress made on the Conditions established by the SAQS Awarding Committee. In Year 3, the School will need to apply for Re-accreditation.

The achievements in the Progress Report will be evaluated by a member of the PR Team who visited the School and another SAQS expert. A follow up visit after Year 1 and Year 2 may very exceptionally take place if deemed necessary after study of the Progress Reports. SAQS will communicate the feedback provided by these two experts to the School.

When a School fails to provide the annual Progress Report on time or when the evaluators consider that insufficient achievement is shown, SAQS will make a case for the Awarding Committee to withdraw the accreditation in its next scheduled meeting.

Conditional Accreditation is a temporary accreditation in transition towards Full Accreditation and not an intermediate or second class accreditation. As a consequence, no School will be granted Conditional Accreditation consecutively more than twice. However, a School which has previously been awarded Full Accreditation will only be granted Conditional Accreditation once.

A School in the above circumstances which is not able to achieve Full Accreditation will lose its accreditation. Therefore, it will be under the same circumstances as those Schools that have received a Peer Review Visit but have not yet been accredited. The School is then free to undertake the Guided Development path or an alternative path.

### **3. Rejection**

This is the outcome for School which, in the Awarding Committee's judgement, are below the SAQS standards of quality in a given set of SAQS criteria. Both the degree to which quality is below the SAQS standard or the number of SAQS criteria affected will be ground for the Awarding Committee to recommend against a School's accreditation.

In this case, the School can work on its own to make the necessary improvements to attain SAQS accreditation, or can opt to do this with the assistance of a SAQS Mentor by asking the AMDISA Executive Director/SAQS Director for Guided Development.

A School that has been denied accreditation cannot re-submit an application within a period of two years.

## VIII. GUIDED DEVELOPMENT

The report written by the Peer Review Team after the initial visit will provide information for the School on two levels.

First of all, it will establish an assessment of where the School stands in relation to the different SAQS criteria, indicating clearly in which dimensions it satisfies the standards and in which dimensions it does not. This profile will give the School a clear indication of the area where it must continue to make progress if it is to reach the level at which accreditation will be possible.

Secondly, the report will set out a series of recommendations for future development and quality improvement. These recommendations will refer primarily to those areas where the School still does not satisfy the SAQS standards, although suggestions may well be made for further progress even in areas where the School does already meet the SAQS standards at a threshold level.

At this point a School which has not yet been SAQS accredited may opt to enter an advisory track called “**Guided Development**” designed to help the School’s management team define and implement a strategic plan based on the recommendations of the Peer Review Team’s report. The objective of this development plan is to achieve constant progress over a period of two to four years up to the level at which the School can expect to qualify for SAQS accreditation.

### 1. Year 1 of Guided Development

**Drafting of a Development Plan:** The AMDISA Executive Director/SAQS Director will appoint a SAQS expert as Mentor to work closely with the School during this process. In the first year, and probably in the months immediately following the Peer Review visit, the SAQS Mentor will meet for one day with members of the School to draw up the development plan. This will be constructed to cover the following key dimensions:

- **Overall Strategy:** The objective of achieving SAQS accreditation must be consistent with and fully integrated on overall strategy of institutional development and quality improvement that makes sense for the School in its own right.
- **Strategic Objectives:** The plan should set out precise objectives for progress in the areas in which the School has not yet reached SAQS standards.
- **Resources:** The plan should include an estimate of the financial and human resources necessary to achieve the objectives and should indicate how these resources will be made available.
- **Implementation Plan:** An action plan for implementing the strategy should be drawn up with a clear indication of who is responsible for achieving each objective.
- **Time Frame:** The plan should establish a time frame for the implementation plan setting out priorities and intermediate objectives.

## **2. Subsequent Years of Guided Development**

### **Annual one-day follow up visit by the SAQS Mentor**

Each year the School will submit a brief report (5 to 10 pages) assessing the progress made in the implementation of the plan. This report will be the basis for a one-day on-site visit by the SAQS Mentor/Adviser who will meet with members of the School and ensure that it is on tracks in the pursuit of its objectives. The strategic development plan itself may be revised during the annual visit to take into account changes in the School's circumstances.

### **Additional consulting service**

In a given year, the School may ask for more than one day's assistance in the implementation of their development plan. This will be provided on a daily a-la-carte basis.

## **3. Resubmission in view of SAQS Accreditation**

An essential role of the SAQS Mentor in the Guided Development process is to advise the School when it appears ready to resubmit an application for Self-Assessment and Peer Review with a reasonable chance of qualifying for accreditation. This resubmission can take place at the earliest two years after the previous Peer Review. The application will be made to the SAQS Committee.

The SAQS Mentor will refer his or her recommendation to the SAQS Committee for approval. The School can decide to resubmit an application without the support of the SAQS Mentor, but this lack of support will probably have an influence in the decision of the SAQS Committee.

## **IX. ALTERNATIVES TO GUIDED DEVELOPMENT**

As mentioned in the previous section, a School which has gone through the Self-Assessment and Peer Review but has not yet been accredited can choose to go down the path of Guided Development. However, the School is free to choose any alternative path. For example, the School can try to work on its own to implement the recommendations stated in the PR Team's report, or it may hire the advisory services of a consulting company.

When the School believes that it has fulfilled the recommendations set forth in the PR Team's report, it can resubmit an application for a new attempt at Self-Assessment and Peer Review. This resubmission can take place at the earliest two years after the previous Peer Review.

The application will be to the SAQS Committee by means of a letter addressed to the AMDISA Executive Director/SAQS Director. The application will include a new Data Sheet and a detailed report indicating the progress made in implementing the recommendations in the PR Team's Report. Sometimes an on-site visit to the School by a SAQS Mentor/Expert may be suggested by the AMDISA Executive Director/SAQS Director in order to complete the evidence to be provided to the SAQS Committee. In any case, the SAQS Committee may require this visit to be performed before issuing its decision.

If the SAQS Committee decides that the School is not yet ready, this decision will be formally communicated to the School by the AMDISA Executive Director/SAQS Director. This communication will include a detailed account of recommendations that have not yet been implemented to the necessary degree.

Unless the SAQS Committee indicates otherwise, the School will not be able to resubmit a new application until at least one additional year has passed.

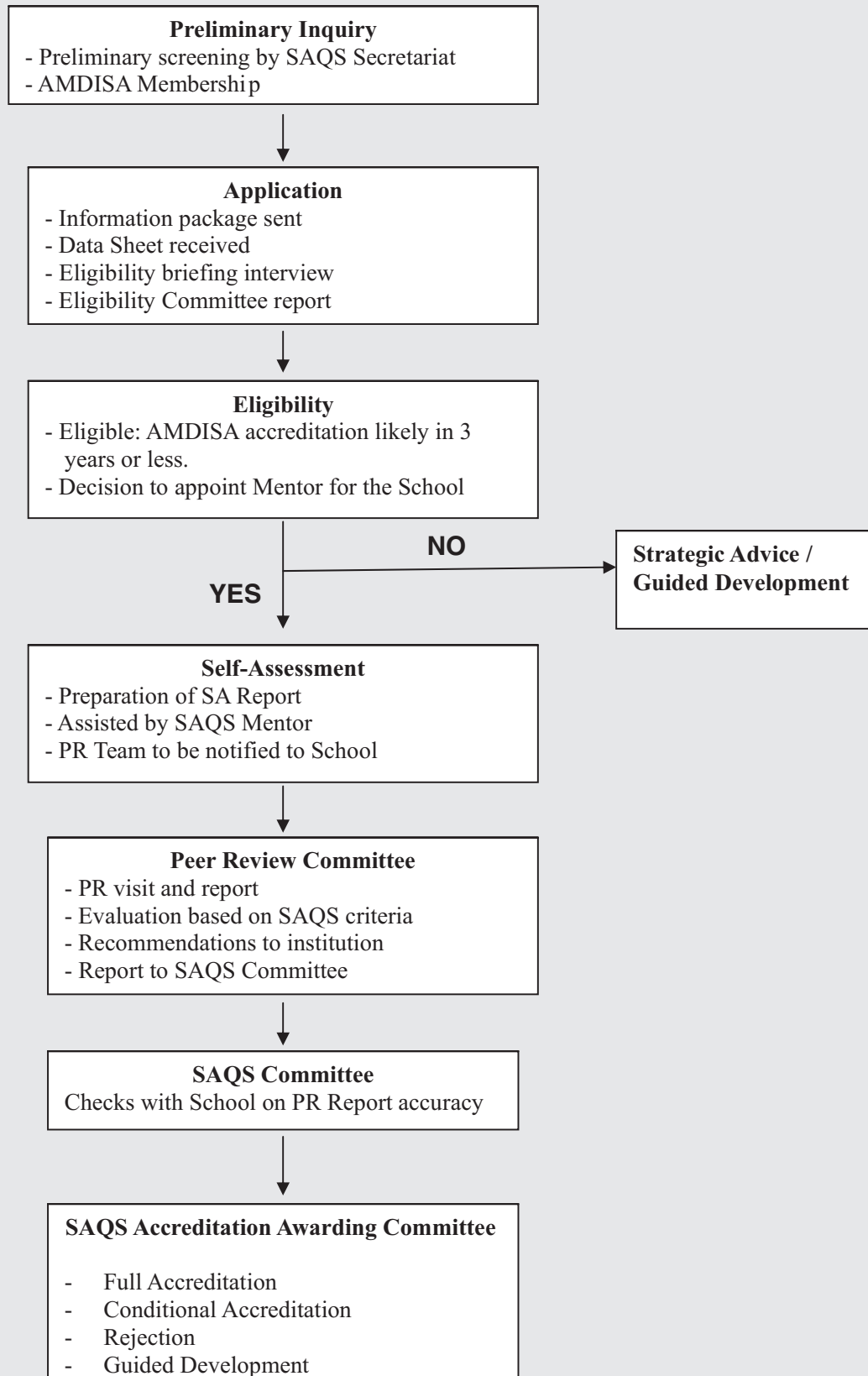
### **RE-ACCREDITATION**

SAQS accreditation is granted for a limited period: five years for Full Accreditation and three years for Conditional Accreditation. Therefore, a School must be reaccredited before its accreditation expires.

Since preparing for re-accreditation may take a few months, a School must apply for re-accreditation approximately one year before its accreditation expires. The date of expiration coincides three or five years later with the date on which the SAQS accreditation was granted by the Accreditation Awarding Committee.

## ANNEXURE A - A DIAGRAM OF THE SAQS PROCESS

### SAQS PROCESS



## ANNEXURE B - DOCUMENTS

This Annexure summarizes the documents involved in the SAQS process which are of interest to the Schools. These are :

- **SAQS Introductory Package of Documents:** Set of documents providing information about SAQS which any School when applying to SAQS should know. It is composed of the following documents :

- **Booklets**

- 1) Accreditation Procedures
- 2) Guidance Handbook on SAQS Quality Criteria
- 3) Guide to Self-Assessment
- 4) Peer Review Guide

- **Leaflets**

- 1) SAQS Data Sheet
- 2) Master's Degree in Management
- 3) Brief for Mentors
- 4) SAQS Self Assessment Checklist
- 5) List of SAQS Committees and Experts

- **SAQS Application Data Sheet:** Short questionnaire to be filled with basic factual information about the School. When filled it is usually 10-15 pages long. It allows a preliminary formal assessment of the School against both the Eligibility criteria and the SAQS Quality Standards.
- **Eligibility Briefing Report:** A one or two page report written by SAQS expert/representative who undertook the Briefing/Interaction Visit for Eligibility. It summarizes his or her view of the Eligibility of the School.
- **Letter of Eligibility:** Letter of the AMDISA Executive Director/SAQS Director to the School reporting the Eligibility decision, including areas of concern and a very rough and preliminary estimate of the number of years that will be required to achieve SAQS accreditation, based on the experience and judgement of the members of the SAQS Committee.
- **Letter of Intent:** Letter to be sent by the School to the AMDISA Executive Director/SAQS Director after being declared eligible indicating its plans with respect to the rest of the SAQS process.
- **Self-Assessment Report:** Report containing an extensive description and self-evaluation of the School based on the SAQS quality criteria. The report is usually about 100 pages long not counting the Appendices, Annexes or Exhibits. It is usually organized so that the chapters in the report correspond to the chapters in the Guide to Self Assessment. Six copies are required.

- **Peer Review Report:** Report by the Peer Review Team containing the evaluation of the School and the recommendations for improvement in relation with the SAQS criteria.
- **Peer Review Memorandum:** A one-page memo addressed by the Peer Review Team to the Chairperson of the SAQS Committee. This memo will contain a supporting recommendation for Conditional or Full Accreditation of the School.
- **Accreditation Awarding Committee Letter:** Based on recommendation of the SAQS Committee, a letter from the Chairperson of the AMDISA Accreditation Committee to the Director or Dean of the School communicating the Accreditation Awarding Committee decision on accreditation and any relevant complementary information.
- **Progress Report:** Report from the School to the AMDISA Executive Director/SAQS Director indicating clearly and succinctly progress made on Objectives or Conditions set when accreditation was granted, or when following Guided Development, or when resubmitting an application after following an alternative path to Guided Development. The report should be annual for Schools receiving Conditional Accreditation, or under Guided Development. Schools receiving Full Accreditation can opt for a 10-15 page midterm report after 30 months of accreditation, or annual reports.
- **Development Plan:** Document prepared by the School under the guidance of the SAQS expert/Mentor at beginning of Guided Development. The document will be a synthesis of the views of the Accreditation Awarding Committee when applicable, those of the Peer Review Team, and those of the management of the School. It will describe the overall strategy of the School and its compatibility with the SAQS criteria, state specific strategic objectives in areas where improvement is required by SAQS, estimate the resources needed to achieve the objectives, and outline implementation plans to obtain the needed resources and achieve the objectives, with a clear indication of the time frame.
- **Letter of resubmission:** Letter from the School resubmitting an application for SAQS accreditation after a previous Peer Review Visit not leading immediately to accreditation.



## ANNEXURE C - TIMING AND DEADLINES

This Annexure summarises some of the circumstances in which there are some kind of deadlines or period limit to be met in the SAQS process. These are the following:

- The Eligibility briefing session for a School should take place no later than two months after reception of its Data Sheet by the AMDISA Executive Director/SAQS Director.
- A School which has been declared Eligible is expected to notify the AMDISA Executive Director/SAQS Director about its intention to continue with the process within two months.
- If a School has not advanced within the SAQS process, Eligibility will be lost after two years and the School will need to reapply. The process from Eligibility to an Accreditation Awarding Committee Decision can usually be completed within twelve months. The Self-Assessment is, of course, the most time consuming. Several months are necessary for the collection and analysis of the data, especially when this process involves a large number of people within the School. The drafting of the Self-Assessment Report will then require at least a month.
- The date of the PR Visit should be determined at least four months in advance.
- The Self-Assessment Report should be submitted to the AMDISA Executive Director/SAQS Director six weeks before the close of the on-site visit to allow time for the PR Team members to read the report and to prepare the schedule for the PR visit.
- If the School is aspiring to an immediate decision on accreditation, the Peer Review Visit should take place at least four weeks before the date of an upcoming Accreditation Committee meeting when such a decision could be taken.
- The School will have one week to confirm the factual accuracy of the PR Report or to return its comments on it.
- Before a School can resubmit an application for another Self-Assessment and PR visit, at least two years must have passed. If the SAQS Committee rejects a resubmission, another application cannot be resubmitted until one year has passed, unless the SAQS Committee indicates otherwise.
- A School must apply for re-accreditation one year before its accreditation expires.

## ANNEXURE D – FEE SCHEDULE

### For Initial Accreditation

- With Application and Data Sheet for Eligibility decision: US \$ 400  
Due to be paid with Application Data Sheet for presentation to the SAQS Committee for Eligibility.
- Main Payment: US \$ 12,500  
Due 30 days after the Eligibility Decision is communicated by the AMDISA Executive Director/SAQS Director.
- Final Payment: before Peer Review visit: US \$ 12,500
- Schools under alternative paths to Guided Development: US \$ 5,000  
To be paid at least 30 days before the meeting of the Accreditation Committee on which the application will be examined.

### Guided Development:

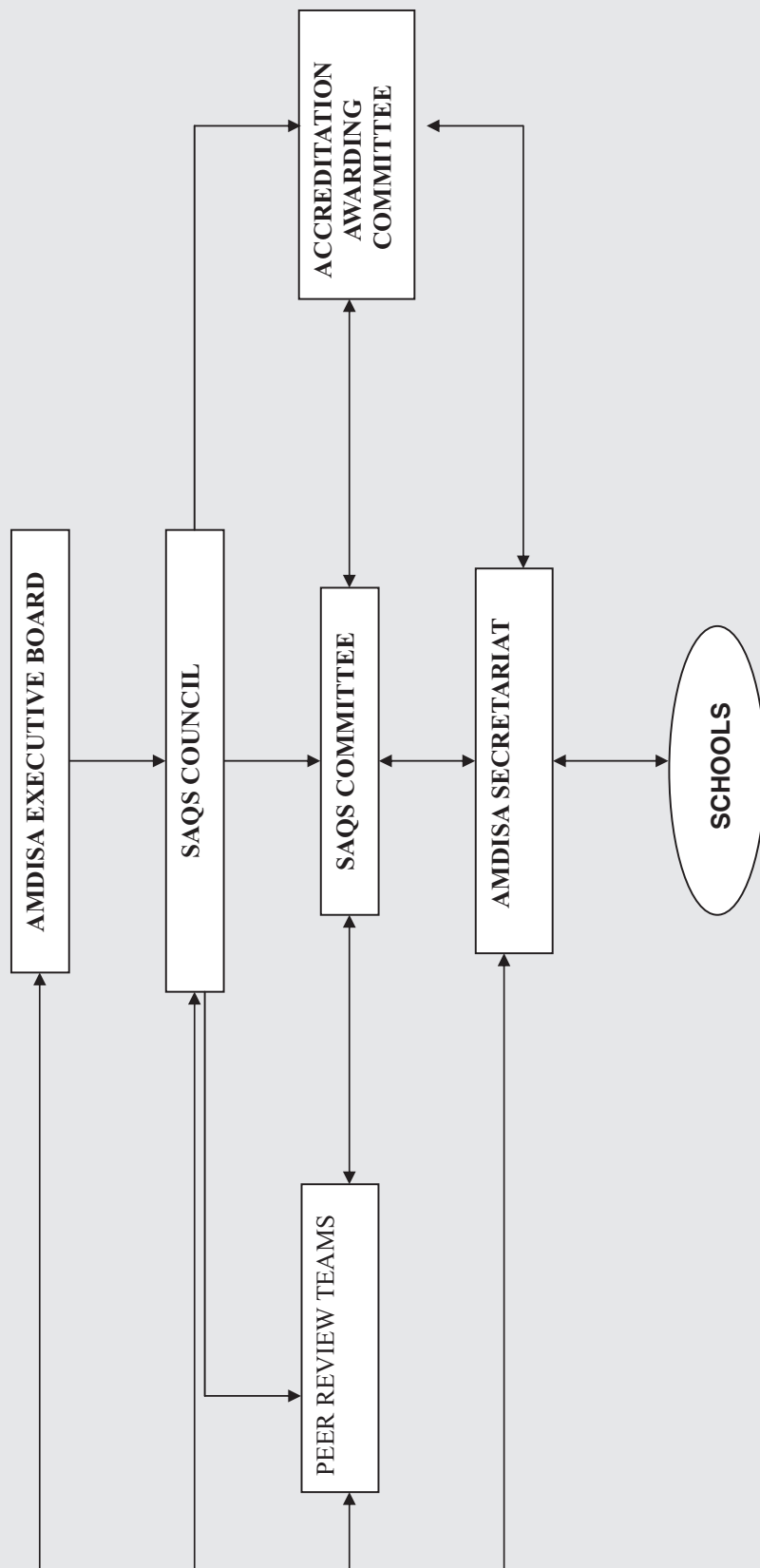
- Registration fee: US \$ 650  
To be paid once when applying for Guided Development
- Advisory Service fee: US \$ 400 per day  
To be paid 30 days before the visit. A School that enters the Guided Development programme will be charged a minimum of one day's service per year.

### Other:

- Strategic advice for non-eligible Schools:
  - US \$ 400 per day for members of AMDISA
  - US \$ 500 per day for non members of AMDISATo be paid 30 days before the visit.
- Strategic Advice on site during Self-Assessment: US \$ 400 per day after the first day.  
Travel, lodging and other direct expenses are to be paid by the School.

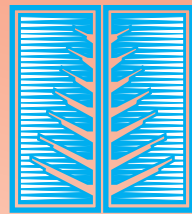
The above fees enable SAQS to be self-financed, while providing adequate service to the Schools.

## ANNEXURE E – SAQS MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE



**NOTE: 1. All AMDISA and SAQS forums have appropriate representation from member countries.  
2. AMDISA Secretariat coordinates all forums and related activities.**





**AMDISA**

**South Asian Quality Assurance System (SAQS)**

**Association of Management Development Institutions in South Asia (AMDISA)**

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