Unveiling the Interests of Stakeholders in Institutional Accreditation

Saif S. Alsowaidi[1,2] & Mazen O. Hasna[1,2]

[1] Qatar University, Qatar

[2] National Committee for Qualifications & Academic Accreditation, Qatar

Correspondence: Saif S. Alsowaidi, Qatar University, Qatar. E-mail: s.alsowaidi@qu.edu.qa

Abstract

Higher education institutions engage in both programmatic and institutional accreditation in order to improve the quality of their instruction, but there are many other drivers including enhancing their reputation and complying with government requirements or requests. In 2022, the government of Qatar established the National Committee for Qualifications and Academic Accreditation. As part of its mandate, the committee developed a set of accreditation standards that included one dedicated to *meeting the expectations of stakeholders and making an impact*. We argue that having this distinct standard helps institutions orient themselves to what they need to do to fulfil their missions while focusing on serving their stakeholders. The approach to institutional accreditation presented in this paper incorporates the cause-and-effect concept that is structured into the Balanced Scorecard (BSC) model. Although we do not attempt to empirically investigate this approach in this paper, we believe it contributes to the literature related to modelling stakeholders' needs and expectations in order to enhance the value of accreditation. In addition, this paper presents some of the relationships that exist between an institution and its stakeholders, as well as some suggestions for how institutions may consider becoming compliant with this new standard.

Keywords: National Committee for Qualifications and Academic Accreditation, stakeholder expectations, Balanced Scorecard, making impact, institutional accreditation, NCQAA

1. Introduction

Accreditation began as a US practice, but many other countries and agencies outside the US have developed their own accreditation culture, processes, and policies based on the US model. Accreditation is a form of quality assurance and accountability, and it publically declares that a certain level of quality has been attained or even exceeded (Romanowski, 2022). In the US context, Eaton (2015) identified four basic roles of accreditation, namely assuring quality, gaining access to federal and state funds, raising private sector confidence, and easing the transfer of student courses and programs. The controversy over accrediting higher education institutions (HEIs) has been running for many years, and so has the role of stakeholders in shaping quality assurance processes in higher education. The value that accreditation brings to HEIs can be thought of in two ways: An internal component relates to improving the quality of a HEI's offerings and its students' experiences, while an external one relates to satisfying the institution's stakeholders and gaining their confidence, and this is especially relevant to employers in general and industry in particular. Creating a strong link between these two components through the accreditation process is key to success, and this helps sustain the value of accreditation.

Bridging the gap between industry and academia has been the focus of many publications, events, and national projects (e.g., Akili, 2016; Buth et al., 2017). For example, some surveyed students expressed that there were not enough links between what they learn and study at university and what is needed in the labor market (Cavallone et al., 2020), while business stakeholders admitted that a traditional theoretical education does not connect with the skills and training needed in the continuously evolving labor market (Cavallone et al., 2020). In this sense, both employers and students want to see HEIs teach skills that are relevant to the labor market. In the European context, Lyytinen et al. (2017) stressed that the policies of the European Union and national governments of member states have encouraged HEIs to be more responsive to the needs and priorities of society and businesses. Cheng et al. (2022) studied the roles played by some key stakeholders (i.e., higher education management, students, government, and employers) in increasing the employability of graduates in the United Kingdom. They concluded that there is a need to develop a coherent understanding and agreement about the role of HEIs in preparing graduates for the labor

market, so they will meet the expectations of government and employers. Indeed, there is also an ongoing frustration among businesses in the US that graduates from HEIs "… are not achieving the broad, cross-cutting learning outcomes they need at high enough levels to fuel a technology-rich, innovation-driven economy" (Humphreys & Gaston, 2016). The existence of this gap is a clear example of not meeting stakeholders' expectations, and this perhaps arises due to misconceptions about what "quality" really is, or it may result from stakeholders failing to engage with various aspects of the relevant institutions.

This paper focuses on the role played by an institutional accreditation model in increasing the visibility of stakeholders and allowing them to shape accreditation as a quality assurance system. Note that this paper does not attempt to conduct an empirical analysis of stakeholders or model their interests but rather present how the National Committee for Qualifications and Academic Accreditation (NCQAA) in Qatar has uniquely accounted for stakeholders' needs and expectations in its approach to institutional accreditation. We first examine the arguments surrounding accreditation, which is a process that has come under increasing pressure, especially in the US, where the government and the general public demand more accountability from accreditation in the form of greater evidence of student achievement and institutional performance (Eaton, 2012) to prove that accreditation is serving its purpose. We then discuss stakeholders in the context of accreditation before introducing the NCQAA's model for accreditation. It is worth noting that this paper is particularly aimed at organizations who are considering how to integrate stakeholders into their accreditation frameworks and increase their visibility, so they can better satisfy the complex needs of these stakeholders.

2. Accreditation Context

Some advocate the benefits of accreditation, but others criticize accreditation due to the lack of any compelling empirical evidence to support the effectiveness of accreditation through assuring quality in areas like student learning. Despite this debate, both institutional accreditation and programmatic accreditation are gaining momentum around the world, even where they are not mandatory. This has been clearly evidenced by the increasing international activities of institutional and programmatic accrediting agencies like WSCUC, QAA, AACSB, ABET, and many others. Amid this controversy, many expect accreditation to demonstrate its value and credibility to the public and government (Hartle, 2012).

Research into accreditation by Nguyen and Ta (2018) identified the positive impacts of accreditation for stakeholders in Vietnam in many ways, such as the quality of teaching, learning, research, management, student support services, and facilities management. This echoed the similar earlier findings of Pham (2012). In Chile, accreditation has encouraged HEIs to establish offices for planning and assessment and introduce a culture of measurement and effectiveness (Espinoza & Gonzales, 2013). Pham (2018) analyzed accreditation in Vietnam and concluded that it led to cultural change in HEIs, such as by sharing good practices, increasing transparency, and facilitating greater engagement with stakeholders. A similar conclusion was reached by a study in Argentina (Vincenzi et al., 2018). In addition, Ulker and Bakioglu (2019) concluded that accreditation contributes more to improving processes and practices in relatively young institutions (i.e., less than 20 years old) than it does in institutions that have been operating for more than 41 years. Their findings also indicated that institutions applying for accreditation for the first time improved their existing processes and practices, introduced new processes, and took actions, more so than institutions applying for re-accreditation did. In a synthesis study of accreditation's impact on internal performance systems at a number of Polish universities, it was found that international accreditation ranked even higher than the government as a driver of internal change at universities (Dobija et al., 2019).

Pham (2018) posited that accreditation has promoted a culture of evidence in systematic ways and improved the reputation of institutions in Vietnam. Espinoza (2013) likewise argued that accreditation has helped strengthen the higher education system in Chile, such as by improving processes, procedures, and management, with there being particular benefits for new private institutions. Indeed, Espinoza and Gonzales (2013) argued that accreditation is essential for new private institutions that may be of a lower quality and require investment in infrastructure, facilities, and staffing to stay competitive in the market. Thus, stakeholders perceive accreditation as a certification of the quality provided by private institutions, at least in this context.

Further improvements in teaching quality should be pursued, because accreditation models include standards that focus on teaching, student learning, and the assessment of learning outcomes. Barrett et al. (2020) reported for the case of Mexico that student learning outcomes and the assessment of student learning is one area that has gained greater emphasis. According to Ulker and Bakioglu (2019), Berry (1999) and Saunders (2007) found that there is value in using accreditation procedures and standards to identify weak areas in higher education institutions that

could be developed effectively. Indeed, part of the accreditation process involves the HEI enhancing its quality improvement in all aspects of the standards, including academic programs (Romero, 2008; Ulker & Bakioglu, 2019).

Nevertheless, the critics of accreditation argue that there is no definite conclusion about whether accreditation actually leads to improvements in higher education (Harvey, 2002; Harvey & Newton, 2004; Newton, 2013; Cardoso et al., 2016). Moreover, they argue that accreditation overlooks the quality of learning and does not add value (Stensaker, 2011) while also being costly (Blanco-Ramirez, 2015). Pham (2018) pointed to accreditation having the drawbacks of being bureaucratic, expensive, and time-consuming. Some researchers also argue that accreditation can impinge upon academic freedom (Harvey, 2004) by dictating how faculty should, for example, develop their teaching methodologies and assessment methods (Johnson et al., 2005; Romanowski & Alkhatib, 2020) and increasing the influence of management over what a faculty does (Brennan & Shah, 2000). Nevertheless, the empirical evidence to support the notion that accreditation impacts academic freedom is inconclusive (see Romanowski & Karkouti, 2022).

Despite this debate about the usefulness of accreditation, an integral component of it remains a desire to create additional value in whatever institutions do, but for whom is this value intended? Is it for the students, the owners, or the management? In retail business units like supermarkets and department stores, customers are at the center of their operations, so they focus on satisfying their customers. Thus, creating value for these customers is the top priority, as reflected in the old adage of "the customer is always right." Nevertheless, while there is certainly nothing wrong with businesses valuing their customers, they should also endeavor to create value for other stakeholders. This complementary but essential process should identify and understand the demands and expectations of their stakeholders and make plans and take actions to meet them (Szwjkowski, 2000).

3. Stakeholder Context

Whether it is institutional or programmatic in nature, accreditation, at the very least, agitates the still waters of any organization, so it provides opportunities to start seeing things differently. Nevertheless, accreditation may be regarded as providing additional value-added benefits to one or more stakeholder. Blanco-Ramirez (2015), for example, referred to gaining institutional accreditation from a reputable body as a form of "quality by association," because the accredited institution is associating itself with highly regarded and reputable institutions with the same accreditation. Ahrens and Khalifa (2015) also studied the notion of reputation and classified university accreditation as a form of management control, arguing that even though accreditation involves so many controls on many administrative, financial, technological, educational, governance, and other aspects, universities still pursue accreditation to protect their reputation relative to their competitors and send a signal to their stakeholders. Sziegat (2021) found international accreditation served to enhance business schools in Germany, with this being evident in terms of quality, performance, and accountability. In a way, business schools also perceive that international accreditation adds to their reputation and branding. Indeed, the local and global reputation of an institution is proxied by many elements, including its ranking (Al-Amri et al., 2020) and programmatic and institutional accreditation, with both of these elements being well regarded by both internal and external stakeholders (Sukoko et al., 2021). Thus, stakeholders hold higher education institutions accountable for their quality (Akhter & Ibrahim, 2016; Pham, 2019; Al-Amri et al., 2020), and this accountability to key public or private stakeholders provides significant motivation for satisfying their expectations (Cheng, 2003). For example, the Indonesian Government requires selected universities to rank in the top 500 of the World University Rankings, and it allocates its budget to benefit those institutions who progress in the rankings at the expense of those who do not (Sukoko et al., 2021). Nevertheless, reputation is not the core aim of accreditation, because accreditation traditionally aims "to determine if schools met threshold tests of academic quality and to facilitate institutional self-improvement" (Hartle, 2012).

We could therefore argue that any business unit should create value for all stakeholders who, whether directly or indirectly through the "invisible hand" of Adam Smith, help it to succeed and ultimately reward its owners with strong financial results. Customers are obviously included in these stakeholders, but they are not the only ones. This notion applies to both businesses and educational institutions, and we focus more on the latter category in this paper. Nevertheless, Benneworth and Jongbloed (2010) posited that universities essentially behave like corporations, so they should learn more about their stakeholders and endeavor to satisfy them if they are to succeed in their operational environment. In their review of the state of research into the relationship between higher education institutions and stakeholders, Alves et al. (2010) wrote:

> *[...] the HEI relationship with its respective stakeholders firstly involves their appropriate identification, their categorization in accordance with their level of importance and priority, understanding of stakeholder needs and corresponding development of the due relational strategies, taking into account the*

prevailing specific needs before evaluating the level of satisfaction attained through the metrics established.

When viewed as a legal entity, an educational unit considers its students as stakeholders who are central to their strategic plan and their prime focus, but other stakeholders may also have an interest in seeing the institution succeed. These groups or individuals influence, or be influenced by, the strategic outputs of an organization (Freeman, 1984). Indeed, stakeholders can contribute to the effectiveness of a university's operations, and with their diverse range of expertise and knowledge, they traditionally interact with HEIs in various ways at different levels. For example, they may serve on boards and committees, render services to institutions, share feedback with institutions, collaborate in research, and organize activities and events on campus.

Indeed, one should never overlook the diverse range of interests, priorities, expertise, and operational environments that stakeholders often have. Mitchell et al. (1997) distinguished three defining attributes of stakeholder influence, namely power, legitimacy, and urgency. In terms of power, HEIs need to account for the fact that not all stakeholders are equally salient, so some will not be as influential in determining the HEI's priority agenda. This makes it even more challenging for HEIs to identify and balance their needs and expectations (Beeneworth & Jongbloed, 2010).

Overall, though, there is a range of stakeholders who look to the institution to meet their diverse "needs" and satisfy their "expectations," and this includes internal (endogenous) stakeholders and external (exogenous) stakeholders. In this regard, Saurbier (2012) wrote "

> *[...] institution-level decisions relating to educational quality may be made giving consideration to not only the institution's unique individual context, mission, and public good aims, but also the impact that those decisions may have on the array of institutional stakeholders.*

The debate about the role of accreditation mirrors the general debate about the role of higher education itself in preparing good citizens who will meet market needs (Ostermiller, 2005). Delving deeper, one could argue that this debate essentially revolves around identifying the various stakeholders and assessing their importance to the institution. For example, if the sole purpose is simply to prepare "good" citizens, then society will be the main stakeholder to consider, while in contrast, if meeting market needs is the priority, identifying the relevant stakeholders becomes a more complex and specific process. Nevertheless, in both cases, the matter centers on identifying the stakeholders and satisfying their expectations. These internal and external stakeholders all have needs and expectations, and they all try to promote their interests in the institution. Indeed, Haley and Jack (2023) stressed how important it is for educational institutions to address the aspirations and needs of their external stakeholders, so they can then focus on benefiting society.

Not only can the expectations of stakeholders vary (Eaton, 2012; Al Tobi & Duque, 2015; Lyytinen, 2017; Al-Amri et al., 2020) but also the useful expertise and engagement that they bring to a university. Nevertheless, the expectations of some internal and external stakeholders can also align in some cases. For example, one study revealed that the students' view of a quality education resembled that of employers, because they both wanted to see universities offer programs that would be relevant to a constantly evolving labor market (Maarja & Udam, 2017). Students and employers are the most obvious stakeholders in this case, with the former being an internal stakeholder and the latter being an external stakeholder. Internal stakeholders are directly involved in the operational activities of the institution, such as by studying, teaching, working, or managing in them. External stakeholders, on the other hand, are not directly involved in the daily operation of institutions. Cooperative relationships can exist between the two parties, but external stakeholders have no "day-to-day" contractual relationship with the institution, are not part of the institution's organizational structure, and are not "products" of the institution's operations. In contrast, internal stakeholders may have a contractual relationship with the institution, such as to teach or work there, or they may be part of the institution's organizational structure, such as an owner, trustee, or board member. They may also be "products" of the institution's operations, such as with students and their learning.

It is also fair to argue that as legal entities, institutions should also reflect the interests of their governing bodies or owners (in the case of private institutions). In public institutions, the government generally assigns an institution's fiduciary power to a governing board, so the government can be considered an influential external stakeholder that can exert legal or financial pressure on an institution through its power and legitimacy (Mitchel et al., 1997). In reality, however, governments generally articulate their preferences and interests through legislation and other policies, such as when making financial allocations to universities, including autonomous universities. Moreover, external stakeholders who support the institution's resources, such as its finances and facilities, have been becoming

increasingly influential (Lyytinen et al., 2017), especially governments (Eaton, 2012), the public (Hartle, 2012; Jongbloed at al., 2008), and employers (Humphreys & Gaston, 2016).

To retain the goodwill of their stakeholders, institutions should ensure they at least fulfill their minimum expectations, although going the extra mile may sometimes be required. The managers of HEIs also need to come to terms with the fact that key stakeholders ultimately determine the usefulness and value of a HEI's products and services (Clarkson, 1995; Benneworth & Jongbloed, 2010). Moreover, with the increasing prevalence of private education, the spread of modern technological modes of education, and the globalization of education, one may be inclined to lean more on the principle of supply and demand in the commercial world.

We argue that while it is likely that a particular impact may partially align with stakeholders' interests, it may not necessarily fully align. For example, getting publications in highly ranked journals would be in the interests of researchers in terms of making an impact in their fields, but the other stakeholders may have little or no interest in achieving this goal, especially for theoretical research that has the sole aim of adding to the academic body of knowledge.

It is also worth mentioning that meeting the needs and expectations of stakeholders is not necessarily the same thing as making an impact. Indeed, the AACSB's accreditation of business programs dedicates a whole section to making an impact, and this agency also focused on the subject at their annual conference in Chicago in April 2023. Business schools are part of the community, so they are expected to make an impact. Nevertheless, there has been a growing debate about what constitutes "making an impact." A set of indicators and metrics has been traditionally applied to reflect the impact that has been made, such as the number of academic publications, the citations to these publications, the total monetary value of awarded grants, the number of consultations in the community, and so on. Nevertheless, while metrics like these can be relevant and valuable, agencies, scholars, and universities that advocate rights and results-based management (RRBM) have recently encouraged institutions to reach beyond their typical audiences (e.g., academia) and trace how activities like publishing papers actually benefits the wider society. A growing research trend has also sought to explore how to approach making an impact, starting with the intention and efforts of educational institutions to actually having the desired impact. Haley and Jack (2023) pointed to the UK's Research Excellence Framework (REF) as a key government effort to hold researchers and their institutions accountable for making an impact on communities, businesses, industries, and so on. Nevertheless, as Meyer stated, a "societal impact, especially in the social sciences, is extremely difficult to pin down. It unfolds in a non-linear way and causality can hardly ever be attributed to a specific publication. It often materializes long after the research" (Meyer, 2023).

Thus, we can safely conclude that an institution can initiate efforts aimed at making an impact, but it may not necessarily be in response to requests from stakeholders. Nevertheless, making an impact falls within the broader domain of meeting stakeholders' expectations, even if the driving forces may vary. Indeed, customers' perceptions of value and quality are critical for satisfying those customers, so we argue that these should be sufficiently addressed in accreditation models.

4. Common Approaches to Institutional Accreditation

Quality assurance of all types and forms has a single core objective, namely to ensure "being a quality institution" in whatever that institution does. Nevertheless, "being a quality institution" is a somewhat arbitrary term, because it may mean different things to different people and stakeholders. Indeed, there is well-known diversity of expectations for stakeholders and their views about what constitutes quality assurance in higher education (Beerkensa & Udam, 2017; Akhter & Ibrahim, 2016; Pham, 2019; Eaton, 2015; Cavallone et al., 2021; Lyytinen, 2017; Sukoco et al., 2021). It is therefore little wonder that references to quality may include varied terms like "reputation," "ranking," "accreditation," and "the employability of graduates," among many others.

Ideally, for educational institutions, the term "quality" should be determined with respect to some recognized set of reference standards, usually one that has been developed by an accreditation agency, although individual institutions may choose to develop their own bespoke definitions. This applies to both programmatic accreditation and institutional accreditation, although the standards for the latter are much broader because they do not drill down into the detail of the programs. Indeed, these two forms of accreditation have different scopes, domains, mandates, and objectives.

We identified two popular but relatively distinct models (approaches) for institutional accreditation, and we label these as the "traditional model" and the "holistic/thematic model." Although they differ in their approaches, both aim to assure the quality of an institution with respect to some set of standards. Furthermore, with both models, the

institution needs to satisfy a number of standards and demonstrate its compliance with them, and this requires meeting a number of review criteria.

The traditional model approaches institutional accreditation through satisfying a large number of standards, or there may be a smaller number of standards but a larger number of elements within each standard, and these will be spread across the institution. In essence, this approach defines an extensive list of criteria that an institution needs to satisfy to demonstrate its compliance with the accreditation standards. Some examples in the United States include the Southern Accreditation of Colleges and Schools (SACS), the New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE), the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE), and the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU). Examples in the Middle East include the United Arab Emirates's Commission for Academic Accreditation (CAA), the Saudi Arabian National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Assessment (NCAAA), the Oman Authority for Academic Accreditation and Quality Assurance of Education (OAAAQA), and the Higher Education Council (HEC) of Bahrain. These agencies have varying levels of detailed requirements and degrees of flexibility within their requirements. In the Middle East, the CAA model has the most stringent requirements, with it even specifying the scores in some proficiency tests for admission, while Saudi Arabia's NCAAA is less restrictive even though it still falls under the traditional approach.

On the other hand, the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) in the United States of America serves as a prominent example of the holistic model. Unlike the traditional model, which has many standards with each being bound to a specific area, the holistic model has fewer standards; fewer review criteria, and fewer specific requirements about how the institution must meet the standards. In essence, the holistic model leaves it to the institution to decide how it will demonstrate compliance with the standards.

Overall, while both models define a number of review criteria, the criteria are more detailed and specified in the traditional model than they are in the holistic model. Therefore, for an applicant institution, the traditional model may be perceived as being more restrictive and demanding in terms of tasks, details, and the length of time required. That said, more detailed and specific requirements might be viewed as an advantage for some agencies and institutions, because they provide a clearer, more systematic list of questions to answer and requirements for data to prove compliance. In contrast, the holistic model is more flexible because it provides institutions with a broader scope for how to demonstrate compliance.

Table 1 provides an overview of various standards and areas of focus for institutional accreditation with both the traditional and holistic models of selected agencies, as defined in their documentation. Note that we have used NECHE (USA) as an arbitrary reference point, and we have endeavored to group similar standards from the other accreditation agencies as closely as possible with the NECHE (USA) standards. The numbering of the standards in the accrediting agencies' official documentation has been preserved for easy referencing.

Table 1. List of standards used by some institutional accreditation agencies

NECHE (USA) (9 standards) Version 2020	WASC (USA) (4 standards) Version 2022	SACS (USA) (14 standards) Version 2018	MSCHE (USA) (7 standards) 13th edition 2015	NWCCU (USA) (2 standards) Version 2020	CAA (UAE) (11 standards) Version 2019	NCAAA (Saudi Arabia) (8 standards) Version 2018
Std. 1- Mission & purposes	Std. 1- Defining institutional mission & acting with integrity	Std. 2- Mission	Std. 1- Mission & goals	Std. 1- Student success & institutional mission & effectiveness		Std. 1- Mission, goals & strategic planning
Std. 2- Planning & evaluation		Std. 7- Institutional planning & effectiveness	Std. 6- Planning, resources & institutional improvement			
Std. 3- Organization & governance	Std. 3- Assuring resources & organizational structure	Std. 4- Governing board	Std. 7- Governance, leadership & administration	Std. 2- Governance, resources & capacity	Std. 1- Governance & management	Std. 2- Governance, leadership & management

		Std. 5- Administration & organization			
Std. 7- Institutional resources		Std. 11- Library & learning/information resources		Std. 9- Fiscal resources, financial management & budgeting	Std. 6- Institutional resources
		Std. 13- Financial & physical resources		Std. 8- Learning resource center	Std. 5- Faculty & staff
		Std. 12- Academic & student support services		Std. 5- Faculty & professional staff	
		Std. 6- Faculty		Std. 7- Health, safety & environment	
Std. 4- The academic	Std. 2- Achieving educational objectives & student success	Std. 9- Educational program structure & content	Std. 3- Design & delivery of the student learning experience	Std. 3- Educational programs	Std. 3- Teaching & learning
Std. 5- Students		Std. 8- Student achievement	Std. 4- Support of the student experience	Std. 6- Students	Std. 4- Students
Std. 6- Teaching, learning & scholarship		Std. 10- Educational policies, procedures, & practices			
Std. 8- Educational effectiveness	Std. 4- Creating and committing to quality assurance & improvement		Std. 5- Educational effectiveness assessment	Std. 2- Quality assurance	
Std. 9- Integrity, transparency & public disclosure		Std. 1- The principle of integrity	Std. 2- Ethics & integrity	Std. 10- Legal compliance & public disclosure	
		Std. 14- Transparency & institutional representation			
				Std. 4- Research & scholarly activities	Std. 7- Scientific research & innovation
				Std. 11- Community engagement	Std. 8- Community partnership
		Std. 3- Basic eligibility standards			

While it is worth noting that agencies differ in how they name and number their standards, Table 1 groups similar standards in terms of their scope to facilitate a relative comparison. This makes it easier to see the common standards that we can reasonably assume reflect the focus areas of the accreditation agencies, as well as which areas are particularly salient for some agencies but not others. What is notable is that none of these agencies has dedicated a standard to focusing on satisfying the needs of stakeholders or measuring the larger impact that is made. Indeed, if the standards really portray the focus of the models, the stakeholders may feel left out and want to see "the customer comes first" approach.

In summary, for institutions that are constrained in their choice of an accreditation agency, such as when a particular country mandates a single or limited choice, it is not a matter of deciding whether the traditional or holistic model is superior. Rather, the choice can be influenced more by deciding which is more relevant to an institution's expertise in accreditation, the desired project cost, and what it sees as attainable within a reasonable time. We could argue that the traditional model provides a better roadmap for guiding institutions that lack accreditation experience in building a culture of accreditation and progressing toward achieving the requirements. On the other hand, the holistic model may be more convenient for institutions who have already built such a culture. Nevertheless, some institutions may find certain accreditation models relatively easy to satisfy due to the associated standards, criteria, and required evidence.

The features of the *traditional model* include:

- A large number of standards;
- Formalized requirements based on the functions of a "quality" institution, namely in the form of a set of defined standards, as well as possibly sub-standards, and criteria;
- Detailed criteria that may well be extensive and restrictive, such as in the case of the UAE and Bahrain.

From an institution's perspective, it may regard the *traditional model* as follows:

- The more detailed standards and criteria make it easier to assign responsible parties to those standards and their associated criteria, but on the other hand, demonstrating compliance can be challenging and sometimes overwhelming.
- It usually takes many years to meet the standards, although this ultimately depends on the preparedness of the applicant institution.
- There is a greater focus on institutional effectiveness compared to the holistic model.
- It clearly tells an institution what standards to satisfy and how to satisfy those standards.

The features of the *holistic model* include:

- Fewer standards;
- Formalized standards based on functions and areas of focus for a "quality" institution, namely in the form of a set of defined standards that span several areas and criteria;
- Less detailed criteria, allowing for more flexibility; and
- A greater focus on outcomes rather than the process itself.

Institutions may view the *holistic model* as follows:

- The standards and their criteria are less detailed and more broadly defined, so while it may be more complicated to assign responsibility for these standards and their associated criteria, the scope of the work involved may be less arduous.
- It is quicker to satisfy the standards than it is with the traditional model, although this again depends on the preparedness of the applicant institution.
- There is less focus on institutional effectiveness than there is with the traditional model.
- It gives institutions greater leeway in how they demonstrate that they satisfy the standards.

Overall, both the traditional and the holistic models serve to motivate an institution to mobilize efforts to ensure and demonstrate the quality of its governance, systems, processes, and effectiveness, although they differ somewhat in their overall scope. Furthermore, both models leave it to the institution to demonstrate compliance to the review team that has been assigned by the accreditation body. Nevertheless, we argue that the stakeholders' perspectives are not regarded as being sufficiently salient or strongly represented in the presented examples for both these models, so we

present an augmented model. Note that we in no way claim that this is a total departure from the traditional and holistic models, but it does center on stakeholders' perspectives by embodying the spirit of the balanced scorecard model (Kaplan & Norton, 1996).

5. Identifying a Sample of Expectations

Identifying potential stakeholders (Freeman, 1984; Alves et al., 2010) is the first step in managing their expectations. Table 2 lists the most common internal and external stakeholders of academic institutions based on the institution type, although some potential additions would be donors, alumni, and other atypical sorts of stakeholders.

Table 2. The most common stakeholders for educational institutions

Stakeholder	Public institution	Private institution
Students	internal	internal
Parents	internal	internal
Faculty	internal	internal
Staff	internal	internal
Governing body	internal	internal
Government	external	external
Owners	see note (1)	see note (2)
Employers	external	external
Educational partners	external	external
Research partners	external	external
Accreditation agencies	external	external
Humanity at large	external	external

Note (1): Depending on the degree of government intervention, the governing body may be more likely to act as the owner with its fiduciary power.

Note (2): Depending on the degree of the owners' intervention, the governing body may be less likely to act as the owner with its fiduciary power.

Simply put, if an institution just delivers enough to meet stakeholders basic expectations, these stakeholders may start looking for alternative institutions that try a little harder to meet their other expectations. Even if institutions continue to act "academically" in a relative silo, stakeholders behave as consumers with utility to satisfy. Thus, institutions need to be most concerned with those expectations that competing institutions could potentially satisfy. For example, customers might ideally want a good, useful product at no cost, but it could, logically speaking, be dismissed as an unrealistic expectation because no competitor would be likely to satisfy it. Moreover, if an institution goes "too easy" in its requirements for a degree, with it only offering a shallow level of knowledge, it may be attractive to some students who are merely looking to obtain a degree for the sake of it, but other stakeholders, most notably employers, will not value such degrees, thus leaving the institution's graduates at a disadvantage in the labor market. It therefore makes sense to balance the expectations of all stakeholders, especially when they conflict.

Table 3 presents five example stakeholders with some generic examples of their needs and expectations, although some of these may vary according to locations and institutions. Regardless of what may be perceived as "simple" needs or expectations, HEIs need to continuously account for them and engage with stakeholders to prioritize satisfying them, because failing to do so would have implications for the institutions, especially as they are accountable to some stakeholders.

Table 3. Example needs and expectations

Stakeholder	Need	Expectation
Students	Availability of academic support	Students expect to receive academic support from highly qualified advisors who will proactively guide them in registering for the most suitable courses, contact them on a regular basis to review their performance, and arrange academic support for them when they may find it helpful.
	Sufficient car parking space	Students want shaded parking lots with sufficient places that are near to teaching locations, preferably at no or nominal cost.
	Attain a degree	The path to obtaining a degree has prepared students to meet the needs and expectations of potential employers.
Faculty	Personal laptop	Faculty members expect modern laptops to be provided by the institution and upgraded regularly as technology improves, with technical support being available 24 hours a day.
	Special consideration for their children when they attend the institution	Faculty members want their children to be given priority admission into their institution, with them also being exempted from paying tuition fees.
	Recognized for their scholarly achievements	Faculty members want a reduced teaching load and greater financial support in recognition of their scholarly achievements.
Owners	Financial return on investment in the institution	Owners expect their institution's net value to appreciate while also paying annual dividends that increase over time.
	Maintain transparency and integrity	Owners expect clear audit reports, a lack of grievances from students, and risk-management reports that do not red flag certain practices.
Employer	Access to qualified graduates	Employers want graduates with knowledge, skills, and training that are highly relevant to the field in which they operate.
	Be involved in the preparation of students	Employers want to be involved in an institution's teaching process, so they can ensure their needs are continuously addressed.
Government	Transparent and ethical environment at the institution	Government wants internal and third-party external evidence to prove that there is a transparent and ethical environment at the institution,
	Well-prepared graduates that contribute to society	Government as a stakeholder wants an institution to produce good citizens with the skills needed to contribute to society and the economy.

The above discussion lays the foundation for discussing the new approach to institutional accreditation that was developed by the NCQAA in 2023. To reiterate an earlier point, based on a literature and contextual analysis, this paper argues that stakeholders' needs and expectations need to be considered more in accreditation standards, but an empirical application of this idea is beyond the scope of this paper.

Although educational institutions and accreditation agencies seek to serve their stakeholders, there has been no clear and sufficiently explicit inclusion of "meeting the expectations of stakeholders" in the standards of the main institutional accreditation models of the US and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. The model developed by the NCQAA in Qatar addresses this shortcoming by dedicating standard five as a standalone standard for this issue. This fifth standard in the model actually covers two areas, namely making an impact and meeting the expectations of the stakeholders, but this paper focuses on the latter. We hope to cover the former in future research.

6. The NCQAA's Approach

In 1995, the progressive and enthusiastic Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani took office in Qatar. Shortly afterward, Qatar University, the country's only national higher education institution, found itself under intense pressure to change. The message was clear: When it comes to performance and effectiveness, only international benchmarks would count. Furthermore, the government decided to invite a number of elite US institutions to set up campuses in Qatar, and this also transformed the playing field. Nevertheless, education was just one of many sectors that were experiencing radical changes and greater exposure to international competition. Programmatic and institutional accreditation became a priority for the managers of all educational institutions in Qatar. Furthermore, under pressure from the government as the primary external stakeholder, Qatar University found itself internalizing the ambition of becoming a world-class university in the university ranking systems. Nevertheless, there was a weak culture of accreditation, no international referencing, undetermined levels of effectiveness, and the existence of just a single national public university, so decisions about quality were entrusted to international accreditation bodies.

As of 2023, there were 34 public and private HEIs in Qatar, including domestic and foreign ones with various affiliations. In this expansion of the higher education sector, institutions took three forms with three complementary missions, namely community colleges, technical universities, and graduate research-focused universities. In addition, there was a significant expansion in institutions focused on the military and police, with this reaching six different academies and colleges. Nevertheless, the greatest growth took place in the private universities that were established with the government's encouragement, thus diversifying the sector and increasing competition. With such a large and rapid expansion in the sector in a small country, the government clearly needed to step in and formalize the quality assurance process for the higher education sector.

In 2022, the government took the decision to establish Qatar's own accrediting body in the form of the NCQAA. Since then, the NCQAA has endeavored to fulfill its mandated responsibilities, with one of these being to develop and implement institutional and programmatic accreditation systems.

Figures 1 and 2 present the hierarchy of the institutional accreditation framework that the NCQAA has developed and adopted. Stakeholders are the most important asset of any organization, including educational institutions, so we believe they should be clearly visible to institutions through accreditation models and processes. Figure 1 shows a standard that we refer to as "making an impact and meeting stakeholder expectations" as part of our approach to institutional accreditation. This figure also shows the basic structure of the model, where the outer circles feed into the inner circles to ultimately fulfil the mission of the institution, because this should be the overriding focus of any organization. It is worth emphasizing here that meeting the expectations of relevant stakeholders is clearly a prerequisite to an institution fulfilling its mission. Indeed, an institution cannot claim to have fulfilled its mission if it has not served the needs and expectations of its stakeholders to the best of its ability. Some, but not necessarily all, of these may relate to the impact that has been made.

Figure 1. The NCQAA's approach to accreditation

To further illustrate the essence of the logic that underlies Figure 1, we now turn our attention to Figure 2, which leans on the BSC literature to reflect our approach to accreditation.
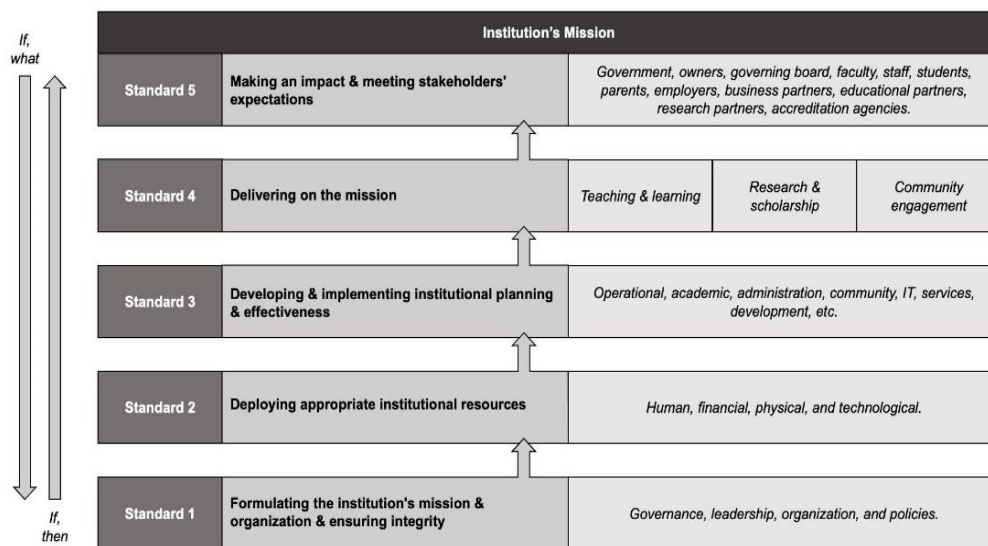

Figure 2. Cause-and-effect or input-out features of the NCQAA's approach

The *balanced scorecard* (BSC) was proposed by Kaplan and Norton (1992) in their famous article in the Harvard Business Review. It is a holistic strategy planning and performance tool for helping an organization's management to see how well the organization is fulfilling its strategic objectives. In brief, the model highlights the importance of cause and effect relationships by capturing them in strategy maps that link four (or more) perspectives of action and performance that are important to any organization that wants to succeed. The four well-known perspectives that were proposed by Kaplan and Norton are the financial perspective (owners/stockholders are a core component of this), the internal processes perspective (policies and procedures, as well as the production of goods and services, are core components of this), the customers' perspective (efforts aimed at attracting and retaining customers), and the learning and growth perspective (employees are a core component of this). Objectives, actions, and measures of performance, as well as the taking of corrective actions, lie at the heart of the BSC approach, because these are what organizational/institutional effectiveness is all about. Furthermore, this model has been adapted to suit non-profit organizations like universities, such as in the work of Niven (2008). While a profit-making business will view the three other perspectives through the prism of serving the financial perspective (i.e., making profits for its owners or stockholders), a non-profit organization focuses on serving its beneficiaries (i.e., those who benefit from the organization's services). In this sense, our model uses the BSC as a basis for an institutional accreditation framework.

An attractive feature of this model is how it displays cause-and-effect relationships in an "if what, if then" form (Kaplan & Norton, 1996; Kaplan & Norton, 2008). As can be seen from Figure 2, the stakeholders are the ultimate beneficiaries of a non-profit public institution for higher education. In contrast, with for-profit institutions, the owners occupy an important role as stakeholders, so the mission will include good financial results and a pecuniary gain for the owner or shareholders.

We must stress that we are in no way claiming that accreditation agencies do not value the stakeholders of educational institutions, because they certainly do. Nevertheless, the management at these institutions may not have sufficiently and explicitly defined their stakeholders and their intra-relationships to ensure that their needs and expectations will be continuously met (Jongbloed et al., 2008; Nguyen et al., 2009; Benneworth & Jonbloed, 2010; Beerkensa & Udam; 2017). Indeed, it is the responsibility of accreditation agencies to explicitly address any loose connections between the standards and criteria in a way that guides HEIs to view themselves through the eyes of their stakeholders. Thus, the fifth standard helps achieve this by further linking the standards and amalgamating them

under the concept of meeting the expectations of stakeholders. This should be demonstrated in all standards and their criteria and reported under standard five.

As can be seen in Figure 2, the balanced scorecard model is used in this approach, such that there is an "if then" mechanism when the model is read bottom-up, while there is a "if what" mechanism when the model is read top-down. Thus, causality travels from the bottom to the top, although a little further elaboration on the logic of this may well be helpful.

For any university, the organizational culture and governance acts as the basic foundation for its operations. This includes the legal basis for establishing the institution, the organizational structure, and policies for assigning the responsibilities and authorities of leaders and manager. All stakeholders have a vested interest in ensuring that an institution operates with integrity and adheres to sound ethics (e.g., Hartle, 2012; Eaton, 2012; Blanco-Ramírez & Berger, 2014; Scharager Goldenberg, 2018). Part of this involves setting clear policies and procedures that embody fairness and trust and allow complaints and grievances to be settled. This is vital to meeting the expectations of stakeholders, so it should be reflected in all standards.

With this foundation firmly in place, efforts can begin to gather and allocate various resources and pool them together as institutional resources. Once these resources are available, the institution can use them to sustain its operations, thus determining the institutional processes and their effectiveness. This is where the core operations actually take place, with them being dependent on the essential components of the institution's mission. While an institution may be mostly interested in teaching, research, or some combination of the two, the administration is also a core component of this perspective. What is more, there may also be community engagement with the institution.

As this model is output focused, the fourth perspective focuses on achieving the institution's mission, because this is where its results manifest. Based on the institution's mission, it should reflect the outcomes of the previous three perspectives by serving and satisfying the expectations of its stakeholders. No organization should be judged solely on its inputs and processes—namely governance and organization, institutional resources, institutional processes, and effectiveness—because the actual output should be the ultimate yardstick. This model therefore divides the outcomes into three possible components—namely teaching and learning, research and scholarship, and community engagement—that reflect the overall expectations of stakeholders.

Delving into the nexus between stakeholders and the components of standards can help institutions to better meet the expectations of their stakeholders. For example, Table 4 shows standard one and its three main components, namely the establishment of a legal entity, institutional policies, and integrity and separation of power. Table 5 shows something similar for standard 4. Although various stakeholders may be interested in the same standard, dividing the standard into smaller components helps clarify how an institution can better meet its stakeholders' expectations. Note that standard 5 is pivotal to the purpose of HEIs.

Table 4. Components of standard 1 and stakeholders' interest

Standard 1	Key component	Stakeholder
Formulating the institution's mission & organization & ensuring integrity	Establishment of legal entity	Government
		Parents
		Students
		Employers
		Faculty
		Staff
		Governing body
		Accreditation agency
		Owners
	Institutional policies	Government
		Parents
		Students
		Faculty
		Employers
		Staff
		Governing body
		Accreditation agency
		Educational partners
		Research partners
		Business partners
		Owners
	Integrity & separation of power	All

Table 5. Components of standard 3 and stakeholders' interest

Standard 3	Key component	Stakeholder
Developing and implementing institutional planning & effectiveness	Planning & improvement	Faculty
		Owners
		Staff
		Governing body
		Accreditation agency

In sum, the *NCQAA's* model is:

- Primarily focused on the expectations of stakeholders;
- Focused on outcomes;
- Mission-guided;
- Driven by the BSC conceptual framework;
- Characterized by a hierarchal structure with an input-output feature;
- Capable of covering institutions from inception to output;
- Less restrictive than the traditional model; and

- Complete with clear standards and criteria to satisfy.

As viewed by an *institution*, the model:

- Focuses on meeting the expectations of their stakeholders through outcomes;

- Portrays a logical and convenient structure based on the cause-and-effect principle and the input-output concept;

- Allows flexibility in meeting the standards; and

- Mixes aspects of the holistic and traditional models.

The world has generally experienced fast-paced development mainly in response to rapid technological advances and innovations. This is especially true of higher education institutions, so they should develop maps of their own stakeholders, identify their needs and expectations, and make satisfying them their top priority. Just like in business, not responding to customers' needs and expectations puts an organization's success and even its continued existence at risk.

Many aspects of the standards in this approach can be found in other accreditation models, but to the best of our knowledge, accreditation has not been linked to the essence of the BSC model. In addition, our approach clearly positions meeting the expectations of stakeholders as something that institutions need to demonstrate. Without specific guidance about what evidence to provide, institutions can be creative when deciding how they will demonstrate this, but we believe that simply putting institutions on this path can create additional value for them and their stakeholders. Thus, our approach to accreditation positions "meeting the expectations of stakeholders" as an explicit standalone standard that aims to direct institutions to reinforce their efforts to ultimately satisfy their stakeholders.

6.1 Demonstrating Addressing Stakeholders' Expectations

This area certainly provides some fertile ground for educational institutions to innovate and create value for their stakeholders. Even when an institution has not considered meeting the expectations of its stakeholders as the prime objective of its mission statement, strategic plan, and operations, there will always be time to rectify this. Indeed, no limits should be imposed on how institutions choose to demonstrate this, and we believe that merely making efforts in this direction will generate the knowledge, experience, and expertise that will ultimately enabled them to achieve it.

HEIs have a comparative advantage in academic quality assurance, whereas many of their stakeholders enjoy advantages in their areas of expertise, such as by developing efficient and effective partnerships for quality assurance. The leaders of HEIs should capitalize on this, and we argue that they should create an executive senior management position and fill it with someone with a business background. Indeed, while academic managers are adept at making effective academic decisions, business managers have the skills and expertise to blend into the various domains of the institution and contribute effectively to serving the expectations of a prominent stakeholder, namely employers. Given that employers, government, and graduates have a mutual interest in meeting the needs of the labor market, this provides a good basis for meeting the various stakeholders' expectations. The developed standard for "making an impact and meeting stakeholders' expectations" calls for an institution to identify stakeholders at different levels of the institution and demonstrate either that their expectations are being met or, at the very least, that it is actively pursuing activities that will help satisfy these expectations.

It should be understood that this standard takes a long-term perspective, so demonstrating compliance will require a history of consistent engagement with stakeholders. Nevertheless, an innovative initiative here would be to devise various novel schemes for engaging with stakeholders, such as by conducting surveys, recruiting stakeholders onto advisory committees at different levels, holding focus group meetings, and performing domain-specific case studies.

Table 6 introduces a possible way for educational institutions to satisfy standard five in terms of meeting the expectations of stakeholders, which is the focus of this paper. We believe that much of the information for this table will already exist somewhere in documentation and activities that are commonly used to demonstrate compliance with the other four standards. Nevertheless, we envisage that further creative ideas and contributions will emerge in the coming years for this specific standard. In essence, the stakeholders are what give meaning to an organization's existence, and educational institutions are no exception to this.

Table 6. Guidelines for approaching the standard from the perspective of stakeholders

Standard	Interests of stakeholders (relevance is noted by YES or NO, where is the degree of interest in each standard is denoted by Low, Medium, High)											
	Students	Parents	Faculty	Staff	Government	Governing body	Owners (private institutions)	Employers	Business partners	Educational partners	Research partners	Accreditation agencies
Standard 1: Formulating the institution's mission and organization, and ensuring integrity	YES/Low	YES/Low	YES/High	YES/High	YES/Low	YES/High	YES/High	YES/Low	YES/Low	YES/medium	YES/Medium	YES/High

The institution has a defined mission and an appropriate organizational structure that ensures the separation of authority and responsibilities. It is governed by an independent governing body that assumes the highest level of duties and leadership to support the institution in achieving its mission while assigning an executive role to the chief executive officer (CEO). The institution's structure and governance system promotes responsibility, effectiveness, transparency, accountability, and integrity.

The institution should account for the following expectations of each of the stakeholders within the scope of standard 1.

Students: Would like to see integrity and transparency in policies.

Parents: Would like to see integrity and transparency in policies.

Faculty: Would like to know the direction of their institution, so they can contribute to it; would like to know the priorities and contribute to achieving them in whatever they do; they also would like to know from time to time, where their institution stands. Furthermore, they would like to see integrity, transparency, fairness, and respect while working in the institution.

Staff: Would like to know the direction of their institution, so they can contribute to it; would like to know the priorities and contribute to achieving them in whatever they do; they would also like to know, from time to time, where their institution stands. Furthermore, they would like to see integrity, transparency, fairness, and respect while working in the institution.

Government: Would like to see clear direction and strategic priorities from the institution, so it can relate these to its national plan; would like to see a future-focused institution; for public institutions, it would like to relate the allocation of resources to those priorities when it comes to budgeting. Moreover, transparency and integrity in operations, including abidance to local laws, are highly important to the local government.

Governing body: Would like to see the management progress in its mission while adhering to approved policies with integrity and being transparent with the board and other relevant stakeholders.

Owners: Would like to see the management progress towards the mission while adhering to approved policies with integrity and being transparent with the owners and other relevant stakeholders.

Employers: Would like to see integrity in the granting of academic degrees.

Business partners: Would like to see integrity while doing business with the institution, including clear policies and procedures related to their business relationship.

Educational partners: Would like to see integrity in collaborations with the institution, including clear policies and procedures related to the partnership.

Research partners: Would like to see integrity when collaborating with the institution, including clear policies and procedures related to the partnership.

Accreditation agency: Would like to see that the institution has a clear direction towards its mission, with this being reflected in its priorities. Moreover, the agency would like to see binding policies, the separation of authorities to enhance accountability, and integrity across the institution.

Standard	Interests of stakeholders (relevance is noted by YES or NO, where is the degree of interest in each standard is denoted by Low, Medium, High)											
	Students	Parents	Faculty	Staff	Government	Governing body	Owners (private institutions)	Employers	Business partners	Educational partners	Research partners	Accreditation agencies
Standard 2: Deploying appropriate institutional resources	YES/High	YES/Low	YES/High	YES/High	YES/Medium	YES/High	YES/High	YES/Low	YES/Low	YES/medium	YES/Medium	YES/High
The institution's human, financial, physical, and technological resources are appropriate and sufficient to support the institution in fulfilling its mission. These resources reflect the evolving needs of the institution and support programs, services, and activities across campus, as well as commitments by the institution to stakeholders. The planning and allocation of resources align with the institution's strategic priorities and emerging initiatives.												
The institution should account for the following expectations of the stakeholders within the scope of standard 2.												

Students: Would like to be taught well and treated fairly by faculty with adequate academic support; would like to have access to financial aid when needed; would like to have access to appropriate physical facilitates and equipment; would like to be in a safe and healthy environment; would like to have safe and secure access to modern technological facilities.

Parents: Would like to see a safe and healthy environment with suitable physical facilities, high quality programs, and access to student financial support when needed, as well as a good reputation.

Faculty: Would like to see a generally safe and healthy environment; competitive compensation; professional development; a clear and fair faculty evaluation system; sufficient financial resources; and appropriate & sufficient physical resources including technological ones.

Staff: Would like to see a generally safe and healthy environment; competitive compensation; professional development; a clear and fair faculty evaluation system; sufficient financial resources; and appropriate & sufficient physical resources including technological ones.

Government: Would like to see a safe and healthy environment; adherence to local employment and financial laws; and a safe technological system. For public institutions in particular, it would like to see a reputable institution and programs; better prepared graduates; and sound financial and reporting systems.

Governing body: Would like to see a safe and healthy environment; adherence to local employment and financial laws; competent faculty and staff; a safe technological system; adherence to approved policies for HR, finance, and the use & maintenance of physical and technological resources; a reputable institution and programs; better prepared graduates; and sound financial and reporting systems.

Owners: Would like to see a safe and healthy environment; adherence to local employment and financial laws; a safe technological system; and good return on investment.

Employers: Would like to see commitment and backing from the owners (whether government or private sector) to the institution; strong supervision of the leadership's performance; and a board that is committed to assessing the institution's performance in terms of the quality of programs and graduates that meet the needs of employers.

Business partners: Would like to see an overall body that oversees the duties of the leadership and management, thus providing them with a greater degree of confidence when trading with the institution. They would like to feel that policies & procedures are in place & trustworthy, so they know they have an additional level of reference should anything happen between them and the management.

Educational partners: Would like to see integrity when collaborating with the institution, including clear policies and procedures related to their partnership; a healthy and safe environment; technological support.

Research partners: Would like to see integrity when collaborating with the institution, including clear policies and procedures related to their partnership; a healthy and safe environment; technological support; collaborative research opportunities; and access to research facilities.

Accreditation agency: Would like to see adherence to approved institutional policies; a safe and healthy environment; professional development; sufficient financial, physical, and technological resources; safe technological infrastructure.

	Interests of stakeholders (relevance is noted by YES or NO, where is the degree of interest in each standard is denoted by Low, Medium, High)											
Standard	Students	Parents	Faculty	Staff	Government	Governing body	Owners (private institutions)	Employers	Business partners	Educational partners	Research partners	Accreditation agencies
Standard 3: Developing and implementing institutional planning and effectiveness	YES/Low	YES/Low	YES/High	YES/High	YES/Medium	YES/High	YES/High	YES/Low	YES/Low	YES/Low	YES/Low	YES/High

The institution engages in systematic, comprehensive, data-informed, broad-based, and integrated planning. The institution continuously evaluates its performance and effectiveness to ensure the fulfillment of its mission and objectives. The planning and evaluation processes guide decision-making, resource allocation, and budgeting. The institution, with the involvement of its stakeholders, assesses and evaluates the quality of its academic programs, research, services, and operations to effectively guide continuous improvement.

The institution should account for the following expectations of each stakeholder within the scope of standard 3.

Students: Would like to have their voice heard through feedback into the improvement of services and teaching.

Parents: Have no explicit and direct needs or expectations within the domain of this standard.

Faculty: Would like to be involved in assessment and continuous improvement efforts, as well as in planning at the college and institutional levels.

Staff: Would like to know the duties & responsibilities of the management when it comes to managing their

sectors & departments, as well as the authority lines.

Government: Has no explicit and direct needs or expectations within the domain of this standard.

Governing body: Would like to see effectiveness and efficiency across the institution, including continuous improvement in operations.

Owners: Would like to see effectiveness and efficiency across the institution, including continuous improvement in operations.

Employers: Would like to have their voice heard in their feedback for improving programs and the preparation of graduates.

Business partners: Have no explicit and direct needs or expectations within the domain of this standard.

Educational partners: Have no explicit and direct needs or expectations within the domain of this standard.

Research partners: Have no explicit and direct needs or expectations within the domain of this standard.

Accreditation agency: Would like to see institutional effectiveness across the institution.

Standard	Interests of stakeholders (relevance is noted by YES or NO, where is the degree of interest in each standard is denoted by Low, Medium, High)												
	Students	Parents	Faculty	Staff	Government	Governing body	Owners (private institutions)	Employers	Business partners	Educational partners	Research partners	Accreditation agencies
Standard 4: Delivering on the Mission	YES/High	YES/Medium	YES/High	YES/Medium	YES/Medium	YES/High	YES/High	YES/High	No	YES/medium	YES/Medium	YES/High

The institution demonstrates a solid commitment to achieving its mission and the core functions of teaching and learning, research and scholarly activities, and community services, as appropriate to its mission and goals.

The institution should account for the following expectations of stakeholders within the scope of standard 4.

Students: Would like to receive quality education with sufficient academic and non-academic support to help them succeed; enhanced non-academic skills to promote their employability; fair assessment; and the development of scholarly skills that are appropriate to the degree they are pursuing.

Parents: Would like to see students learn and be provided with all possible support to help them develop and succeed.

Faculty: Would like to be involved in academic design, planning, and assessment; have access to adequate teaching resources; and, as appropriate to the mission, receive support to conduct research and serve the community.

Staff: Would like to know the strategic plan; what is required from them; how to develop, implement, and assess their performance according to the strategy; how sub-plans are related; the availability of resources for achieving goals; how their administrative work contributes to the goals; the importance of reporting; and their involvement in planning & implementation.

Government: Would like to see the institution offer quality academic programs and be recognized in academia for its teaching, research, and community service.

Governing body: Would like to see quality academic programs; academic and non-academic support for students to succeed in enhancing their employment qualifications; an institution engaged with the community; and, when research is within the mission, scholarly endeavors that are recognized by quality research.

Owners: Would like to see quality programs and services being offered to attract students and help them succeed; promote the image of the institution in the community; achieve the research targets if this domain is part of the mission.

Employers: Would like to see adequate academic and personal (soft skills) preparation of graduates.

Business partners: Have no explicit and direct needs or expectations within the domain of this standard.

Educational partners: Would like to see the teaching of similar programs in this institution and their institutions; arrangements for the transfer of students and earned credits; adequate learning and teaching resources; collaboration in cross-teaching between institutions.

Research partners: Would like to see collaborative research efforts with researchers in the institution, ones where resources are available and research ethics are applied.

Accreditation agency: Would like to see the institution work to achieve the academic, research, and community engagement domains of its mission through solid academic programs, the encouragement of research, and support for the community.

Standard	Interests of stakeholders (relevance is noted by YES or NO, where is the degree of interest in each standard is denoted by Low, Medium, High)											
	Students	Parents	Faculty	Staff	Government	Governing body	Owners (private institutions)	Employers	Business partners	Educational partners	Research partners	Accreditation agencies
Standard 5: Making an impact and meeting stakeholders' expectations	YES/High	YES/High	YES/High	YES/High	YES/High	YES/High	YES/High	YES/High	YES/High	YES/High	YES/High	YES/High
The institution strives to meet its stakeholders' needs and expectations (i.e., students, parents, faculty, staff, government, institution owners, educational partners, research partners, business partners, and accreditation bodies) to support the achievement of its mission and goals. Whether the institution is a teaching or research institution, it is obliged to positively impact its stakeholders in line with its mission.												
The institution should account for the following expectations of its stakeholders within the scope of standard 5.												
Students: Would like their needs and expectations considered by the institution and all reasonable efforts made to meet them.												
Parents: Would like their needs and expectations considered by the institution and all reasonable efforts made to meet them.												
Faculty: Would like their needs and expectations considered by the institution and all reasonable efforts made to meet them.												
Staff: Would like their needs and expectations considered by the institution and all reasonable efforts made to meet them.												
Government: Would like their needs and expectations considered by the institution and all reasonable efforts made to meet them.												
Governing body: Would like their needs and expectations considered by the institution and all reasonable efforts made to meet them.												
Owners: Would like their needs and expectations considered by the institution and all reasonable efforts made to meet them.												
Employers: Would like their needs and expectations considered by the institution and all reasonable efforts made to meet them.												
Business partners: Would like their needs and expectations considered by the institution and all												

reasonable efforts made to meet them.

Educational partners: Would like their needs and expectations considered by the institution and all reasonable efforts made to meet them.
Research partners: Would like their needs and expectations considered by the institution and all reasonable efforts made to meet them.
Accreditation agency: Would like to see how the institution is meeting the needs and expectations of its stakeholders.

7. Conclusion

This paper set out to present the model of institutional accreditation that has been developed and adopted by the recently established National Committee for Qualifications and Academic Accreditation in Qatar. Although the developed model benefits from the thematic approach used by some agencies in the US, it also features an additional standard that requires an institution to demonstrate that it is meeting the expectations of its stakeholders and making an impact on society. While there is a growing body of literature about "making an impact," to the best of our knowledge, this is the first institutional accreditation model with a dedicated standard for meeting the expectations of stakeholders and demonstrating that an institution is making an impact. The five-standard model presented in this paper is based on the concept of cause and effect, although it can alternatively be viewed as an input–output framework. Nevertheless, the main purpose of any higher education institution is to serve its stakeholders as well as possible, so this needs to be the ultimate focus of what an institution does, with it featuring prominently in its approach to accreditation. We have therefore provided a number of figures and tables to guide institutions as they seek to better serve their stakeholders.

We also call upon aspiring researchers and institutions to pursue further research aimed at exploring and examining how processes and measures could be developed to help institutions meet the expectations of their stakeholders and measure their impact, both on their own societies and the wider world. We plan to conduct further research into the "making an impact" aspect of standard five in the near future, because this is also crucially important, and it would complement the contribution of this present paper.

Acknowledgment

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