

ACADEMIC ZONE HIGHER EDUCATION REGULATIONS

Policy Reference No:	AZ/POLICY-002
Document Name:	HIGHER EDUCATION REGULATIONS
Version:	01
Issue Date:	12 th February 2019

Note:

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Preamble

1. The Ras Al Khaimah Economic Zone - Academic Zone (RAKEZ AZ) has made these Higher Education Regulations pursuant to its powers in relation to the Academic Zone.
2. These Higher Education Regulations shall be referred to as the RAKEZ AZ Higher Education Regulations.
3. These Higher Education Regulations shall come into force on January 16, 2019 and shall replace any previous regulations or guidelines in relation to the Academic Zone relating to higher education institutions only.
4. These Higher Education Regulations may be amended or supplemented by the Ras Al Khaimah Economic Zone - Academic Zone from time to time.

Definitions

5. In these Regulations the following definitions shall apply:

Academic Zone means the Ras Al Khaimah Economic Zone - Academic Zone;

Academic Regulations means the Academic Regulations issued by RAKEZ AZ on January 16, 2019 as amended from time to time and any supporting regulations, resolutions, orders, decisions, policies and guidance documents issued by RAKEZ AZ from time to time;

Academic Qualification means the certificate(s) issued by the HEI to students who successfully complete the HEI Programs, including diplomas;

Educational Licence means the licence issued by the Competent Authority;

Competent Authority means the licensing authority of a Free Zone, including, in relation to the Academic Zone, the Ras Al Khaimah Economic Zone Authority –Licensing Division;

Education Institution means a private education institution or a branch of an education institution based in or outside the United Arab Emirates which RAKEZ AZ grants an HEI Permit to provide education or training activities within or from the Free Zone;

Emirate means the Emirate of Ras Al Khaimah, unless specified otherwise;

Free Zone means any established free zone or any free zone to be established in the Emirate of Ras Al Khaimah, including the Academic Zone;

Infrastructure Service Provider (ISP) means the company partner with the HEI to provide non-academic support to the campus infrastructure used by the HEI;

Initial Approval means the initial approval issued by RAKEZ AZ to the Education Institution

applicant before it applies for an Educational Licence (Branch Licence);

Inspectors means persons appointed by RAKEZ AZ, who are under its control and supervision, to

monitor and inspect Education Institutions for compliance with the provisions of these Regulations and the quality assurance standards adopted by RAKEZ AZ from time to time;

HEI means an Higher Education Institution licensed or to be licensed in a Free Zone as a higher education

institution carrying out higher education activities;

HEI Permit means the permit issued by RAKEZ AZ which grants academic authorization to the

Education Institution to carry on its education or training activities within or from the Free Zone;

HEI Programs means the courses and academic programs offered by the HEI to enrolled students;

Higher Education Regulations means these regulations and any supporting regulations, resolutions, orders, decisions, policies and guidance documents issued by RAKEZ AZ from time to time;

RAK means the Emirate of Ras Al Khaimah, UAE;

RAKEZ AZ means the Ras Al Khaimah Economic Zone - Academic Zone –and
UAE means the United Arab Emirates.

Application of These Higher Education Regulations

6. These Higher Education Regulations apply to all HEIs.
7. All HEIs shall comply with the provisions of the Academic Regulations and these Higher Education Regulations. These Higher Education Regulations provide further clarity on the Academic Regulations which are relevant to HEIs. If there is any conflict between the provisions of these Higher Education Regulations and the Academic Regulations, these Higher Education Regulations will take precedence.

HEI Permit

8. RAKEZ AZ shall set out the process, procedures and documents required for the establishment of a HEI in a Free Zone.
9. A HEI Permit for a HEI shall only be granted to a:
 - a) a branch of a foreign university; or
 - b) a branch of a university incorporated in the UAE.
10. A HEI's licensed activities shall be limited to one or a combination of the following:
 - a) a branch of a foreign university; and/or
 - b) a branch of a university incorporated in the UAE.
11. The Education Institution establishing the HEI must itself be licensed as a university, in its home jurisdiction, and accredited by the competent authority in such jurisdiction.

Application for Initial Approval

12. Before an HEI can apply to RAKEZ AZ for an HEI Permit, it must first obtain Initial Approval from RAKEZ AZ.
13. To be granted Initial Approval, the HEI / ISP (if any) must:
 - a) be capable of financing the establishment and operations of the HEI in accordance with the standards and requirements set out in these Higher Education Regulations and the Academic Regulations and any other decisions, orders, policies and procedures prescribed by RAKEZ AZ from time to time and provide evidence of its sources of finance;
 - b) submit the Academic plan study to RAKEZ AZ, including:
 - i. the name of the HEI;

- ii. relevant documentary evidence of the applicants or documents evidencing ownership of the parent Education Institution and the persons representing it before RAKEZ AZ;
 - iii. a letter of intent from the Education Institution establishing the HEI;
 - iv. the business strategy, values and goals of the Education Institution;
 - v. the proposed legal entity for the HEI;
 - vi. an undertaking by the Education Institution establishing the HEI;
 - vii. the job attributes and specifications of the academic and administrative staff and their respective hiring criteria;
 - viii. the job attributes and specifications of the proposed Academic President to be assigned based on experience and relevant qualifications;
 - ix. accurate description and information related to the HEI accredited programs, their duration, the prescribed method of teaching and their commencement and ending dates;
 - x. language of curricula and details on the educational materials to be provided to students;
 - xi. the selection criteria for the admission of students to the HEI Programs;
 - xii. a list of the proposed tuition fees and other relevant fees to be incurred by prospective students;
 - xiii. the total number of full time students that the HEI expects to enroll in its first three years of operation after it is granted a HEI Permit;
 - xiv. the revenue that the HEI expects to generate in its first three years of operation after it is granted a HEI Permit;
 - xv. the proposed policies and internal regulations that deal with campus processes in relation to student complaints and grievances;
 - xvi. demonstrate that it can provide alternative means and solutions to students in case the activity or the HEI Programs are wholly or partially suspended or cancelled by RAKEZ AZ;
 - xvii. an evaluation of the quality and assessment system to be adopted by the HEI;
 - xviii. a plan for the proposed premises of the HEI explaining the dimensions of the buildings;
 - xix. details of the HEI's Infrastructure Service Provider (ISP) (if any); and
 - xx. any other documents determined by RAKEZ AZ; and
- c) meet any other conditions set out by RAKEZ AZ from time to time.
14. RAKEZ AZ may issue the Initial Approval, provided that the following application procedures are complied with:
- a) application for Initial Approval must be submitted in the format prescribed by RAKEZ AZ;
 - b) RAKEZ AZ has registered the application and provided an acknowledgment receipt to the applicant;
 - c) RAKEZ AZ has verified the application on its merits and verified that all the necessary conditions have been respected; and
 - d) RAKEZ AZ has notified the applicant of its decision to accept the Application for Initial Approval.

15. RAKEZ AZ shall endeavor to notify the applicant of its decision to accept or reject the application for Initial Approval;
16. RAKEZ AZ must notify the applicant of its decision by way of a registered letter within (60) days from the date of the meeting where all of the required conditions are satisfied;
17. RAKEZ AZ must provide reasons to the applicant if it rejects an Initial Approval application. The applicant may apply to RAKEZ AZ again after lapse of at least one year to complete the procedures for obtaining the HEI Permit and the Educational Licence; and
18. RAKEZ AZ will grant a grace period of six (6) months to the applicant to complete the process of obtaining the HEI Permit. After expiry of this grace period, the Initial Approval will be void.

Application for an Educational Licence

19. If RAKEZ AZ grants Initial Approval, the Infrastructure Services Provider (if any) or the HEI may apply for an Educational Licence.
20. The conditions, process, procedure and documentary requirements to obtain an Educational Licence shall be prescribed by the Competent Authority from time to time.

Application for an HEI Permit

21. If the Competent Authority grants the HEI and the Infrastructure Services Provider an Educational Licence, the HEI may apply for a HEI Permit.
22. RAKEZ AZ may issue an HEI Permit to an HEI, provided that the following conditions have been complied with:
 - a) the Initial Approval has been issued by RAKEZ AZ in favor of the HEI;
 - b) the Educational Licence has been issued by the Competent Authority in favor of the HEI;
 - c) in the event that the HEI has an Infrastructure Services Provider, the Educational Licence for that Infrastructure Services Provider has been issued by the Competent Authority;
 - d) all necessary documents required by RAKEZ AZ from the HEI to be authenticated by the competent official entities outside the UAE have been provided;
 - e) the adequate financial resources of the HEI / ISP (if any) in accordance with its proposed academic plan submitted to obtain the Initial Approval are in accordance with the standards and requirements set out in the Regulation and any other decisions, orders, policies and procedures prescribed by RAKEZ AZ from time to time and provide evidence of its sources of finance; and
 - f) meeting any other condition prescribed by RAKEZ AZ from time to time.
23. RAKEZ AZ may issue the HEI Permit provided that the following conditions have been complied with:
 - a) an application for the HEI Permit to be submitted in the form prescribed by RAKEZ AZ for this purpose supported by the required documents;
 - b) RAKEZ AZ will register the application and provide an acknowledgment receipt to the applicant;
 - c) RAKEZ AZ will verify the application on its merits and verify that it meets all of the necessary conditions;
 - d) RAKEZ AZ must notify the applicant of its decision within (60) days from the date of the meeting where all of the required conditions are satisfied. RAKEZ AZ may grant the

- applicant an extension to complete any shortcomings as determined by it prior to issuing its decision in this respect;
- e) RAKEZ AZ must provide reasons to the applicant if it rejects an applicant a HEI Permit application. The applicant may apply to RAKEZ AZ again after lapse of at least one year to complete the procedures for obtaining the Licence; and
 - f) where an application for the HEI Permit is approved, the applicant must pay all the relevant fees to RAKEZ AZ within five (5) working days.
24. RAKEZ AZ shall charge a fee for the issuance, renewal or amendment of HEI Permits to all types of HEI.

Information to be included in the HEI Permit

25. RAKEZ AZ shall include the following information on the HEI Permit:
- a) the name of the HEI;
 - b) the names of the HEI's Infrastructure Service Provider (if any);
 - c) the name of the Academic President;
 - d) the accredited HEI Programs of the HEI; and
 - e) details of the premises of the HEI (if any).

Cancellation of Educational Licence and HEI Permit

26. Subject to the conditions in the Academic Regulations, if RAKEZ AZ cancels or suspends an Educational Licence for any reason, the HEI must:
- a) ensure that students enrolled in its HEI Programs are not prejudiced by such a cancellation. The HEI shall provide to students reasonable alternative solutions approved by RAKEZ AZ;
 - b) secure its employees' rights; and
 - c) pay any penalties imposed by RAKEZ AZ, if any.

Premises

- 27. The premises to be used by a HEI must meet the minimum standards and requirements of RAKEZ AZ, as prescribed from time to time.
- 28. The premises shall comply with all applicable health, safety and environmental standards of RAKEZ and the concerned Government Authorities.

Curricula and Courses

- 29. An HEI shall ensure that its curriculum and courses are accredited by a competent authority approved by RAKEZ AZ from time to time.
- 30. For universities established in the UAE, the HEI shall obtain accreditation from the UAE Ministry of Education. For HEIs that are branches of foreign universities they shall obtain accreditation from an internationally recognized accreditation agency for such curriculum and courses, as approved by RAKEZ AZ from time to time.
- 31. An HEI shall not amend or change its curriculum or courses without the prior approval of RAKEZ AZ.

Approving HEI Programs (to be offered in the branch)

- 32. To approve an HEI Program, the following conditions must be met:
 - a) the HEI must provide details of the program to RAKEZ AZ, including a description of its objectives, the number of its hours, its duration, the method of study, the adopted quality system, the requirements for graduation, the name of the Academic

- Qualification awarded upon successful completion of the program, and the name of the entity issuing this Academic Qualification;
- b) the program must be academically recognized and accredited by a competent authority recognized by RAKEZ AZ;
 - c) the content of the program shall comply with the UAE and RAK's religious and national values and traditions when teaching its curriculum and courses, and all books, course materials, programs and other publications (whether in hard copy, digital, written, audio or visual) shall comply with such values and the laws and public policies in force in the UAE and RAK;
 - d) the foreign or UAE based Education Institution which owns the HEI must provide to RAKEZ AZ written confirmation that it approves of the HEI offering the Program; and
 - e) the Program must already be offered by the foreign or UAE based Education Institution in its other campus; and
 - f) if an HEI wishes to add additional HEI Programs to those already approved by RAKEZ AZ, it may do so only if it has operated in the Emirate for three (3) consecutive years and/or prior approval from RAKEZ AZ.

Suspension of HEI Programs

33. HEIs are not permitted to wholly or partially suspend, close or discontinue any of its approved HEI Programs without first obtaining the written consent of RAKEZ AZ.
34. RAKEZ AZ will consent to such suspensions only if reasonable alternative solutions are provided for students enrolled in the HEI Programs.
35. RAKEZ AZ may, in its sole discretion, temporarily suspend wholly or partially, close or discontinue any of the HEI approved HEI Programs, if the HEI fails to abide to any of the conditions for the approval of such Programs or if the HEI fails to comply with the criteria, conditions, and standards adopted by RAKEZ AZ in respect of the HEI Programs.

Employees

36. An HEI must employ qualified teaching staff holding teaching certificates from recognized organizations by RAKEZ AZ. All qualifications and teaching certificates are subject to the inspection of RAKEZ AZ.
37. Teaching staff must have appropriate experience for their roles in the HEI.
38. An HEI must ensure adequate and appropriate staff training and comply with applicable continued professional development requirements prescribed by its accreditation body.
39. An HEI expected to ensure that it has an adequate annual teacher training plan.
40. The annual teacher and any professional development plan must be approved by the home university.
41. All teaching staff, including the Academic President, shall be employed by the ISP and approved by the home university and have suitable employment contracts in place.

Academic President

42. A HEI must have an Academic President, who shall act as the manager for the purposes of the Academic Regulations.
43. The Academic President must meet the requirements of a manager set out in the Academic Regulations, and in addition:
 - a) must be of good conduct and reputation;
 - b) must be fully competent and have full legal capacity;

- c) must not have been convicted of any felony;
 - d) must have had at least three years' experience of managing a university, and obtaining or maintaining accreditation of a university; and
 - e) must have a doctorate degree.
44. The prior approval of RAKEZ AZ is necessary for the appointment and removal of the Academic President.

Responsibilities of the Academic President

45. The Academic President is responsible for the management and supervision of the Education Institution, and in particular:
- a) the overall operation of the HEI and its academic supervision;
 - b) ensuring the health and safety of students and staff while on HEI premises;
 - c) the recruitment or selection of teaching staff in the HEI;
 - d) management of student affairs, especially those related to the admission process;
 - e) the supervision of any complaints or grievances procedures addressed by students; and
 - f) ensure compliance by the HEI with the provisions of the Academic Regulations and these Higher Education Regulations.
46. If for whatever reason, the office of the Academic Present is vacant, the HEI must notify in writing RAKEZ AZ within twenty-four (24) hours from the date of its occurrence.
47. Subject to any order by RAKEZ AZ the Education Institution must, within (30) working days from the date of vacancy, appoint a new Academic President.

Academic Year

48. RAKEZ AZ will approve the annual academic year of the HEI in accordance with the commencement and completion dates of the HEI Program offered by the HEI.
49. The academic year will be approved in accordance with the following procedures:
- a) RAKEZ AZ will inform HEIs annually of when the applications for approval of the academic year are;
 - b) the HEI will apply for approval of its academic year in the prescribed timeline and format specified by RAKEZ AZ;
 - c) RAKEZ AZ will issue its decision concerning the application for approving the academic year within (14) days from the date of the application; and
 - d) RAKEZ AZ may, in its sole discretion, amend the academic year of the HEI as it sees fit taking into consideration the official occasions in the UAE.

Fees

50. An HEI shall ensure that its tuition fees (and any subsequent increases) are carefully set to reflect the community within it which it operates, its target students within RAK, the Program offered and the facilities provided.
51. An HEI shall ensure that it notifies RAKEZ AZ of any proposed amendments to its tuition fees.
52. At the request of RAKEZ AZ, an HEI shall submit a feasibility study in respect of its proposed tuition fees.
53. RAKEZ AZ reserves the right to make an order in relation to tuition fees.

Information

54. An HEI ensures that all information required to be held by a HEI pursuant to the Academic Regulations is kept complete, accurate and up to date.
55. On request by RAKEZ AZ, an HEI shall provide to RAKEZ AZ all required information including information relating and not limited to its students, staff (academic and non-academic), premises, facilities, curriculum, courses, and teaching materials.

Quality Assurance

56. HEI should submit an evidence that it follows a recognized quality assurance system at its home university by the time of submission of initial application for HEI permit and will continue following the same system.

