

## **The External Peer Review Process**

**1** The self-assessment process of the 8 pilot universities, Kabul, Kabul Polytechnic, Balkh, Kandahar, Kardan, American University of Afghanistan, Kateb and Khatam-Al-Nabieen University, started on January 17, 2017. During the process the 8 pilot universities worked on their self-assessment reports; necessary support was provided by the Ministry of Higher Education, the Higher Education Development Program and Quality Assurance and Accreditation Directorate. The 8 pilot universities were able to submit their final self-assessment reports on March 8, 2017, which was deadline set by the QAAD.

**2** The self-assessment report writing was followed by the external review process. A team of eight highly professional and well trained external peer reviewers, who received training in Afghanistan and abroad, accompanied by an international peer reviewer were deployed on March 11, 2017 to start the peer review process. The universities were informed in advance of the peer review visits, the detailed visit agenda was shared with the eight pilot universities. These peer review visits were conducted very professionally and were conducted based on the three day agenda by each team.

**3** This is a big achievement for the Ministry of Higher Education specially the Quality Assurance and Accreditation Directorate and external peer reviewers to carry out a standardized external peer review process at national level. This process wouldn't have been possible without the support of Higher Education Development Program to this component. The HEDP strongly supported the quality assurance and accreditation framework revision, development of handbooks for institutions and external peer reviewers and report templates for self-assessment and external peer review.

**4** The peer reviewers, as they informed us, will complete their final reports on April 15, 2017. The final reports will then be submitted to the Quality Assurance and Accreditation Board for final decision making. The QAA Board will review each report and will make a decision of awarding full, provisional or no accreditation. The review process by the QAA board will start on April 22 and will continue until 25, 2017.

**5** After the QAA board made decision on each report, it will be officially shared with respective university for comments, they universities can appeal against the decision made by QAA Board. The 8 pilot universities will have develop an institutional action plan based on the feedback provided in the report. The institutional action plan will be officially submitted to the QAA Board for Approval. After the approval process the action plan will have to be integrated in the institutional strategic plan so it can help universities achieve full accreditation.

**6** The external peer reviewers, who have done an excellent job in this process, has practically used the new framework and have identified areas that might require consideration in the upcoming stages of the external peer review process.

**7** The Ministry of Higher Education is committed to promotion of quality assurance and accreditation and encourages higher education institutions to adopt the standards that are defined in the revised framework of quality assurance and accreditation.

**8** In conclusion HEDP would like to thank the external peer reviewers, the quality assurance and accreditation directorate and HEDP for their hard work and dedication to quality assurance and accreditation.