



HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION

H-9, ISLAMABAD, PAKISTAN, Website: <http://www.hec.gov.pk>

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**SUBJECT: INCORPORATION OF MANDATORY CERTIFICATIONS AND INTERNSHIPS
IN UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS**

Reference is made to Prime Minister's directives via U.O.10-OPHRD/DS(IA-III)/2025, dated 25th March 2025, and Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development (MOPHRD), Islamabad's initiatives to enhance employability of Pakistani graduates, the Higher Education Commission (HEC), with strong support from partner universities, is working tirelessly to nurture and strengthen the higher education ecosystem. This includes policy-level interventions, particularly the Undergraduate Education Policy (2023), which remains the cornerstone for regulating undergraduate education in Pakistan.

2. The Higher Education Commission (HEC) supports the development of academic programs that are closely aligned with market needs. In this backdrop, an advisory is placed at Annex-A for information and further necessary action. Universities are requested to submit the compliance status within three months of issuance of this advisory.

3. Further information and clarification may be requested from Mr. Amad ud Din, Assistant Director, at asardar@hec.gov.pk or 051-90802115, if required.


(DR. FARIDA ANJUM)

All Vice Chancellors/Rectors/Heads

Public and Private Universities/Degree Awarding Institutes (DAIs)

Copy for information to:

- i. PS to Secretary, Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication
- ii. PS to Secretary, Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development, Islamabad
- iii. PS to Secretary, Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination
- iv. ES to Chairman, Higher Education Commission, Islamabad
- v. ES to Executive Director, Higher Education Commission, Islamabad
- vi. Director, Coordination, Higher Education Commission, Islamabad
- vii. PS to Consultant, Quality Assurance, Higher Education Commission, Islamabad
- viii. PS to Managing Director, NAHE, Higher Education Commission, Islamabad
- ix. PS to Director General, Academics Division, Higher Education Commission, Islamabad
- x. PS to Director General, A&A Division, Higher Education Commission, Islamabad
- xi. PS to Director General, Higher Education Commission, Regional Centers in Karachi, Lahore, Peshawar & Quetta

ACADEMICS DIVISION
HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION, ISLAMABAD
GOVERNMENT OF PAKISTAN

**INCORPORATION OF MANDATORY CERTIFICATIONS AND INTERNSHIPS IN
UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS**

The Higher Education Commission (HEC), recognizing the critical importance of graduates' employability and professional mobility at both national and international levels, is committed to facilitating the development of academic programs that are closely aligned with market needs. To this end, HEC is strengthening curricula by integrating mandatory certifications and internships designed to equip students with practical, job-ready skills alongside academic knowledge. This approach ensures that graduates gain not only strong theoretical foundations but also the hands-on experience valued by employers.

Priority is being accorded to disciplines with high market demand, including Information Technology and Computer Science, Medical and Health Sciences, Business and Management, Agriculture, and Food Science, among others. In light of this, all universities and degree-awarding institutions are hereby advised of the following:

1. Integration of Mandatory Internship and Engagement with Industry:

HEC, through the Undergraduate Education Policy (V 1.1.), has already mandated a minimum of three (03) credit hours of supervised internship for all undergraduate degree programs. Universities are advised to ensure that internships align with market demands, focusing on skill acquisition relevant to students' fields of study.

To maximize the impact of the mandatory internship requirement, universities are advised to:

- a) Establish formal agreements with industry partners, including corporate entities, SMEs, and public sector organizations, to secure meaningful internship placements;
- b) Leverage online internship platforms and remote working opportunities to cater to evolving job market trends;
- c) Align internship assessments with skill acquisition by incorporating employer evaluations and project-based learning;
- d) Encourage students to pursue additional certifications relevant to their field of study through recognized certification bodies;
- e) Develop industry-specific internship modules for disciplines where conventional internships may be challenging.

2. Use of MOOCs / Micro-credentials:

Recognizing the growing significance of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) in modern education, universities are advised to collaborate with platforms to enhance online learning and skills development. Such partnerships would equip students with high-demand competencies by providing access to globally recognized learning pathways, enabling students to earn industry-relevant certifications alongside their academic qualifications.

3. Introduction of Mandatory Certifications:

To enhance the employability of graduates and ensure the alignment of academic programs with evolving industry demands, universities may consider integrating mandatory, industry-relevant certifications into various undergraduate degree programs. These certifications should aim to equip students with practical, job-ready skills and improve their competitiveness in the labor market. Universities may collaborate with recognized national and international certification bodies to ensure the quality, credibility, and relevance of the certifications offered.

Priority sectors where there is a high demand for certifications at a national and international level include:

- i. Computing and IT
- ii. Health Care (including childcare and elderly care)
- iii. Construction
- iv. Mining, Quarrying, and Extractive Industries
- v. High-Tech & Digital Economy
- vi. Business and Financial Institutions
- vii. Hospitality Sector
- viii. Environment (including EIA, IEE, ESG, etc.)
- ix. Agriculture & Livestock (including agriculture, livestock farming, forestry, and fishing)
- x. Food and Beverage Production
- xi. Project Management

The details regarding international job demand and the requisite skills in the identified sectors, as communicated by the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development (MOPHRD), Islamabad, are available at <http://www.hec.gov.pk/site/SCD>. In continuation thereof, other related reports titled: *Skill Development of Pakistani Youth in the Service Sector for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA)* and *Future of the U.S. Healthcare Industry: Labor Market Projections by 2028* are also available for access and download from the same weblink.

Furthermore, as highlighted in the Skills Catalogue, there is significant demand for professionals with proficiency in international languages across various countries. To address this need, universities may utilize the ‘Interdisciplinary Requirements (IDS)’ component—comprising a minimum of 12 credit hours under the UGE Policy—to offer relevant language courses, subject to international requirements and the availability of resources.

4. Acceptance of Certifications:

To incentivize students to pursue subject-related certifications, a department may accept credit hours for certifications subject to course mapping and approval from statutory university bodies under the following conditions:

- i. The level of certification and the skills gained in the certification should be on par with the Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs) of that specific course.
- ii. The certification will be considered at a minimum of 1 credit hour and a maximum of 6 credit hours, subject to its course mapping and the workload involved as determined by the university. (The certification will be considered equivalent to 1 credit hour if it comprises at least 16 hours of classroom exposure or 48 hours of lab exposure).
- iii. The relevance, authentication, and assessment of the certification may be determined by the department or faculty offering the degree program.

- iv. The certification must be issued by a recognized, credible, and relevant certification body, preferably national or international organizations with established standards.
- v. Students must provide verifiable documentation (e.g., a certificate, transcript, course outline) demonstrating completion of the certification, which must be reviewed by the concerned department for approval.
- vi. The certification should have been completed within the last 3 years prior to the acceptance request to ensure the skills are current and relevant to industry needs.

5. Replacement of Electives with International Certifications in CS/IT programs

In reference to Para 4, in all CS/IT programs, the electives provided in the scheme may be replaced with international certifications equivalent to 3 credit hours. The respective department will guide students in selecting relevant certifications, ensuring alignment with current market needs and the program's objectives. The scheme for CS/IT programs with the above-mentioned changes shall be shared with universities after NCRC Computer Science.

6. Certifications through NAVTTC and Provincial Technical Bodies:

As HEC's primary mandate is to develop academic standards and structure degree programs, it does not oversee or regulate short courses and diplomas. Accordingly, the skill-based courses and diplomas listed in the 'Skills Catalogue' (<http://www.hec.gov.pk/site/SCD>), other than university degree programs, fall under the jurisdiction of the National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTTC) and its provincial counterparts. However, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) may, if desired, offer such courses in collaboration with relevant partners, subject to the availability of institutional facilities and resources.