

# CIEC Quality Maturity Medallion Framework (QMMF)

## *A Non-Ranking, Standards-Based Quality Assurance Categorization Framework for the Universities in Sindh*

### 1. Background

Sindh's higher education landscape comprises institutions with considerable variation in governance maturity, academic processes, internal QA systems, and institutional readiness. The Charter Inspection and Evaluation Committee (CIEC), functioning under the Sindh Higher Education Commission (SHEC), is mandated to evaluate, regulate, and guide these institutions in accordance with provincial standards.

Existing inspection and compliance review mechanisms are robust, but the absence of a **uniform, transparent, non-competitive method** for communicating institutional quality maturity creates information gaps for students, policymakers, and university leadership. Traditional ranking systems are unsuitable for a regulatory body, as they introduce competition rather than developmental guidance.

To address this gap, the **Quality Maturity Medallion Framework (QMMF)** provides a standards-driven, developmental categorization of universities based on **compliance, maturity of systems, governance strength, documentation practice, and QA readiness**—without ranking institutions against one another.

### 2. Purpose of the Medallion System

The CIEC-QMMF aims to:

- Communicate institutional compliance status simply and transparently.
- Provide evidence-based institutional and sector-wide SWOT insights.
- Encourage strengthening of internal quality assurance mechanisms.
- Help CIEC prioritize mentoring, monitoring, and capacity-building efforts.
- Provide the public with a clear understanding of institutional quality without creating competitive pressure.
- Reinforce a culture of continuous improvement and responsible governance.
- Improve transparency of findings while avoiding reputational harm.

The system is a developmental instrument, not a ranking or judgment tool.

### 3. Rationale for a Non-Ranking Categorization Approach

A regulatory body must prioritize compliance and developmental improvement—not competition. Conventional rankings:

- Reward relative performance, not absolute compliance.
- Favour resource-rich institutions.

- Risk misinterpretation by the public and media.
- Incentivize metric chasing rather than systemic improvement.

In contrast, a categorization/Medallion model:

- Reflects alignment with pre-defined CIEC standards.
- Communicates maturity, not superiority.
- Reduces reputational polarization.
- Encourages collaborative improvement.
- Aligns with global regulatory good practices (e.g., QAA-UK, TEQSA-Australia).

Thus, the framework supports responsible regulation, fairness, and system-wide quality enhancement.

#### 4. Scope

The framework applies to institutions under SHEC jurisdiction, including:

- Public and private universities
- Degree-awarding institutes (DAIs)
- Specialized or sector-specific institutions
- Any additional institutions identified by SHEC

#### 5. Structure of the Proposed Medallion System

The framework assigns institutions to one of five maturity-based categories, each aligned with the CIEC Inspection Framework. Categories do not imply ranking.



##### 5.1 Platinum Medallion – “Exemplary Compliance & Mature Systems”

Institutions demonstrate:

- Full compliance (CIEC Evaluation Score ranges between 90% to 100%).
- Advanced, fully functional IQA systems.

- Strong governance, documentation, and reporting culture.
- Established cycles of continuous improvement.
- Transparent internal communication mechanisms.

These institutions require minimal oversight and may serve as mentors.

## **5.2 Titanium Medallion – “Substantive Compliance with Minor Enhancements Required”**

Institutions exhibit:

- Broad compliance (CIEC Evaluation Score ranges between 80–89%).
- Stable academic and governance structures.
- Some areas requiring improvement (documentation consistency, QA processes, administrative alignment).
- Partial maturity in internal QA mechanisms.

Targeted follow-up and periodic monitoring are recommended.

## **5.3 Sapphire Medallion – “Developing Systems with Partial Compliance”**

Institutions show:

- Partial compliance (CIEC Evaluation Score ranges between 70–79%).
- Foundational systems present but inconsistently implemented.
- Limited evidence of continuous improvement.
- Documentation gaps and QA integration challenges.

These institutions require structured development plans and capacity-building support.

## **5.4 Emerald Medallion – “Emerging Institutions / Early-Stage Systems”**

Assigned to recently chartered institutions. It is for newly chartered universities or institutions in early growth stages

- Systems not fully formed (CIEC Evaluation Score ranges from 60% to 69%)
- Reasonable progress demonstrated
- Basic compliance attained still building foundational governance and QA processes
- Show reasonable initial progress
- Operate with limited systems but demonstrate commitment to development
- Some systems are in place, but not consistent
- QA mechanisms applied selectively
- Training and capacity-building required

High-priority institutions for mentorship and capacity development. Universities fall under structured improvement plans by SHEC. This medallion helps distinguish new institutions from non-compliant ones.

## 5.5 Under-Review Status – “Critical Non-Compliance / Immediate Attention Required”

Indicates serious compliance deficiencies requiring urgent regulatory action. Reserved for serious cases involving:

- Recurrent or significant non-compliance (CIEC Evaluation Score less than 60%)
- Failure to meet minimum standards
- Serious governance, academic, or legal deficiencies
- Lack of responsiveness to directives
- Major QA gaps exist
- Serious documentation deficiencies
- Governance issues affecting academic quality
- Repeated non-compliance with directives

Requires special audits, close monitoring or penalties according to law.

## 6. Why Medallion Terminology Works

- **Non-ranking:** Medallions convey *status classification*, not competition.
- **Professional tone:** Suitable for formal regulatory and policy contexts.
- **Avoids colour labels:** Colours are often misinterpreted as performance ranking.
- **Distinctiveness:** Each medallion is unique and clearly differentiated.
- **Scalable:** Additional medallions can be introduced in future phases.

## 7. Guiding Principles

To ensure the system remains non-ranking, supportive, and fair, the following principles will be observed:

- Categories convey maturity, not performance ranking.
- No numerical scores will be shared publicly.
- Developmental support is prioritized over penalization.
- Review cycles ensure dynamic, fair updating.
- Transparency is responsibly balanced with reputational considerations.
- Confidentiality of detailed reports is maintained.

## 8. Methodology for Assigning Medallions

### 8.1 Inputs

Medallions will be based on:

- Comprehensive inspection reports
- Follow-up compliance submissions
- Annual performance reviews
- Institutional documentary evidence

- Quality assurance maturity indicators

## 8.2 Process

1. The inspection team conducts a detailed assessment.
2. Internal review ensures consistency and fairness.
3. Scores mapped to categories (internal only).
4. CIEC deliberates and assigns a medallion.
5. Medallion shared with institution and disclosed appropriately.

## 9. Expected Outcomes

- Stronger institutional governance and documentation.
- Enhanced stakeholder confidence.
- Targeted QA support and capacity building.
- System-wide quality enhancement across HEIs.
- Recognition for exemplary compliance.
- Efficient resource allocation for monitoring.

## 10. Implementation Roadmap

1. Development of a detailed indicator matrix
2. Approval by relevant authorities
3. Pilot testing with select universities
4. Orientation workshops for institutions
5. Refinement based on feedback
6. Full-scale rollout and annual review cycle
7. Annual review cycle

## 11. Review Duration

- Platinum Medallion HEIs are reviewed every **three years**
- Under-Review Status HEIs are reviewed every **six months**
- All other medallions are valid for **two years**

## 12. Appeals

Universities may submit written appeals within 30 days of tag assignment.

## 13. Confidentiality & Publication

- Only the Medallion category is published
- Detailed evaluation reports remain confidential to SHEC and the institution.

#### 14. INDICATOR MATRIX

Domain	Key Indicators	Evidence Required	CIEC Form Score	Weightage
Governance & Legal Compliance	Act/Charter compliance, Strategic Initiatives, BoG/ Statutory Bodies functioning, Statutes	Act/Charter, strategic plan, policies, minutes, notification	190 (Form 1)	15%
Financial Stability	Need analysis, Income, budget estimation, research head, scholarships, recurring budget, salaries.	Need analysis documentation, budget statement, minutes of FPC and statutory bodies, cash flow statements,	40 (Form 1)	15% 5% score 10% CIEC
Quality Assurance System	QEC functioning, Internal Quality Assurance, Annual QA cycles	RIPE/PREE documentation, Membership documents, feedback evaluation reports, policy adoption notification/manual, QA events documentation, monitoring of outcome-based education, accreditation status,	100 (Form 3)	15%
Academic Standards	Curriculum, faculty qualifications, faculty awards, social outreach, assessment methods, relevancy assessment, research outcomes	Faculty appointment criteria, Syllabi/Curriculum, faculty CVs, moderation reports, sample course file, minutes of relevancy assessment committee, research articles, grants, track of professional development, students feedback report,	70 (Form 1)	10%
Infrastructure & Resources	Land, teaching facilities, laboratories, libraries, ICT systems, canteens, hostels, auditoriums, LMS, CMS, quality of services.	Land documents, sponsoring body registration documents, classroom capacity, library, canteens, hostels, inventories, utilization data.	140 (Form 1)	10%
Student	Scholarship, internships, jobs related activities, advising, grievance redress, equality, anti-woman harassment policy, support services.	Scholarships awarded, activities' calendar, on-campus job drives, policy documents, policy reviews, student related surveys, log of grievance redressal, log of activities.	70 (Form 1)	15%
Research & Innovation	ORIC functioning, ORIC staff, funded projects, patents,	Appointment letter of ORIC staff, research outputs, project lists, submitted and approved patents.	50 (Form 1)	10%
Continuous Improvement	Implementation of previous recommendations	Corrective action records, compliance implantation report (CIR), evidence		10%

Score bands are internal and not disclosed publicly.

## **14. Conclusion**

The CIEC Quality Maturity Medallions Framework (QMMF) offers a structured, developmental, standards-based mechanism for assessing institutional quality without invoking competitive ranking. It aligns regulation with capacity-building, promotes transparency, and strengthens the higher education ecosystem of Sindh through responsible, evidence-driven institutional categorization.