

CONSULTATION DOCUMENT - VOLUNTARY CERTIFICATION SCHEME (EDUTRUST)

Introduction

1. This document sets out the requirements, process flow and criteria of the voluntary certification scheme, EduTrust, under the enhanced regulatory regime. When implemented, EduTrust will replace the CaseTrust for Education scheme, started in 2004 and currently administered by the Consumer Association of Singapore (CASE).
2. EduTrust will build on CaseTrust's coverage on the protection of fees paid by students and introduce additional requirements such as academic, financial and administration processes and student welfare matters.

EduTrust Certification Flow

3. Only private educational institutions (PEIs) registered under the new Private Education Bill are eligible to apply for EduTrust certification. EduTrust certification status will be revoked if a certified PEI is subsequently de-registered.
4. PEI will need to submit its application for certification through the On-line Business Licensing Service (OBLS) website. Once the application is submitted on-line, the PEI will need to follow up with a submission of the following documents (both soft-copy and hard-copy) via post or hand delivery to the regulatory authority:
 - a. Self-assessment report;
 - b. Credit rating report;
 - c. Quality manual and procedures; and
 - d. Other documents as specified in a standard document list.
5. If the above documents and information are not submitted within a specified timeframe, the regulatory authority can decide to terminate the application. If any key documents are missing or incomplete, the PEI will be advised and requested to re-submit information within a specified timeframe.
6. The certification process consists of the following stages:
 - a. Desktop review;
 - b. On-site assessment;
 - c. Reporting; and

d. Award of certificate.

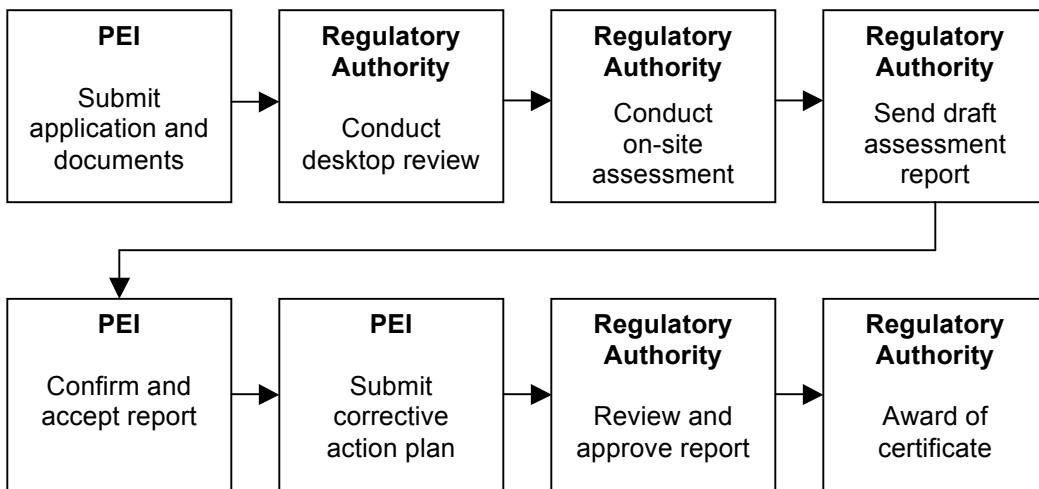
7. Desktop review covers an analysis of the documents and procedures submitted by the PEI. Appointed assessors will check that the PEI has documented all policies and procedures covering the requirements of the EduTrust certification scheme. Upon successful completion of the desktop review, the PEI will be allowed to proceed with the on-site assessment.

8. The on-site assessment will be carried out by an appointed assessor team. The assessors will make inquiry during the course of the assessment and gather evidence in both qualitative and quantitative form. The evidence will be used by the assessment team to evaluate the effectiveness of the organisation in complying with EduTrust requirements.

9. An assessment report will be prepared by the assessment team and sent to the PEI for its review and acknowledgement of the findings. The PEI is required to take appropriate corrective action on any non-compliance raised and submit a corrective action plan.

10. The assessment team leader will submit to the regulatory authority the complete assessment report including a recommendation on the award of EduTrust certification. Once the recommendation is approved, an official notification will be sent to the PEI informing them of the decision. For a successful PEI, EduTrust certificate will be issued once payment of the annual fee is received. All EduTrust certificates issued will be valid for a period of 1 or 4 years. During the validity of the certificate, PEI may use the EduTrust mark on letterheads, brochures, namecards, and in advertisements and publicity materials.

11. The complete certification flow could be summarised as follow:



Interim Assessment

12. PEIs issued with an EduTrust certificate that has a validity of 4 years will be required to undergo an interim assessment at the end of the second year after the award of the certificate.

13. Any non-compliance raised during the interim assessment must be rectified. The regulatory authority may consider suspending the EduTrust certification if the PEI fails to address all non-compliance raised during the interim assessment.

Annual Status Report

14. PEIs issued with an EduTrust certificate which is valid for 4 years will be required to submit a yearly status report at the end of first and third year. The report will consist of the following:-

- a. Annual self-Assessment report;
- b. Student numbers, both local and foreign;
- c. Credit rating report;
- d. Records of student complaints; and
- e. Any other information deemed necessary by the regulatory authority.

Renewal of EduTrust Certificate

15. The certified PEI will need to apply for a renewal of certification at least three months prior to the expiry of the EduTrust certificate. Application for renewal can be made through OBLs.

Differentiating the EduTrusted PEIs

16. To help students make informed choice, the PEIs will be scored based on how well they meet the EduTrust criteria. These scores will subsequently be used to place the PEIs into the following award categories which will be made public:

- a. EduTrust Gold Award
- b. EduTrust Silver Award
- c. EduTrust Bronze Award
- d. EduTrust Provisional Award

17. PEIs under Gold, Silver and Bronze Award categories will be conferred a 4-year certificate. A PEI which is meeting the minimum requirements at the point of on-site assessment for initial certification or renewal will be given a Provisional Award and issued with a 1-year certificate.

18. PEIs issued with EduTrust Provisional Award should strive towards achieving the Bronze Award during the next renewal cycle. However, the EduTrust certificate will not be renewed if the PEI fails to achieve at least a Bronze Award during the second renewal cycle. In this case, the PEI will not be allowed to re-apply for EduTrust certification for a period of 2 years.

Publicity of EduTrust PEIs

19. A list of EduTrust-certified PEIs, categorised according to the 4 different awards that the PEIs fall under, will be published on the official website of the regulatory authority. A list of EduTrusted PEIs which have voluntarily withdrawn from the scheme as well as those whose certificate has been suspended or terminated would also be made available on the website.

Student Fee Protection

20. As in CaseTrust, EduTrust will require PEIs to have fee insurance or set up escrow bank account arrangements for the protection of student fees.

21. The Student Protection Scheme (SPS) will cover both local and foreign students. This means all tuition fees paid by local and foreign students will be protected.

EduTrust Criteria

22. To achieve certification, the PEI must provide evidence that they meet the requirements of the 6 EduTrust criteria. The table below provides a brief description of the 6 criteria, including the sub-criteria.

Criterion 1 – Management Commitment and Responsibilities
This criterion examines the PEI’s leadership system and its commitment to achieve its vision and how the responsibilities are spelt out to ensure that its mission is met. The leadership should set the direction with a focus on building capacity and guided by the tenets of high quality education services.
1.1 – Defining Vision, Mission and Educational Goals
This criterion examines how the senior executives of the organisation develop the vision and mission appropriate for an educational institution and the constituencies it seeks to serve. Its educational goals are aligned to its mission and vision and are utilised to develop, shape and evaluate its programmes to provide quality education services.
1.2 – Defining Organizational Values and Culture

<p>This criterion examines the beliefs that the PEI pursues to achieve its mission and educational goals and how it translates the values into organisation norms, guidelines or expectations that prescribe the behaviour of all organisation members.</p>
<p>1.3 – Strategic Planning</p> <p>This criterion examines the planning processes of the PEI towards its development by looking at its current and potential capacity and capability. The planning process would ultimately create value for all stakeholders.</p>
<p>1.4 – Defining Responsibilities</p> <p>This criterion examines how the PEI assigns responsibilities within the organisation to meet the needs and expectations of its stakeholders and ultimately guiding the organisation towards excellence and placing itself in a competitive position.</p>
<p>1.5 – Management Representative (MR)</p> <p>This criterion examines the effectiveness and efficiency of the MR in the implementation of the EduTrust.</p>
<p>Criterion 2 – Corporate Governance and Administration</p>
<p>This criterion examines how the PEI manages its financial health, resources and facilities including partnership with local and/or overseas agents. It also examines the system of communicating internally and externally.</p>
<p>2.1 – Financial Management</p> <p>This criterion examines how funds are allocated, approved, used and monitored to ensure that the organisation remains in good financial health to deliver its educational goals.</p>
<p>2.2 – Management of Resources and Facilities</p> <p>This criterion examines how the PEI manages its resources, facilities, infrastructure and environment optimally to support its educational goals and at the same time provide for continual improvement and growth.</p>
<p>2.3 – Management of Partnerships and Human Resources</p> <p>This criterion examines how the PEI manages its training and development plans for its employees so as to tap the full potential of its employees to create a high performance workforce that provides excellent educational services. It also</p>

looks at management of local and/or overseas agents engaged by the PEI.

2.4 – Communication and Publicity

This criterion examines how the PEI manages its communication process including its vision, mission and educational goals without ambiguity to all its stakeholders.

2.5 – Information Management System

This criterion examines how the PEI manages and uses information innovatively to carry out performance evaluation and to support decision making at all levels of the organisation. It also examines how the PEI handles information it receives in the course of registration and enrolment in a manner that upholds confidentiality and security to the information provided by the students

Criterion 3 – Student Protection

This criterion examines how the PEI provides student protection via the tuition fee protection scheme and the PEI-student contract. This will thus build a strong PEI-student relationship build on trust which will help the PEI to focus on its core business of achieving its mission and educational goals. The transfer/ withdrawal policy and procedures will also ensure greater flexibility for the industry towards building a robust educational hub. The criterion also examines how the PEI exercises due care and due diligence to uphold the core principles of confidentiality, integrity and security towards information it receives. PEI will thus be required to discharge its ethical and legal obligations towards its students by providing privacy towards information submitted by its students.

3.1 – Protection of Tuition Fee

This criterion examines how the PEI provides protection to the tuition fee for all its recruited students. EduTrust Certification will only be awarded to PEI which has adopted Tuition Fee Protection Scheme (either Escrow or Insurance Protection Scheme) with approved service providers.

3.2 – Student Contract

This criterion examines how the PEI executes the PEI-Student Contract for every enrolment. The contract is a critical document that helps to minimise future disputes and hence it has to be completely understood by the student prior to enrolment.

3.3 – Refund Policy

This criterion examines how the PEI manages refunds for students under

various conditions in a fair and acceptable manner.

3.4 – Transfer/Withdrawal of Students

This criterion examines how the PEI manages a student's request for course transfer or withdrawal in a fair and acceptable manner. Course transfer may be executed within the PEI or with other PEI.

Criterion 4 – Student Welfare and Support Services

This criterion examines how the PEI designs, implements, manages and improves its services to provide a holistic education towards enhancing student well-being. It includes how the PEI determines students' needs and expectations and monitors their well being to ensure that students' welfare is sufficient for them to perform well academically. PEI should aim to provide a caring physical and psychosocial environment and programmes that value-add to students' educational experiences.

4.1 – Student Support Services

This criterion examines how the PEI provides support services to meet the needs of students and to create a conducive environment for students to focus on their academic studies.

4.2 – Student Satisfaction Measurement

This criterion examines how the PEI manages the students' feedback through regular surveys to improve their processes and quality of services.

4.3 – Student Feedback and Complaints

This criterion examines how the PEI sets up a system to collect students' feedback and how it responds to students or public's complaints. This will assist the PEI to refine their policies, systems and procedures to provide high quality educational services that will benefit the students.

Criterion 5 – Academic Processes and Assessment of Students

This criterion examines how the PEI sets up processes to ensure that courses offered are of high quality that meets needs and expectations of the students and the industry. It also examines how the PEI monitors the progress of the students through the most appropriate modes of assessment to achieve the course outcomes. The PEI shall also be assessed on its system to select and recruit the most appropriate staff to deliver the courses to achieve its educational goals.

5.1 – Curriculum Design and Development

This criterion examines how the PEI engages its Academic and Examination boards (or other accreditation bodies) in the process of design, development and review of the contents of the courses it offer to ensure relevancy and rigour.

5.2 – Curriculum Planning and Delivery

This criterion examines how the PEI plans the detailed course contents for classroom delivery and its close monitoring to ensure that the course outcomes are achieved. This criterion will also examine how the PEI engages its Academic Board to ensure that the courses are planned and delivered to achieve its educational goals.

5.3 – Student Selection and Admission

This criterion examines how the PEI selects prospective students for its courses to meet their needs and ensuring that they meet the admission criteria set for the courses. This will minimise transfer and withdrawal rates by ensuring the best match of students to the courses.

5.4 – Monitoring of Learning Outcomes and Students' Development

This criterion examines how the PEI monitors the academic performances of the students and uses the data collected to review its processes so as to continually provide high quality educational services to develop the students to their maximum potential.

5.5 – Student Tracking

This criterion examines how the PEI tracks their students' performance results and uses them to improve policies and procedures in its operations (e.g. student selection and admission, support services etc).

5.6 – Assessment of Students

This criterion examines how the PEI assesses the learning outcomes of the students through various modes of assessments and provides appropriate interventions when required. It also examines how the PEI engages the Examination Board to develop and implement examination policies and procedures, including the handling of examination results and appeals.

5.7 – Selection of Teachers

This criterion examines how the PEI engages its Academic Board in the process of recruitment for academic staff. It also examines how the PEI deploys and

monitors its academic staff in the process of course delivery.

Criterion 6 – Quality Assurance and Requirements

This criterion examines the quality assurance requirements of a PEI in establishing a system to comply with the EduTrust criteria. Through establishing performance objectives, conducting self assessment and management review, a PEI ensures that the systems and practices are effectively managed as it continues to delivery quality services to the students.

6.1 – Performance Measurement Objectives

This criterion examines how the PEI establishes its objectives for purpose of measuring its performance. The objectives set must be realistic, quantifiable and measurable.

6.2 – Self Assessment

This criterion examines how the PEI conducts its internal assessment process. Through self assessment, the PEI is able to determine if the processes and systems continue to meet internal requirements and are effective in achieving specified results.

6.3 – Management Review

This criterion examines how the PEI involves its management in the review process. The review involves senior management and all key personnel and the key items to be discussed include achievement of objectives, student feedback and complaints, financial performance, resources and other issues which could affect the effective operations of the PEI.

6.4 – Analysis and Continual Improvement

This criterion examines how the PEI analyses data collected and initiate continual improvement to its processes.