



## Academic Integrity in the Balance: A Call for Steadfastness in the Face of Reform Challenges

*The vital role of promotion-review committees at the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training as a reform instrument for safeguarding academic integrity, combating scientific misconduct and predatory publishing, and elevating the quality of promotions and scholarly research.*

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I begin by sharing with you the impulse behind this article: academic integrity is in the balance — and why did the need arise for promotion-review committees, and what is their role in reform?

The issue of academic integrity and the fight against scientific misconduct has emerged as an overriding priority. The Public Authority for Applied Education and Training, acting on ministerial directives channelled through its Board of Directors, took a decisive step to arrest the fracture that had afflicted the promotions system across its colleges. That step was realised through ministerial decisions issued in

March and October 2023, which resulted in the formation of a committee to examine the promotion procedures of certain faculty members within the Authority's colleges. These committees, established by ministerial decree, were tasked with auditing the promotions system and ensuring its compliance with academic regulations; they reviewed promotion applications, approving some and rejecting others on the basis of regulatory criteria.

A further investigative committee was formed in March 2024 at the request of the Office of Your Highness, the Prime Minister, to examine

files relating to research manipulation and academic corruption. This committee was constituted as a direct result of the sustained efforts of the Kuwaiti Society for Quality Education to expose unlawful practices harming the reputation of both the Authority and the country. The committee concluded its work and submitted its final report in May of last year; we now await the Minister of Education, Higher Education, and Scientific Research to act upon its recommendations.

According to preliminary statistics on the performance of the review committee in 2023, fifty-seven promotion applications were evaluated and seventeen were rejected on multiple grounds – among them: suspicions of forgery or breach of academic trust; the selection of reviewers who did not meet the conditions stipulated in the interpretive regulations governing promotions; and publication in predatory journals belonging to exploitative publishing houses that do not satisfy the standards required for promotion-eligible scientific journals. These findings raise a pressing question: how did these promotion applications pass through the Authority's committees at every level – departmental, college-wide, and the Supreme Committee?

The Authority confronts a number of issues bearing on its academic identity and the future trajectory of its mission to advance its human cadres and institutional outputs. A diagnosis of its present condition reveals a contest between the constituent members of the Authority's body and its immune system, on the one hand, and the viruses that ceaselessly corrupt its members, organs, and academic fabric, on the other. The Kuwaiti Society for Quality Education affirms the imperative of steadfastness: taking difficult decisions and

applying firm accountability to all those implicated in violating regulations or laws, misappropriating public funds, or facilitating their exploitation.

From this foundation, the Society calls for the rejection of any attempts to dissolve the promotion-review committees and urges the Authority's leadership to resist any pressure that would imperil the reform trajectory recommended by His Highness the Amir of the country – holding that any retreat would cause corruption to spread and inflict lasting damage on the Authority's credibility. The Society likewise supports the measures initiated by the former Minister, Dr. Hamad Al-Adwani, in forming a committee to examine promotion procedures, and stresses the necessity of developing the regulations governing promotions, appointments, and scholarships in order to guarantee the quality of scholarly performance and preserve the Authority's academic reputation. The Society further emphasises the importance of deploying specialised software to prevent predatory publishing and deter unlawful plagiarism, thereby ensuring the originality of research and protecting the rights of faculty members.

In closing, the Kuwaiti Society for Quality Education remains steadfast in its commitment to supporting the education system – and applied education in particular – through the preservation of academic integrity and quality standards in the promotion of faculty members at the Authority. Achieving this requires cooperation at every level of the educational hierarchy: from its apex, through the Supreme Council of Education chaired by the Minister of Education, Higher Education, and Scientific Research, down to the academic departments of the Authority itself.

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