E-Consultation Policy

Ministry of Education

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Purpose of the document
The Ministry of Education is keen to introduce and implement eConsultation concept to enable stakeholder participation (especially citizens) and opinion sharing with the Ministry. This document covers the following:

- eConsultation definition
- eConsultation scope
- eConsultation process cycle
- eConsultation tools

After going through the document, if you need further assistance regarding eConsultation, you are welcome to contact the Ministry @ the following:

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What is eConsultation?

The term ‘consultation’ refers to ‘seeking advice’ on a subject of interest. It is a process of participatory involvement of interested parties to collaboratively complete the objective in hand.

Our context

In its role of serving the citizens and stakeholders better, we reach out to our stakeholders for seeking advices / opinions on a number of leading issues/opportunities through consultative approach. The consultative approach helps us to get the first hand information about the stakeholder feedback in an issue/opportunity. In some cases, such an approach is used to pilot a new idea or in most cases a new policy decision. Consulting the interested stakeholders provides key insights into the acceptance of the policy decisions, introduces changes required before mass implementation, identifies resistance pockets and most importantly provides certainty on the practical view of the implementation challenges ahead.

eConsultation, defined

eConsultation is the process of enabling the ‘consultative’ interaction between the Ministry and the stakeholders using electronic media like internet, mobile, kiosks and conferencing facilities. The chosen media allows on-line interactive mechanism to debate, discuss, share and provide opinion about the government policies, new initiatives etc.

Globally, the eConsultation, as a process has gained significant momentum due to the fact that by adoption of technology, citizens can contribute to the process at their convenience. By and large, eConsultation could play a complementary role (to start with) and mature itself into a primary consultation process over time. Again a number of parameters will determine the level of usability of eConsultation.

eConsultation, Benefits

We envisage a number of benefits by implementing the eConsultation process. The benefits provided below are in addition to the benefits that the consultative process brings in policy making.

► Reach: The chosen media (amongst the options like internet, local presses, Radio, hotlines etc) provides reach and penetration to target communities that are one way or the other aligned to the media listed above

► Increased participation: The target audience tend to participate more if they have consultation access in a media they are familiar with

► Quick response: To the policy makers, eConsultation provides quick and timely response.
Transparency: The media ensures that the whole process is done transparently and in a manner that everyone can have end to end visibility

Ease of analysis: Since the data captured (like opinion polls) could be analyzed using online analytical processing tools like business intelligence

Objective feedback: eConsultation provides an opportunity to record the citizen feedback more objectively than some of the other research methods where bias of the researchers could impact the consultation process

**eConsultation Scope**

We will seek advises and opinion time to time from the concerned stakeholders on topics / subject matter concerned with the ministry functioning, policies and procedures. The scope of these consolations would involve such topics where we need improvement / suggestions / opinions / new ideas etc. The topics will be selected based on the following criteria:

- Relevance of the topics to the areas of function of the ministry as well as stakeholders
- Type of stakeholders like G2C, G2G
- Impact to the target stakeholders
- Objective / outcome required on the subject

All topics for eConsultation would be open for public view / comments unless it is specifically targeted for a specific group. In such cases, ministry might use appropriate electronic tools to address the specific target groups to get their opinions.

The opinions / advises gathered through this process would be appropriately analyzed and utilized for decision making purposes. The ministry is not legally bound to accept any comments /opinions through such processes.
eConsultation Process cycle

Ministry will follow the following general cycle for any eConsultations. The cycle may be modified depending on the need, urgency and the type of topics discussed.

**Step 1: Publish the document**

Ministry will publish the topics for eConsultation in the ministry website. The topics for discussion would cover the following:

- A clear objective of the eConsultation for this specific service/issue;
  - The topic description;
  - Potential impacts of the specific topic on the citizens;
  - Information regarding decision makers;
  - The timelines set for consultation
  - Resources to ensure effective participation

- The document will include the guidelines participants should abide by as far as good conduct and proper respectful language

- A description of the terms and conditions for online engagement that promote civil behavior, constructive criticism, active listening and discussion

- Explain the importance of the citizen involvement in the eConsultation and what benefit it will provide;

- Define the age group that are expected to provide their feedback and responses

**Step 2: Broadcast and create awareness about the topic**

Ministry will create awareness among the target audience for participating in the consultation process by broadcasting the topic through the following various channels like TV, radio, newspapers, journals, conferences, websites, announcements through blogs.

The broadcast message will provide brief information about the topic under consultation, the timelines of the consultation process, the importance of the citizen’s involvement and the expectations from the citizens.

After creating the awareness on the eConsultation topic, the ministry will ensure that the topic with its related documentation is available for the participants as per the timeline announced and accessible through the selected eConsultation methods.
Step 3: Collect Feedback and responses
Once the topic is open for citizen opinion, the ministry will monitor the responses and feedbacks that are posted on the chosen channels and moderate the use of any inappropriate language.

The ministry will consolidate all the responses and provide timely feedback for any queries raised by the participants.

Step 4: Analyze the responses
After the responses are received, the Ministry would analyze the responses/citizen opinions and appropriate suggestions to the ministry for decision making. Once the decisions are taken by the ministry, the ministry would prepare feedback for responses received based on the decision taken.

Step 5: Communicate and announce the decision
The ministry will communicate and announce the decision through appropriate online methods.

Step 6: Closure and Archive
After successful completion of the eConsultation cycle for every topic, ministry will close the topic of discussion until / unless further consultation is required on the topic in future. The ministry will maintain a record of the full process cycle for each topic that is being consulted on. The following will be maintained:

- Initial assessment for the eConsultation;
- Documents/communication that was developed for the specific topic;
- Decisions taken by the Ministry for response received;
- Statistical records of number of participants; number of responses;
- All the issues/problems that came along and how its being solved;

Implementation Life cycle
**eConsultation tools provided by the Ministry**

We would use multiple channels as a medium to receive the feedbacks from the citizens. The selection of the media would be based on

- Target population;
- Subject/topic to be consulted on;
- The overall duration of the eConsultation

The ministry is currently providing the following electronic tools for eConsultation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tools</th>
<th>URL link for accessing the tool</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blog</td>
<td><a href="http://moe.gov.bh/bloga/">http://moe.gov.bh/bloga/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forum</td>
<td><a href="http://www.moe.gov.bh/forum">http://www.moe.gov.bh/forum</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poll</td>
<td><a href="http://www.moe.gov.bh/">http://www.moe.gov.bh/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suggestions</td>
<td><a href="http://www.moe.gov.bh/eServices_team.aspx">http://www.moe.gov.bh/eServices_team.aspx</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The ministry will have an eConsultation page which will provide the citizens with a single access point for accessing all eConsultation topics and tools. Citizens may access the eConsultation page at [http://www.moe.gov.bh/eConsultation.aspx](http://www.moe.gov.bh/eConsultation.aspx)