



Sultan Qaboos University

College of Medicine and Health Sciences

Department of Family Medicine and Public Health

Master of Biomedical Sciences Major in Epidemiology and Medical Statistics

Student HANDBOOK

2025-2026





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MASTER OF BIOMEDICAL SCIENCES
MAJOR IN EPIDEMIOLOGY AND
MEDICAL STATISTICS

STUDENT HANDBOOK

Academic Year 2025-2026

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Welcome Message

Dear Postgraduate Students,

Welcome to the Department of **Family Medicine and Public Health**, College of Medicine and Health Sciences at Sultan Qaboos University. We are delighted to have you join our academic community and look forward to supporting you throughout your postgraduate journey.

This handbook is designed to guide you through your academic experience by providing essential information about our programs, policies, and resources. It includes details on course requirements, research opportunities, assessment methods, and support services available to you. We strongly encourage you to familiarize yourself with this document and refer to it whenever needed to make the most of your time in our department.

Our faculty and staff are committed to providing supportive learning environment that promotes both professional growth and personal development. We encourage you to actively engage in all aspects of your training, collaborate with your peers, and take full advantage of the learning opportunities available.

Once again, welcome to our department, and we wish you every success in your academic and professional pursuits.

Best regards,



Prof. Mohammed Al-Azri
MD, MRCGP(Int), FRCGP(Int), MMedSc(UK), PhD (UK)
Head of Department, Professor, Senior Consultant
Department of Family Medicine and Public Health
Sultan Qaboos University

2. General Information

Mission

The mission of the Department is to enhance the health of the population through leadership in quality education, research, and patient care in Family Medicine, as well as in different aspects of Public Health.

Vision

The Department aspires for:

- Provision of patient and family-centred, comprehensive, high-quality, evidence-based, and cost-effective health care.
- Development and maintenance of quality medical education for students and residents.
- The promotion and dissemination of knowledge are important for clinical practice, teaching, and the improvement of healthcare for the population.

Department Overview

- Location: [COM&HS building, 1st floor]
- Contact E-mail: [bahiya@squ.edu.om]
- Telephone: (+968) 2414-1127
- Office Hours: [Sun-Thurs, 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.]

Academic calendar (2025-2026)

Semester	Month	week	SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	Events
Fall 2025	August		31	1	2	3	4	5	6	Orientation Program & Foundation Program assessments Week 1 Fall 2025 Courses Timetable Announcement
			7	8	9	10	11	12	13	Orientation Program & Foundation Program assessments Week 2 Fall 2025 online registration
	September	1	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	1st Week of Academic Classes Add/Drop Week Obtain Statement of Graduation period *
		2	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	
	October	3	28	29	30	1	2	3	4	
		4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	
	November	5	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	
		6	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	
		7	26	27	28	29	30	31	1	
		8	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
		9	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	Academic advising for probation students 12/11/2025 Start up of Math Exam Exit test to transfer between colleges *
	December	10	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	20/11/2025 End of Math Exam Exit test to transfer between colleges 18/11/2025 National Day
		11	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	
		12	30	1	2	3	4	5	6	
		13	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	
	January	14	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	
		15	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	Last day of Academic Classes
16		28	29	30	31	1	2	3	Final exams - Week 1	
17		4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Final exams - Week 2	
Spring 2026	February		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	11/01/2026 -HM the Sultan Accession Day Spring 2026 Courses Timetable Announcement *
			8	9	10	11	12	13	14	16/01/2026 - Isra & Mi'raj Fall 2025 Results *
	March	1	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	Spring 2026 Online registration Internal transfer requests period Starts
		2	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	
	April	3	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
		4	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	
		5	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	20/03/2026 Eid Al-Fitr
	May	6	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	Summer2026 Courses Timetable Announcement *
		7	29	30	31	1	2	3	4	Academic advising for probation students
		8	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	
9		12	13	14	15	16	17	18		
June	10	19	20	21	22	23	24	25		
	11	26	27	28	29	30	1	2		
	12	3	4	5	6	7	8	9		
July	13	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	Last day of Academic Classes	
	14	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	Final exams - Week 1	
August	15	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	Final exams - Week 2 27/05/2026 Eid Al-Adha	
	16	31	1	2	3	4	5	6		
September	17	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	Spring 2026 Results *	
	18	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	17/06/2026 Islamic New Year *	
Summer 2026	July	1	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	1st Week of Academic Classes Add/Drop Week
		2	28	29	30	1	2	3	4	Obtain Statement of Graduation *
	August	3	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	
		4	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	12-23/07/2026 Math Exam Exit test period to transfer between colleges *
	September	5	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	
		6	26	27	28	29	30	31	1	
		7	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Last day of Academic Classes
		8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	Final examinations week
	October	9	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	Summer 2026 results *
		10	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	26/08/2026 - Prophets Birthday
11	30	31	1	2	3	4	5			
12	6	7	8	9	10	11	12			

3. Academic Regulations

3.1 Program Admission Requirements

Admission to a Master's program entails that the applicant must have the following:

A. A bachelor's degree in Health Sciences or Medical Laboratory Sciences or M.D. from Sultan Qaboos University or any recognized institution with:

- A minimum cumulative GPA of 2.75 on a 4-point scale or its equivalent in any other system, and the Deanship of Postgraduate Studies will assess equivalency acceptance.
- A minimum cumulative GPA ranging between 2.50 and 2.74 on a 4-point scale or its equivalent, with a **minimum of two years** of work experience, if admission is sought to a master's program by coursework, or coursework and Thesis, or coursework and comprehensive examination.
- Achieve Band (6) or higher in the IELTS or a score of 79 or higher in the International TOEFL-IBT.
- Pass the interview held in the Department (if necessary).

B. Candidates from other disciplines, such as Science or Agriculture, will be considered, but may need to complete additional qualifying courses to provide them with the necessary scientific background in the field of study. Some of the courses may be offered in the afternoon.

C. A minimum of 21 credits with a minimum GPA of 3.00 on a 4-point scale and a cumulative GPA of 2.50 in the bachelor's degree for currently enrolled postgraduate diploma students at SQU. In this case, the student may be considered for upgrading to the master's program in the same specialization. Hence, the credits earned and their grades will count towards the master's degree.

D. Fulfillment of the language proficiency requirements.

E. Fulfillment of any other program-specific requirements.

3.2 Registration Guidelines:

- Students must register for each semester during their study within the official registration period announced by the Deanship. They must register from the first semester they join the program and, in every semester, until they graduate. During the thesis write-up stage, students must submit a progress report to register for the subsequent semester.
- Late registration may be allowed upon approval of the college dean and the Dean under extenuating circumstances for up to one week from the end of the Add/Drop period. Late registration is not guaranteed and is contingent upon the availability of places.

3.2.1 Course Load

- The minimum semester course load for a full-time student must be 9 credits, except when the student is registered for a thesis. The normal course load for a part-time student is 6 credits, with 3 credits being the minimum. Failure to conform to the course load results in deregistration for that semester.
- A full-time and part-time student may register for the Thesis after completing 12 credits of coursework with a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.00, with acceptance of the supervisor and the HoD. A student with a cumulative GPA less than 3.00 may be allowed to register for the Thesis upon approval of the Dean.

3.2.2 Add and Drop

- Students may add or drop courses during the Add/Drop period, provided that it shall not affect the student's record.
- A course dropped between the end of the Add/Drop period and the end of the withdrawal period will appear as a withdrawn (W) in the student's transcript.
- A course dropped **after** the **withdrawal period** will result in a **grade of F**.

3.2.3 Attendance

Students are expected to attend all classes for which they are registered and will be issued an official “Absentee Warning Notice” if they miss 10% of the total semester contact hours. Students will receive an FW grade if they miss 20% or more of the total semester contact hours and will be issued an “Absentee Failure Notice.”

3.3 Grading Policy

3.3.1 Grades with Numerical Value

Grade	Numerical value	Range	Description
A	4.00	92-100	Excellent performance
A-	3.70	88-91.9	
B+	3.30	85-87.9	Very good performance
B	3.00	82-84.9	
B-	2.70	78-81.9	
C+	2.30	75-77.9	Satisfactory performance
C	2.00	70-74.9	
F	0.00	0.0-69.9	Unacceptable performance

*This scale applies to the coursework and thesis option for master's and doctorate programs, but not to the comprehensive examinations or programs by thesis option. It also applies to bachelor's degree courses taken by the student as part of the postgraduate program, meaning that **any grade below C will be recorded as an F** grade when calculating the cumulative GPA.

3.3.2 Grades with No Numerical Value

I. [X] Incomplete

- A student is given an incomplete grade [X] when all course requirements are not completed by the scheduled deadline.
- This grade can be changed no later than a month from the end of the examination period and will be used when the following two conditions are met:
 - A. The student has been prevented by exceptional circumstances, such as an accident, family emergency, or illness, from completing all the course requirements on time.

B. The student has a passing level in those coursework components completed by the end of the course.

II. [W] Withdrawal

- A [W] grade is granted to a student who has formally withdrawn from a course before the end of the withdrawal period.
- A course dropped after the deadline ends is assigned an F grade.

III. [FW] Absentee Failure

- An [FW] grade is granted to students who exceed the permitted absence hours (see section 8.3) (<https://www.squ.edu.om/ps/en-us>). No credits will be obtained in this course.

IV. [AU] Audit

- An [AU] designates a course registration with an audit status (see section 8.5) (<https://www.squ.edu.om/ps/en-us>).

V. [IP] In Progress

- An [IP] is granted when the work of a course extends beyond the end of a regular semester. This typically applies to a thesis and enables students to maintain their enrollment in the program.

VI. [P] Pass

- A [P] grade is granted for a course that is not graded on the numerical scale but carries a credit value in a degree program.
- Typically, courses with objectives related to general exposure, skill courses, or applied field practice attract this grade.
- A course with a P grade is included in the total number of credits required for graduation.

VII. [NP] No Pass

- A [NP] grade is granted for a course that is not graded on a numerical scale but that carries a credit value in a degree program.
- Typically, courses with objectives related to general exposure, skill courses, or applied field practice attract this grade.

- A course with a [NP] grade is included in the total number of credits required for graduation.

VIII. [TC] Transfer of Credits

- A [TC] grade designates credits acquired in another program.
- A course with a [TC] grade is included in the total number of credits required for graduation, but is not included in the Grade Point Average.

3.3.3 Repeating Courses

- If the CGPA falls **below 3.0**, the student is placed on probation and is given only one semester to regain the required CGPA.
- A course with an F grade must be repeated.
- Students may repeat a maximum of two courses.

4. Program structure & course details:

4.1 Masters of Biomedical Sciences, Major in Epidemiology and Medical Statistics

Degree Option	Credits Required	Thesis	Mode	Duration
Coursework and Thesis	30	Yes	Full-time	2 Years
Coursework and Thesis	30	Yes	Part-time	3 Years

4.1.1 About the Program

The program's curriculum focuses on promoting a research culture, particularly among clinical trainees, fellows, and faculty, to facilitate the conduct of clinical research. The program serves two purposes:

1. First, it will equip students with the skills necessary to enable them to work across the range of areas covered by the medical, biomedical, and health-related fields and epidemiology
2. Second, it will train healthcare professionals to possess in-depth knowledge of epidemiology and biostatistics, as well as their application to significant clinical and public health issues in Oman and other countries, with a focused approach to regional problems and needs.

4.1.2 Program Curriculum and Structure

To satisfy the requirements of this program, students must complete 30 credits by taking six core courses (18 credits), two elective courses (6 credits), and one core research project (Thesis) (6 credits) within 2 years for the full-time mode and 3 years for the part-time mode. Details of the courses are as follows:

Course Code	Course Title	Credits	Category*
EPIS6000	Statistics and Computers	3	Core
METH6001	Research Methods and Critical Reading of Scientific Literature	3	Core
EPIS6001	Advanced Principles of Epidemiology and Inference Statistics	3	Core
EPIS6002	Advanced Statistical Methods	3	Core
EPIS6003	Categorical Data Analysis	3	Core
EPIS6004	Applied Epidemiology	3	Core
EPIS6005	Statistical Methods in Quality Control	3	Elective
EPIS6006	Epidemiology in Health Care Planning	3	Elective
EPIS6008	Health Management and Leadership	3	Elective
EPIS7002	Research Project (Thesis)	6	Core

* Students can take up to 2 elective courses with 3 credits per course on level 6 offered by the College of Medicine and Health Sciences or other postgraduate courses offered by the University, according to the Academic Regulations for Postgraduate Studies 2018 (<https://www.squ.edu.om/ps/en-us/>), subject to change without notice.

4.1.3 Language of Instruction

All programs are taught in English.

4.1.3 Course description

Core Courses

EPIS6000 (Statistics and Computers)

This course introduces the basic principles of applications of statistical methodology in designing, analyzing, interpreting, and presenting biological experiments and observations. The topics include description and presentation of data, descriptive statistics, probability and sampling distributions, sample size and sampling methods, elements of hypothesis testing and one and two-sample tests, tests of association, analysis of variance, correlation, regression techniques, and non-parametric statistical methods. During the laboratory component of the course, students learn how to create data entry screens, merge and subset data files, derive new variables, conduct analyses, and summarize results based on the topics covered using data from laboratory and field studies. For this, the SPSS package will be used extensively.

METH6001 (Research Methods and Critical Reading of Scientific Literature)

This course teaches the critical analysis of refereed scientific publications of varying quality. Critical reading and oral presentation of scientific information are major components of this course.

EPIS6001 (Advanced Principles of Epidemiology and Inference Statistics)

This course instructs the students about the epidemiological approach and concepts of causation, epidemiological methods, epidemiological methods in genetics, developing research protocols, the concept of statistical inference, sampling distributions, estimation, hypothesis testing, principles of clinical community-based prophylactic trials (designing of clinical and community-based trials, randomizing techniques, estimation of sample size), and biological inferences from epidemiological studies. Problems related to the topics covered, suited to real-life situations, are solved using statistical program packages.

EPIS6002 (Advanced Statistical Methods)

This course aims to provide students with a comprehensive understanding of experimental design, encompassing both theoretical and practical aspects. The student

will be introduced to the principles and methods of designing and analyzing efficient comparative experiments. The influences of extraneous factors are either controlled systematically or prevented from getting confounded with the effects of the main factors under investigation. Topics included Completely Randomized designs. Randomized Block design, and Repeated Measure design.

EPIS6003 (Categorical Data Analysis)

This course will cover applications of some statistical methodological studies when the outcome variables are categorical. The topics covered include analysis of two-way contingency tables, the testing for the trend in a 2 x r contingency table, estimation and testing of relative Risks and Odds Ratios, the Mantel-Haenszel test for the combination of several 2 x 2 tables with an estimation of the combined odds ratio and confidence limits, estimation of attributable risk, matching and confounding, and an introduction to log-linear models. Throughout the course, data from epidemiological and experimental studies will be analyzed using SPSS or other statistical software.

EPIS6004 (Applied Epidemiology)

This course is designed to teach how epidemiologic methods are applied in real-world settings, with a focus on the issues faced by health departments. This includes screening test and its application, validity, and reliability of screening tests, evaluation of diagnostic tests, vital statistics (e.g., measures of mortality and morbidity), estimation of population, standardization of rates (direct methods, in-direct methods, standardized mortality ratio), demography and epidemiological investigation, cost-benefit analysis and role of epidemiology and statistics in healthcare planning and evaluation.

EPIS7002 (Research Project – Thesis)

Students will conduct a research project, identify a problem to be studied, review the literature associated with the problem, collect data about the issue, analyze the data to either support or refute a pre-selected hypothesis or answer research questions, discuss the findings, present conclusions, and make recommendations based on the study in a Thesis.

Elective Courses

EPIS6005 (Statistical Methods in Quality Control)

This course covers the application of Statistical Quality Control techniques for enhancing quality/performance in the healthcare environment. The course will enable the students to understand how to draw the appropriate control charts to improve the quality/performance of different healthcare parameters. Besides, the course will also elaborate on acceptance sampling techniques for attributes based on single and double sampling plans. The topics include: control charts for variables, control charts for attributes, and sampling inspection plans.

EPIS6006 (Epidemiology in Health Care Planning)

This course will cover the epidemiological aspects of health care planning. The course content covers social choices, the planning process, and systems, as well as their applications to healthcare services. It also explores the objectives of evaluative studies, the uses of healthcare information in planning, managing information systems, epidemiological approaches to planning, the use of probabilities in decision-making, the planning environment, and professional interactions.

EPIS6008 (Health Management and Leadership)

This elective course is designed to familiarize the students pursuing different postgraduate courses at Sultan Qaboos University, and specifically for those enrolled for the Masters in Epidemiology and Medical Statistics in the College of Medicine and Health Sciences, with the importance of leadership roles in health and with principles and different aspects of health management with special emphasis on health economics. The course will help stimulate strategic thinking and critical management perspectives in the new generation of professionals, enabling them to assume leadership roles that benefit the health services in Oman.

4.1.5 Full-time Mode Study Plan (2 years)

Year 1, Semester 1 (Fall)

Course Code and Title	Credits	Category
EPIS6000 Statistics and Computers	3	Core
EPIS6004 Applied Epidemiology	3	Core
EPIS6005 Statistical Methods in Quality Control	3	Elective
EPIS6008 Health Management and Leadership	3	Elective

Year 1, Semester 2 (Spring)

Course Code and Title	Credits	Category
METH6001 Research Methods and Critical Reading of Scientific Literature	3	Core
EPIS6001 Advanced Principles of Epidemiology and Inference Statistics	3	Core
EPIS6002 Advanced Statistical Methods	3	Core
EPIS6003 Categorical Data Analysis	3	Core
EPIS6006 Epidemiology in Health Care Planning	3	Elective

Year 2, Semester 3 (Fall) & 4 (Spring)

Course Code and Title	Credits	Category
EPIS7002 Research Project (Thesis)	6	Core

4.1.6 Part-time Mode Study Plan (3 years)

Year 1 & 2 (Fall semester)

Course Code and Title	Credits	Category
EPIS6000 Statistics and Computers	3	Core
EPIS6004 Applied Epidemiology	3	Core
EPIS6005 Statistical Methods in Quality Control	3	Elective
EPIS6008 Health Management and Leadership	3	Elective

Year 1 & 2 (Spring semester)

Course Code and Title	Credits	Category
METH6001 Research Methods and Critical Reading of Scientific Literature	3	Core
EPIS6001 Advanced Principles of Epidemiology and Inference Statistics	3	Core
EPIS6002 Advanced Statistical Methods	3	Core
EPIS6003 Categorical Data Analysis	3	Core
EPIS6006 Epidemiology in Health Care Planning	3	Elective

Year 3 (Fall / Spring semester)

Course Code and Title	Credits	Category
EPIS7002 Research Project (Thesis)	6	Core

5. Thesis and Research Guidelines

5.1 Thesis Progress Report

- Students are required to submit a progress report, signed by both the supervisor and the student, in order to register for the subsequent semester.
- The supervisor will provide feedback on the work plan and evaluate the student's overall performance.
- If the student's progress is deemed unsatisfactory, the college dean will appoint an ad hoc committee to investigate the issue and make appropriate recommendations.

5.2 Seminars

- Students **must** give two seminars during their course, which should be scheduled as part of their respective Department's seminars.
- The first seminar must be held before the end of the first semester of thesis registration, covering the background, objectives, and methodology of the research.
- The second seminar should be held prior to the thesis defense and should include a summary of the research and its main findings.

5.3 Thesis Defense

- Before initiating the thesis defense procedure, the student **must** have completed all required program courses with a minimum **cumulative GPA of 3.0**.
- The student **must** have completed the required two seminars.

5.3.1 Thesis evaluation procedure

The Master's Thesis is evaluated based on two main components: the thesis document (80%) and the oral defense (20%). Each member of the Thesis

The Examination Committee, except the Chairperson, is required to evaluate these two components based on the following:

A. Component I: Thesis Document

- Examiners should use **(Section I)** of the evaluation tool to complete this component.
- The thesis evaluation should take place before the day of the final thesis oral defense.

B. Component II: Oral Defense

- Examiners should use **(Section II)** of the evaluation tool to complete this component.
- The oral defense evaluation is to be completed immediately after the student finishes the defense.

C. Finalization of Student Grade

- Upon oral defense completion, three decisions by the examination committee will be made:
 - i. The First decision will be to allocate numeric and letter grades as attached. Combined scores of the thesis document and the oral defense will be used to accomplish this.
 - ii. The second will be the final thesis letter grade **(5.3.3)**.
 - iii. The third will be the final thesis decision, which will be communicated to the students without the letter grade at the end of the thesis examination session **(5.3.4)**.

5.3.2 Grades and report submission

- Grades will not be endorsed until any necessary revisions are submitted.
- The examination committee will enter the Thesis's final decision, comments, and final grade into the SIS system.
- The Chairperson will submit the thesis examination report via the DPS system, which includes the final thesis decision, individual examiners' scores, the average score, and the final letter grade based on all examination outcomes. A copy of all individual reports should be submitted to the Assistant Dean's office.

- The thesis supervisor will enter the final letter grade into the SIS system, and the Head of Department will verify it for alignment with the Thesis Chairperson’s report.
- If the student defends their thesis between semesters, then the [IP] grade should be entered by the supervisor by the end of the semester, and the final grade is endorsed after the defense.

5.3.3 Numeric and letter grading

Score	Grade
95-100	A
90-94.9	A -
85-89.9	B+
80-84.9	B
75-79.9	B-
70-74.9	C+
65-69.9	C
<65	F

5.3.4 Overall decision on the Thesis

- **Pass** (For students earning an A)
- **Pass pending minor revision** (For students earning B up to A-)
- **Deferred pending major revision** (For students earning C up to B-)
- **No Pass** (For students earning F)

5.4 Thesis submission

After the Thesis has been approved, electronic submission of thesis (PDF) through the SIS will be the official method for submitting thesis and following up on the graduation requirement. (Letter from Deanship of Postgraduate studies dated 25/09/2025). Emailed by Assistant Dean of Postgraduate studies dated 05/10/2025.

5.5 Postgraduate Thesis Writing Guidelines

Plagiarism Threshold: Both the student and the thesis committee must ensure that the similarity index of the thesis, as measured by the Turnitin program, does not exceed 20%.

Thesis Length: The length of a master's thesis at Sultan Qaboos University must not be less than 30,000 words, excluding preliminary pages, references list, and appendices.

Please refer to the link below:

<https://www.squ.edu.om/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=sVltHyykFvA%3d&portalid=42&language=en-US>

6. Code of Conduct

Students are required to agree to conventional norms and keep positive habits and behaviors inside the University, including:

- A. Please adhere to the postgraduate academic regulations and other university regulations, documents, and decisions issued by the concerned university bodies and refrain from inciting others to break them.
- B. Attend lectures, classes, and other required university sessions.
- C. Pay tuition fees.
- D. Do not submit a research project, paper, or assignment that has already been submitted elsewhere to gain another academic degree at the University or other academic institutions.
- E. Not interfere with other students' work, or commit acts of cheating, forgery, or plagiarism. This includes submission of work whose text, ideas, and arguments belong to others without proper citation through references to footnotes.
- F. Adhere to university laws, particularly those relevant to the code of conduct and research ethics, including regulations regarding the use of humans, animals, and other species, as well as those related to data confidentiality.

- ❖ Thank you to Ms. Zamekile P. Lukhele and Prof. M.F. Chan for preparing this handbook. All sources were from the postgraduate academic regulation 2018 SQU (https://www.squ.edu.om/Portals/24/Academic%20Regulation2018-EN_1.pdf) and the Department of Family Medicine and Public Health, SQU (<https://www.squ.edu.om/medicine/Departments/Family-Medicine-and-Public-Health>), subject to change without notice.

For Further Inquiries, Please Contact:

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