



International Quality Review of Ajman University, United Arab Emirates

February 2020

Contents

About this review	1
Key findings.....	2
Executive summary.....	2
QAA's conclusions about Ajman University	5
European Standards and Guidelines.....	5
Good practice	5
Recommendations	5
Explanation of the findings about Ajman University	6
Standard 1.1 Policy for quality assurance.....	7
Standard 1.2 Design and approval of programmes	9
Standard 1.3 Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment.....	12
Standard 1.4 Student admission, progression, recognition and certification	15
Standard 1.5 Teaching staff	17
Standard 1.6 Learning resources and student support	20
Standard 1.7 Information management	22
Standard 1.8 Public information	24
Standard 1.9 Ongoing monitoring and periodic review of programmes.....	25
Standard 1.10 Cyclical external quality assurance	27
Glossary.....	29

About this review

This is a report of an International Quality Review conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Ajman University. The review took place from 3 to 5 February 2020 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

- Professor Jeremy Bradshaw
- Dr Roy Ferguson
- Mr Harry Williams (student reviewer).

International Quality Review (IQR) offers institutions outside the UK the opportunity to have a review by the UK's Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA). The review benchmarks the institutions' quality assurance processes against international quality assurance standards set out in Part 1 of the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)*.¹

In International Quality Review, the QAA review team:

- makes conclusion against each of the 10 standards set out in Part 1 of the ESG
- makes recommendations
- identifies features of good practice
- comes to an overall conclusion as to whether the institution meets the standards for International Quality Review.

A summary of the findings can be found in the section starting on page 2. Explanations of the findings are given in numbered paragraphs in the section starting on page 6.

The QAA website gives more information [about QAA](#) and its mission.² A dedicated section explains the method for International Quality Review³ and has links to other informative documents. For an explanation of terms see the glossary at the end of this report.

¹ www.engq.eu/index.php/home/esg

² www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us

³ www.qaa.ac.uk/en/training-and-services/iqr

Key findings

Executive summary

Ajman University (AU) is a private institution situated in the Emirate of Ajman. It was founded in 1988 and obtained its license by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research in 1994 under its previous name of Ajman University of Science and Technology. In October 2016 the University's name was changed to Ajman University to reflect its education provision. Until recently, AU had two campuses, having a main campus in Ajman and a branch campus in Fujairah. However, in March 2019, the operation was split, forming two separate Universities; AU is now operating as a single campus based in Ajman. This has had no financial or governance implications for the University.

There are currently over 6,000 students studying at the University. AU is made up of nine degree-conferring colleges offering 24 undergraduate and 12 graduate programmes, all of which are aligned with the National Qualifications Framework of the Emirates (QFEmirates) and are accredited by the Commission for Academic Accreditation (CAA). In addition, five programmes have been accredited by international professional bodies, with a number in the process of obtaining international accreditation.

The University's head is the Chancellor who reports to the Board of Trustees (BOT) and has a senior management team of four who lead key functions within the University. The mission for the University is that of 'a multicultural, dual gender, academic institution that offers a broad range of high quality and relevant undergraduate and graduate academic programmes. The University strives to fulfil the needs of students, alumni, employers, and society through quality education, scholarship and community engagement. AU develops well-rounded graduates who are professionally competent, socially responsible, innovative and active contributors to sustainable development of the UAE and beyond'. Its Strategic Plan 2017-2022, which was updated in January 2019, sets out six strategic goals:

- Strategic Goal 1: Ensuring Excellence in Teaching and Learning
- Strategic Goal 2: Enhancing the Quality, Relevance, and Impact of Research and Intellectual Contribution
- Strategic Goal 3: Recruiting, Supporting and Fostering the Development of a Bright and Diverse Student Body
- Strategic Goal 4: Enhancing the Visibility and the Positioning of the University
- Strategic Goal 5: Building Impactful and Long-Lasting Ties with the External Communities
- Strategic Goal 6: Promoting Cutting-Edge and Innovative Support Services.

As noted above, a key change has been the move from a split site operation to becoming a single campus. In addition to this, the University has undergone a restructure of some of its colleges, which was approved by CAA and implemented in February 2019. Furthermore, the University has established a new College of Medicine, having obtained approval and successful accreditation of its MBBS programme from the Ministry of Education.

AU has until recently been a primarily teaching-based institution. However, in 2017, the Deanship of Graduate Studies and Research (DGSR) was established, bringing a research focus for the University. This change has also seen an increase in the research budget along with the development of a research culture, which the University notes in its self-evaluation as a challenge to maintain the momentum and further promote the research culture as part of a 'seamless transition'.

A further challenge the University notes in its self-evaluation is the need to continue to be successful in the recruitment of students and highly qualified faculty, in what is a highly

competitive market in the UAE. Global ranking is also an area that is deemed important and while the University has recently received QS ranking in the range of 751-800, it notes that further improvements are required to be able to reach a higher ranking.

In reaching conclusions about the extent to which AU meets the 10 ESG standards, the review team followed the handbook for International Quality Review (April 2019). The review process is evidence-based, and the review team was provided with a self-evaluation and supporting evidence by the University. In addition, the team received a student written submission (SWS) and a video produced by students. During the three-day visit, which took place from 3 to 5 February 2020, a total of nine meetings were held comprising the Chancellor, his senior management team, quality assurance, committee and academic leads involved in the management of programmes, teaching faculty, support services staff, students, employers and alumni. The review team also toured the key teaching and learning facilities at the campus and received a demonstration of AU's unified customer service system (Kayako), which is used by students to report complaints, general enquiries, suggestions and comments, and which also facilitates direct communication with students and parents.

The review team concludes that Ajman University **meets** the 10 ESG standards and has identified three areas of **good practice** and three **recommendations**.

The instances of **good practice** relate to three standards: Standard 1.6, Learning resources and student support; Standard 1.7 Information management; and Standard 1.10, Cyclical external quality assurance.

Three **recommendations** were made under Standard 1.3, Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment.

Of the three recommendations made, the first is that the institution should provide sufficient oversight to assure itself that the combination of pedagogic approaches employed across each programme are appropriate to the learning outcomes. While recognising that the institution encourages use of a variety of teaching practices, there is no systematic consideration of the appropriateness of approaches across an entire programme with regards to learning outcomes. Implementing a more holistic process allows for a greater level of assurance of the relevance of teaching methods, their effectiveness and impact on student engagement and overall performance.

The second aspect stems from the limited use of double marking and moderation processes, which the team noted is only used for the capstone project. The University is therefore recommended to extend the use of double marking and moderation to include all summative assessments. An institutional policy for internal moderation provides assurance that there is a shared understanding of the assessment criteria among markers and that this has been applied appropriately, is transparent and fair ensuring there is consistency of marking across courses and programmes.

The third recommendation under this Standard is that the institution should introduce, and monitor compliance with, appropriate expectations for the maximum turnaround time for all assessment marking and providing feedback to students. While the University stipulates a couple of deadlines, and students in the main are happy with the timeliness of feedback, there is the possibility for slippage of assessments that sit outside of the mid-term and the end-of-year examinations; students could therefore be in a position where they receive no feedback for an assessment before attempting the next one. Feedback should be timely and developmental so students understand the strengths and limitations of their performance and can improve their performance in the future, learning from the feedback.

Good practice was evident firstly under Standard 1.6, Learning resources and student support, with the extensive suite of student support services, available to both students and alumni, which enables their academic and professional development. The review team concluded students are well-supported throughout their journey with AU from the point of registration to graduation. Students are allocated an academic adviser and also have various other support staff and services available, such as the 'Student Success Centers'. The holistic approach that the University takes from orientation to graduation and beyond provides added value through the comprehensive student support available throughout the student learning journey, and is considered by the team to align strongly with the University's ethos.

The second area of good practice noted is the effective framework to engage and respond to students in a timely way, which relates to Standard 1.7, Information management. The University has various ways in which it listens to its students and responds to their feedback which was backed up with a number of examples cited by students.

The final good practice the review team identified was under Standard 1.10, Cyclical external quality assurance. The team found the University had an effective approach to professional engagement, clearly structured relationships and interactions, and a healthy reflectiveness on curriculum development and the student experience generally. This was substantiated by employers and alumni the team met who were willing to assist the University at a number of levels, formally and informally from enhancement of the curriculum, provision of work placements, and supporting students more generally.

The review team came to the overall conclusion that Ajman University meets the 10 standards set out in Part 1 of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area.

QAA's conclusions about Ajman University

The QAA review team reached the following conclusions about the higher education provision at Ajman University.

European Standards and Guidelines

Ajman University **meets** all of the 10 ESG Standards and Guidelines.

Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following features of **good practice** at Ajman University.

- The extensive suite of student support services, available to both students and alumni, which enables their academic and professional development (Standard 1.6).
- The effective framework to engage and respond to students in a timely way (Standard 1.7).
- The effective approach to professional engagement, clearly structured relationships and interactions, and a healthy reflectiveness on curriculum development and the student experience generally (Standard 1.10).

Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendations** to Ajman University.

- The institution should provide sufficient oversight to assure itself that the combination of pedagogic approaches employed across each programme is appropriate to the learning outcomes (Standard 1.3).
- The institution should introduce, and monitor compliance with, appropriate expectations for the maximum turnaround time for all assessment marking and providing feedback to students (Standard 1.3).
- The institution should extend the use of double marking and moderation to include all summative assessments (Standard 1.3).

Explanation of the findings about Ajman University

This section explains the review findings in more detail.

Terms that may be unfamiliar to some readers have been included in a [brief glossary](#) at the end of this report. A fuller [glossary of terms](#) is available on the QAA website, and formal definitions of certain terms may be found in the operational description and handbook for the [review method](#), also on the QAA website.

Standard 1.1 Policy for quality assurance

Institutions should have a policy for quality assurance that is made public and forms part of their strategic management. Internal stakeholders should develop and implement this policy through appropriate structures and processes, while involving external stakeholders.

Findings

1.1 Ajman University (AU) is a private university accredited by the UAE Commission for Academic Accreditation (CAA). As such, AU must comply with CAA's Standards for Institutional Licensure and Program Accreditation. AU's Policy for Quality Assurance is available in the AU Policies and Procedures Manual and is also available on the University website. The policy applies to all academic areas and key administrative, service and support units. The Office of Institutional Planning and Effectiveness (OIPE) is responsible for the evaluation of organisational effectiveness, including academic and support units to ensure continuous quality enhancement.

1.2 The institutional quality assurance processes are set out in the AU Quality Assurance Manual. Underpinning AU's approach to quality assurance is the institutional effectiveness-model, which is a cyclical process that integrates planning, systematic data gathering and analysis, to inform evaluation and decision-making, in order to enhance academic programmes and the performance of University units. The OIPE at AU is responsible for the coordination and monitoring, evaluation and enhancement processes that are implemented across the institution. The Institutional Planning Council (IPC) is responsible for long-term strategic and short-term operational planning. The Assessment Planning Committee (APC) is responsible for planning, monitoring and evaluation and oversight of quality assurance processes. The Institutional Effectiveness Committee (IEC) has two co-chairs: one has responsibility for academic units and the other for non-academic units. Each member of the IEC is designated as the Institutional Effectiveness Coordinator for their unit and also acts as Chair of the respective College Effectiveness Committee (CEC). The coordinator also provides support and guidance to all department-level Assessment and Continuous Improvement Committees (ACIC). The IPC, IEC and APC report to the Executive Director of the OIPE.

1.3 The AU Policies and Procedures Manual also sets out the terms of reference and membership of key institutional committees as well as roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders for quality, including Deans of Colleges, Heads of Department and the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs. The quality assurance framework at AU benefits from input from a range of internal stakeholders, including students, faculty and staff, as well as external stakeholders which include alumni, employers, training/internship supervisors and industry advisory boards.

1.4 AU has agreed a set of key performance indicators (KPIs) for each academic and support unit. An evaluation of each target takes place regularly and any achievement shortfall results in a development plan being prepared, which supports ongoing enhancement in the unit concerned.

1.5 The review team examined a range of evidence, including sample Effectiveness Reports for academic and support units, which confirmed a systematic approach to quality review within AU and which highlighted 'closing the loop' to ensure the continuous improvement of educational provision and support services. The evidence-based outcomes of the various quality assurance processes are used to develop action plans by College Deans, Office Managers, and AU's senior management, to enhance educational provision and support service departments.

1.6 In meetings with faculty and staff, the review team confirmed that the AU processes and procedures used to effectively implement the elements of the Quality Assurance Policy were understood, and that they were clearly set out in the institutional Quality Assurance Manual.

1.7 CAA undertakes a cyclical review of AU as part of the renewal of its institutional licensure status. The review team evaluated the effectiveness of AU's approach to quality assurance through discussions with faculty, staff and students and by studying relevant institutional evidence, including committee minutes, policy documents, action plans and examples of ongoing quality improvements. A number of scorecard evaluations were made available to the review team as a sample of internal monitoring that are routinely undertaken to assess operational performance against agreed KPIs. The review team also confirmed in meetings with a range of stakeholders that the implementation of the AU quality assurance framework was supported by contributions from internal and external stakeholders, including students, alumni, employers, advisory boards, training/internship supervisors, as well as faculty and staff of AU.

1.8 The University has in place processes for quality assurance that enable it to meet the statutory requirements prescribed by the UAE Ministry of Education. These quality assurance processes are enabled by AU's Policy for Quality Assurance and the associated procedures, as set out in the Quality Assurance Manual. AU has developed a quality framework which facilitates feedback from a wide range of internal and external stakeholders. The review team found that the quality assurance processes were operating effectively and that, overall, the review team concludes that Standard 1.1 Policy for quality assurance is **met**.

Standard 1.2 Design and approval of programmes

Institutions should have processes for the design and approval of their programmes. The programmes should be designed so that they meet the objectives set for them, including the intended learning outcomes. The qualification resulting from a programme should be clearly specified and communicated, and refer to the correct level of the national qualifications framework for higher education and, consequently, to the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area.

Findings

2.1 AU provides programmes at bachelor's, master's and doctoral level.

2.2 The approval process for new programmes begins with the Head of Department who assembles the required information and ensures that the aims of the programme align with those of the college, the number of credits is appropriate, and the curriculum complies with the Qualifications Framework Emirates and the Standards of the CAA, Ministry of Education, UAE. The completed New Program Proposal Template is then submitted to the College Dean. The template prompts for relevant information about the intended programme, including the expected enrolment, the expected revenue, and various costs, including academic and support staff, and physical and library resources. After reviewing the proposal, the Dean passes it on to the office of the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs (VCAA).

2.3 The VCAA will arrange for the proposal to be scrutinised and considered by the Curriculum and Study Plans Committee (CSPC). Following successful review, the CSPC Chair reports the Committee's recommendations to the office of the VCAA, who forwards them on to the relevant Dean for final revision.

2.4 A revised proposal will then be submitted to the Council for Academic Affairs (CfAA) for approval, and on to the University Cabinet for final approval. Once this approval has been granted, the college or department prepares a self-study report, in collaboration with OIPE, for initial accreditation by the CAA, Ministry of Education.

2.5 All AU programmes are fully accredited by CAA, following its standard procedures for initial accreditation, full accreditation and reaccreditation.

2.6 As required by the CAA approval process, the University engages staff, students, alumni and advisory board members in the preparation of applications, through the use of tailored questionnaires.

2.7 An important feature of the courses at AU is that they are sequenced in each student's study plan so that each course builds on the previous ones. Each student must maintain a minimum Cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA) of 2.0 out of 4.0 in order to progress onto each subsequent course.

2.8 All courses offered by the University are designed to align with the institutional strategy and required to have clear learning outcomes that are aligned with the University's mission, vision and strategic goals. The relevant Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs) are printed on the first page of examinations.

2.9 The design of new programmes involves a range of stakeholders, including students. In autumn 2019, the University established a process that engages students in the design of new programmes. Heads of Department and Program Coordinators have started

to meet with students to gather feedback on the learning and teaching process. Although the meetings are very new, they are providing useful information for the review of existing programmes and are feeding into the ongoing design of some new programmes.

2.10 The process of new programme development includes consultation with support staff to ensure that any requirement for additional resource is properly estimated. This information is then entered onto the New Degree Program Template, which includes the anticipated budgets for additional faculty, physical resources, library and support staff. Library staff are consulted early in the development process so they can consider any resource implications and be ready if the proposal is taken forward.

2.11 The University values the contribution that employers make to the employability of its graduates and the currency of its provision through Industry Advisory Board (IAB), curriculum development think-tanks and other opportunities for dialogue about its academic programmes. Colleges are required to arrange meetings with employers, record the discussions and include recommendations within their Annual Plans.

2.12 Each college has an IAB that meets at least twice per year. They contribute to the design of new programmes, including providing advice about the market and its skills requirements.

2.13 The provision at AU aligns closely with the Four Purposes of Higher Education as defined by the Council of Europe; preparation for sustainable employment; personal development; preparing students for active citizenship; and creating a broad advanced knowledge base and stimulating research and innovation.

2.14 Many of the University's courses are designed to be sequential, so that each course builds upon a previous one to allow smooth transition through the curriculum following a predefined study plan.

2.15 The Policies and Procedures Manual provides detailed information about the minimum number of credits for a bachelor's programme, and the breakdown of these credits into General Education, College, Major, and Minor components.

2.16 The University makes extensive use of well-structured internships to enrich the learning experience and enhance the employability of its graduates.

2.17 Institutional policy describes the requirements for the establishment and conduct of internships, in compliance with the CAA Standards for Institutional Licensure and Program Accreditation.

2.18 An internship is defined as a supervised work experience in an approved site, of between six and 16 consecutive weeks' duration.

2.19 There are clearly defined internship objectives and outcomes, which are checked before a formal written agreement is signed between the University and the internship provider. There is a Clinical Training Internship and Risk Management policy that aims to identify and minimise the possibilities and consequences of the risks inherent in off-campus practicums.

2.20 Placements and internships are overseen by the Career and Placement Services Office, working with faculty Internship Program Coordinators. The Office provides briefings for students about to embark upon an internship.

2.21 Students on internships are supported by a University Internship Supervisor and a Field Supervisor from the company hosting the intern. Both roles are clearly defined in the Policy and Procedures Manual.

2.22 On completion of the internship, the student, field supervisor and internship supervisor must each submit individual reports. The student's report describes the work carried out during the internship period, the relationship between this work and the student's programme of studies and the anticipated extent of the usefulness of the experience to the student after graduation. The reports of the two supervisors include the student's performance, the skills obtained through the training, the correlation between the training and the student's academic study, and an evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the internship.

2.23 Final assurance of quality and standards for the courses and programmes delivered by the University is provided by the CAA accreditation process through which each new programme proposal must pass, as well as by the PSRB accreditation held by many of the programmes.

2.24 Based on the evidence and the processes the University has in place to ensure that programmes meet the set objectives and intended learning outcomes, the review team concluded the Standard 1.2, Design and approval of programmes is **met**.

Standard 1.3 Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment

Institutions should ensure that the programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in creating the learning process, and that the assessment of students reflects this approach.

Findings

3.1 There is a comprehensive Learning and Teaching Strategy with detailed objectives and indicators of success. While it does not explicitly refer to student-centred learning, it does describe a culture of careful design and delivery of study programmes and the assessment of outcomes.

3.2 The Policies and Procedures Manual requires course content and assessment methods to align with the learning outcomes.

3.3 There is a Student Grievances and Appeals Policy in the Policies and Procedures Manual, with references to it in student handbooks.

3.4 The QFEmirates defines a set of CoreLife Skills, including information, communication, self-organisation, working with others, numeracy, problem-solving, technology and societal skills. It is a requirement of accreditation that development of these CoreLife Skills is included in programmes and their constituent courses. The review team saw considerable evidence that the provision at AU builds these life skills.

3.5 The University considers teaching to be the core obligation of all its faculty members and encourages a student-centred approach to learning and teaching. To this end, it recruits the best faculty it can, encourages the use of the most up-to-date technology and acknowledges the importance of student feedback by using student survey data in the annual evaluations of academic staff members.

3.6 As noted above, many of the courses offered by the University are designed to be sequential, with each course building upon a previous one in a well-defined sequence. To facilitate this, each academic programme has a well-defined curriculum and a study plan that helps students to understand their progression route through the component courses. Students reported that they received their study plans during the orientation sessions at the start of their studies. They valued them for the guidance they provided through their entire programme of study and found them helpful when deciding which optional courses to take.

3.7 As described under Standard 1.10 of this report, the processes of programme design and monitoring and review include a significant amount of external input, from industry partners, employers and other practitioners. Each programme has an Industry Advisory Board. The extensive use of external advisers is intended to improve the quality of the teaching and learning experience and to produce graduates that are ready for employment with a good understanding of current industry practice. This positive feature was considered by the review team to contribute to the good practice identified under Standard 1.10 relating to cyclical external quality assurance. This is supplemented by the widespread use of external lecturers and by student placements and internships.

3.8 Students reported that they thought their studies at the University prepared them for employment, and alumni said their studies at the University had helped them through the transition into employment. This was confirmed by employers, who reported that AU graduates were generally well equipped for employment. They praised the effectiveness of the educational experience that produced graduates who possessed well-developed practical and communication skills and who were able to learn new skills very quickly.

3.9 Their relationship with the University does not end when students graduate. A number of alumni events are arranged each year, and use of university facilities, including the library, is open to graduates. Usage data show that around 40% of the attendees at professional development workshop and 80% at the curriculum vitae review sessions were former students, together with 20% of those using the gym and sports facilities.

3.10 The University states it is committed to employing innovative and effective teaching and learning methodologies, and high-quality infrastructure and facilities. This requirement is communicated through the Faculty Handbook and Policies and Procedures Manual, available to all faculty members through AU's website. The review team confirmed through meetings that faculty are encouraged to use a variety of pedagogic approaches and are supported to develop proficiency with newer styles of learning.

3.11 Several different modes of provision are employed: traditional scheduled classes, intensive delivery courses, supervised credit-earning for advanced undergraduates, independent study and online learning. Some of these modes of delivery include a capstone project, and some include the possibility of an internship.

3.12 The annual evaluation of faculty includes consideration of the quality of a faculty member's teaching but, while encouraging the use of new pedagogies and methods, does not address the suitability of the teaching techniques and methodologies with respect to the learning outcomes. The review team saw no evidence of systematic consideration of the appropriateness of the range and balance of teaching and learning practice across entire programmes. The review team **recommends** that, while recognising the educational benefits of a wide range of pedagogic practice, the institution should provide sufficient oversight to assure itself that the combination of pedagogic approaches employed across each programme is appropriate to the learning outcomes.

3.13 In order to promote a sense of autonomy in the learner, bachelor's students at AU are allowed to take up to 25 hours per semester of independent study, a flexible mode of learning outside the classroom.

3.14 There are appropriate procedures for dealing with student complaints. The complaints procedure is described in the Student Handbook.

3.15 As described under Standard 1.7 of this report, the University uses ticketing software to receive and track complaints from students. The expectation is that each complaint will receive a response within 48 hours; if this period is exceeded, the complaint is escalated to a higher level.

3.16 The criteria for and method of assessment as well as criteria for marking are published in advance. The grading scale is made available to students during the first week of classes and is available on the virtual learning environment (VLE). Marking rubrics are provided for assessed work and are available on the VLE.

3.17 To ensure that the assessment allows students to demonstrate the extent to which the intended learning outcomes have been achieved, mappings of the assessment contents and methods to the CLOs are provided in the course syllabi. In addition, relevant CLOs are included on the first page of examinations, together with a description of the distribution of marks across the different components of the assessment.

3.18 The Course File, updated annually, includes explicit consideration of the appropriateness of the assessment instruments in relation to learning outcomes and the appropriateness of the balance of assessment.

3.19 For examinations, the marked papers are either distributed in class, or the grades are posted on the institution's VLE and students are encouraged to visit the teaching staff during their office hours to review their marked papers and discuss the feedback provided on the papers. Model answers are either made available in class or through the VLE.

3.20 While students were generally satisfied with the timeliness and the quality of the feedback received, there was considerable confusion about the turnaround time for marking assessments.

3.21 Institutional policy for the timing of feedback to students only has two deadlines, namely two weeks before the mid-term examination and two weeks before the end-of-year examination. This means that it is possible that students will not receive the feedback from one assessment before attempting a subsequent one. The review team, therefore, **recommends** that, to maximise the opportunities for student learning before subsequent assessments, the institution should introduce, and monitor compliance with, appropriate expectations for the maximum turnaround time for all assessment marking and providing feedback to students.

3.22 Except for the capstone project, the institution does not routinely carry out double marking or moderation of assessed work; students can appeal their grade or request a re-mark; however, this can lead to variability and a lack of consistency of marking across courses and programmes. To ensure a shared understanding of the assessment criteria among markers and that this has been applied appropriately, is transparent and fair the review team **recommends** that the institution should extend the use of double marking and moderation to include all summative assessments.

3.23 The regulations for assessment take into account mitigating circumstances. Students who are unable to complete an assessment on time are allowed to present mitigating circumstances, following the Incomplete Grade process described in the Student Handbook. There are clear criteria for granting a concession. Students must submit their case, with evidence, within three days of the assessment date.

3.24 Assessment is consistent, fairly applied to all students and carried out in accordance with the stated procedures. The University's assessment procedures are described in the Policies and Procedures Manual. While the design of assessments varies between programmes, there is regular evaluation of the methods used to confirm that assessment methods are consistent with the learning outcomes and equitable across educational provision. Course syllabi contain a mapping of the assessment methods and contents to the CLOs, to ensure that each assessment is aligned with the level, knowledge, and skills appropriate to each course learning outcome and to meet the requirements for accreditation by the CAA.

3.25 The Policies and Procedures Manual describes the process to be followed if a student submits a grade complaint (appeal). Such a request may be submitted to the Registration Department within 15 days following publication of the results on the University website. The Registration Department sends the request to the Dean's office of the relevant college, from where it passes on to the instructor of the course in question, who then decides whether a change to the grade is justified. If a satisfactory conclusion is not reached, the appeal may be escalated to a higher level in which a Student Appeal Committee is constituted to review the evidence. The process is also described in the Student Handbook.

3.26 The review team concludes that the delivery of programmes encourage students to be active learners with assessments that allow them to demonstrate the achievement of stated learning outcomes. Alumni and employers confirmed that AU prepared its students well for employment and, therefore, Standard 1.3, Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment is **met**.

Standard 1.4 Student admission, progression, recognition and certification

Institutions should consistently apply pre-defined and published regulations covering all phases of the student "life cycle", e.g. student admission, progression, recognition and certification.

Findings

4.1 The University provides information relating to its approach to higher education in several ways, including via its website, social media, printed marketing materials, and outreach events aimed at improving engagement with less well-represented student groups. The Undergraduate and Graduate Catalog provides more comprehensive information relating to course structure, content, and contact details for relevant departments.

4.2 The Office of Admissions and Registration is responsible for coordinating all AU recruitment activities. There are several policies in place that outline the University's approach to the recruitment and admission of new students, including their Admissions and Graduate Admissions Policies and the University's Transfer Admissions Policy, which allows for the admission of students currently enrolled on an accredited programme at another institution. These policies ensure that the University employs a consistent approach to recruitment and admissions.

4.3 The University has a comprehensive week-long induction and orientation programme, overseen by the Office of Student Affairs, during which students are introduced to their peers and the academic team and also given a tour of the University's campus and facilities. The University has also started training students, identified by academic staff as positive role models, to act as mentors for new students.

4.4 There are procedures in place to ensure that students with prior learning or technical skills can receive academic credit exemptions, via the University's Advance Standing and Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) Policy. For undergraduate programmes, up to half the credit requirement can be awarded based on prior learning or experience, whereas for graduate programmes, up to a quarter of the credit requirement can be awarded based on prior learning or experience.

4.5 The review team tested and confirmed the effectiveness of the phases of the student life cycle from admissions to graduation through discussion with students and staff, and scrutinising relevant policy and procedural documents. This confirmed that AU is operating within its set regulatory framework for admission of students and certification of awards which aligns with the UAE's regulatory requirements.

4.6 There are clear mechanisms in place to ensure students are supported to achieve, academically and professionally, throughout the student life cycle. The students whom the review team met concurred that the admissions, enrolment and orientation processes were clear. All students are allocated an academic adviser; their role is to prompt and guide students in designing a suitable study plan that will enable them to achieve both academically and also professionally. During the review visit, students confirmed to the review team the usefulness of their study plans, which help them track their academic progress throughout their programme. Upon completion of their programme, graduates are issued with a degree certificate and transcript.

4.7 Students should achieve a minimum of a Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) of 2.0 to progress as per their agreed study plans. Those students falling below this are considered as being at risk of failing and issued an academic warning with their credit hour workload reduced, and a requirement to maintain regular contact with their academic

advisers during this time. Specific support is also provided by the Student Success Centre to help students achieve their full academic potential. See Standard 1.6 for further information. Where an improvement to their CGPA is not achieved following two consecutive warnings, students are required to transfer to another programme. Should their performance continue to not meet the required standard, it may also be necessary for a student to withdraw from their programme. Academic advisers have been critical in supporting students at risk and the monitoring undertaken by the University suggests that the majority of students are brought out of an academic warning position.

4.8 In analysing the documentary evidence and discussion with students and staff, the review team concluded that the processes for the admission of students, the recognition of prior learning, and the arrangements for graduation and certification align with the requirements outlined in Standard 1.4. Therefore, the review team concludes that Standard 1.4, Student admission, progression, recognition and certification is **met**.

Standard 1.5 Teaching staff

Institutions should assure themselves of the competence of their teachers. They should apply fair and transparent processes for the recruitment and development of the staff.

Findings

5.1 AU has established procedures for the recruitment, appointment and appraisal of teaching staff, which are set out in the AU Policies and Procedures Manual and the Faculty Handbook. The number of part-time teaching staff employed by UAE higher education institutions is restricted under CAA regulations. The Policies and Procedures Manual sets out the recruitment and appointment process for new faculty and staff. For the recruitment of new faculty, the College Dean will submit the annual faculty hiring plan to the Vice-Chancellor for Academic Affairs (VCAA) in the preceding autumn period. If an appointment is authorised, the Office of the VCAA will prepare the job advertisement. All applications are considered by the Dean. A Search Committee is established, chaired by the Dean or the relevant Head of Department, and shortlisted candidates are interviewed and assessed against previously agreed criteria. The Search Committee makes a recommendation to the VC for Student Affairs. All teaching appointments are underpinned by a formal contract. The majority of faculty have a doctorate and/or master's level qualification.

5.2 AU introduced a faculty development plan in 2019-20, to support faculty continuous professional development (CPD) activity. The faculty development scheme offers a wide range of CPD activities, including seminars, workshops and training courses, and attendance at conferences. AU has introduced a Professional Development Plan recently to facilitate a more systematic approach to the development of faculty members, which covers teaching, research and service. In 2019, to support teaching faculty, AU also established a Teaching and Learning Center, and a Student Success Center (SSC) aimed at providing academic support to students.

5.3 Teaching staff are required to complete a Faculty Self-assessment Report before the end of the academic year. The self-assessment report is used as part of the annual performance review undertaken by Heads of Department. Student feedback obtained from the Student Course Evaluation survey and the Instructor Course Assessment Reports also contribute to the appraisal process. Faculty appraisal is based on three core criteria: Teaching; Research; Service - to the University, to students, and to the community. The procedures for the performance review of faculty are set out in the AU Policies and Procedures Manual. A faculty review committee is formed at the college level to coordinate and oversee the evaluation of faculty performance. Typically, the committee comprises the College Dean and Heads of Department/Unit and one external member from a different college. At the conclusion of the committee's deliberations, the outcome of the performance evaluation and final recommendations are sent to the VCAA for approval.

5.4 In 2017, AU began to place a greater focus on faculty research and established the Deanship of Graduate Studies and Research (DGSR). The DGSR introduced new incentives and policies to promote research quality and impact. On an annual basis, the DGSR assesses the effectiveness of all AU research initiatives, research strategy and research activity in all colleges. All College Deans are required to submit a report annually on research activity to the DGSR at the end of the academic year.

5.5 AU employs four primary academic ranks: Professor; Associate Professor; Assistant Professor; and Lecturer. Each 'rank' has an associated job descriptor. New faculty receive an orientation and faculty handbook and are generally subject to a probation period of one semester. Faculty applying for promotion are evaluated against the quality and

effectiveness of their teaching, the depth of scholarship and quality and impact of published research, and service. AU has specified criteria for promotion to a higher rank.

5.6 Part-time faculty may be appointed in accordance with the externally regulated cap of not exceeding 25% of overall faculty and a teaching load of up to six credit hours per part-time faculty member per week, as specified by the Ministry of Education of the UAE. Their appointment is subject to the same requirements of professional competence and experience as their full-time colleagues. Employment contracts for part-time faculty do not exceed two years but can be renewed subject to University regulations.

5.7 The review team established through the examination of supporting evidence and in site meetings, that faculty and staff feel well supported in professional development activities and that they are aware of opportunities to participate in conferences, research activities and other professional events, both internal and external to AU. Faculty and staff generally expressed a positive attitude to the effectiveness and benefit of the annual appraisal system.

5.8 In meetings with faculty, the review team also confirmed that the DGSR undertakes an annual assessment of the effectiveness of all AU research initiatives, research strategy, and research activity in all academic colleges. The review team was provided with evidence that AU had introduced new incentives and policies to promote the quality and impact of research across the institution, including an increase in the research budget for internal research grants; release time for faculty to undertake research; and the provision of research assistants. This ongoing emphasis on research quality has, in a relatively short period of time, contributed to an improvement in the number of Scopus-indexed research publications.

5.9 Information relevant to faculty and professional staff is set out in the AU Policies and Procedures Manual, which includes information on roles, faculty development and performance appraisal, workload policy and promotion policy. Job descriptions detailing expectations concerning teaching, research, service, academic advising, qualifications and experience are available for each teaching vacancy.

5.10 In discussions with full-time and part-time faculty, the review team confirmed that AU had established a Teaching and Learning Center in autumn 2019, to support excellence and innovation in teaching and learning through the professional development of faculty. A number of faculty confirmed that they had attended workshops organised by the Center, including blended learning, active learning and curriculum design. The Center also supports a range of related activities, including faculty research on pedagogy and faculty-student research collaborations and mentorship. Given that the Center had been operational for only a few months, the review team concluded that it would have been premature to comment on the effectiveness of the unit at the time of the site visit. Teaching faculty are evaluated by students via the Student Course Evaluation system, which is used to enhance teaching methods and the student learning experience. Students who met with the review team confirmed that AU was responsive to student feedback, citing several examples, including modifications to the delivery of class timings and the sequencing of course learning components.

5.11 Full-time faculty are appointed to contracts of between one to three years' duration. Newly appointed faculty are given three levels of orientation with varying degrees of focus, the first provided by AU's Human Resources Department, followed by institutional and college-level orientation sessions.

5.12 Overall, the review team concludes that AU provides a structured and supportive environment that allows faculty and staff to undertake their responsibilities effectively and facilitates personal development. Scholarly activity is encouraged and supported to strengthen the link between research and teaching. Additionally, there are fair and

transparent recruitment processes in place. Consequently, the review team concludes that Standard 1.5 Teaching staff is **met**.

Standard 1.6 Learning resources and student support

Institutions should have appropriate funding for learning and teaching activities and ensure that adequate and readily accessible learning resources and student support are provided.

Findings

6.1 The University has a wide range of learning and teaching resources that support and enable students to achieve both academically and professionally. Seminar rooms and lecture halls are supplemented by excellent specialist facilities which allow for an immersive learning experience, for example, the fully equipped television and radio production studios utilised by students in the College of Mass Communication.

6.2 In addition to the University's physical infrastructure, the University VLE allows students to access learning resources remotely and on demand. The VLE is also used to store central copies of various documents, such as the Student Handbook, and so students are always able to access the most up-to-date and accurate versions of important documentation. Students, during the review visit, reported that they found the VLE a useful resource in its own right.

6.3 In meetings with faculty and students, the review team confirmed that AU used an effective communication framework to engage and respond to students, including email and face-to-face contact, student representative system, student feedback on courses and faculty, and consultation with students about revisions to programmes. The relationship between students and staff is excellent, with students reporting both academic staff and support staff as approachable and supportive. The academic adviser programme, in which each student is allocated a faculty member with whom they design a suitable study plan, is well-established and enables each student to achieve academically. Academic advisers are also in place to facilitate professional development and, as such, students are encouraged to meet with their academic adviser regularly to discuss their progress and development.

6.4 The University recently opened its new Student Hub at the centre of the AU campus, in which all the student-focused support functions are now co-located with the University's main administrative departments. The University's two libraries, which are found in the Student Hub, contain reference textbooks and learning spaces for students. More recently, in response to student feedback, the University has focused on expanding its online collection, which now includes a broad range of databases. Students can, where necessary, request texts and learning resources via the library on ad hoc basis. The University's two libraries are available to students after they graduate, and usage statistics provided to the review team demonstrate that alumni take full advantage of this service.

6.5 The University has a full and comprehensive suite of student support services, each located in the Student Hub, and this includes the Student Counselling Unit, which is dedicated to helping students with pastoral issues that may impact their educational experience via both individual and group counselling sessions. During the review visit, the review team heard examples of the Student Counselling Unit supporting students through financial difficulty and personal problems. Students and alumni consistently reported that staff went above and beyond to support them in completing their academic programme. The University's Office of Career and Placement Services (OCPS) is responsible for supporting students through any work placements or internships while also running career and employability-focused activities and workshops. Standard 1.2 deals further with the support provided by University Internship and Field Supervisors. In meetings during the review visit, the review team heard examples of students availing themselves of support via the OCPS, including using the support staff to build their CVs and run practice interviews with them.

This is also the case for alumni who strongly praised the support provided by the OCPS even after they leave the University. The newly established SSC is also found within the Student Hub. The purpose of the SSC, which opened in September 2019, is to provide tailored and targeted support to students at risk of not fulfilling their full academic potential. During the visit, the review team heard that both students and alumni have access to this broad suite of services and usage statistics provided by the University demonstrate that even after graduation, alumni continue to avail themselves of the tailored support made available by the University. The review team considers that the extensive suite of student support services, available to both students and alumni, which enable their academic and professional development, is **good practice**.

6.6 There is a broad range of extracurricular programmes in place. The Student Council is one of the main avenues by which the student voice is captured. There are two single-gender Student Councils, one for male students, the other for female students. Each Student Council consists of 15 members, 10 of which are nominated by the colleges and the remaining five are chosen by University-wide elections. There are also various student-led societies based around specific issues, such as academic programmes, which students appear overwhelmingly satisfied with. During the review visit, the team heard from students that they felt their voice was genuinely listened to and appreciated.

6.7 The review team concluded that the University provided appropriate learning and student support services underpinned by a suitable level of funding, and that, consequently, Standard 1.6, Learning resources and student support is **met**.

Standard 1.7 Information management

Institutions should ensure that they collect, analyse and use relevant information for the effective management of their programmes and other activities.

Findings

7.1 AU uses a range of mechanisms to capture feedback from faculty, students and other stakeholders. The Office of Institutional Planning and Effectiveness (OIPE) seeks to establish a culture of evidence-based assessment, evaluation and continuous improvement for academic and non-academic units of the University. OIPE collects, analyses and disseminates data on institutional performance to ensure alignment with the strategic goals and objectives and to contribute to decision-making processes.

7.2 The Institutional Research Unit, within OIPE, is responsible for the provision of analytical and technical support to AU management, to support strategic and operational decision-making. The unit also prepares the University Fact Book and maintains several databases, including student enrolment, academic performance, retention and progression data and graduation. Institutional Research also compiles data for the UAE Center for Higher Education Data and Statistics.

7.3 While the Institutional Research Unit in OIPE is responsible for the collection and analysis of institutional data, it is the Quality Assurance Unit in OIPE that is responsible for ensuring the quality of the information provided in institutional documents. The Assessment and Effectiveness Unit of OIPE is responsible for collecting all relevant data and information concerning academic programmes. The assessment reports collated and reviewed by OIPE are used to monitor the progress made by academic programmes in implementing planned actions in the context of continuous improvement.

7.4 Examples of KPIs, the AU Fact Book, student enrolment and progression data, and graduate employment data were made available to the review team. A recent development is the implementation of a dashboard which aims to make institutional data more accessible online for the senior management team, Deans and other administrators.

7.5 The review team had access to the September 2019 Annual Effectiveness Report prepared for the CAA by the OIPE, which documented a summary of the effectiveness of the delivery of academic programmes at AU in the reporting period. The review team also examined a range of reports which set out action plans in response to data analysis and feedback from faculty and students.

7.6 Students who met with the review team confirmed the utility of the AU VLE and social media used by AU to communicate with them, and to facilitate access to key information about their courses and programmes. In a 2019 student satisfaction survey, 95.10% of students indicated that they were highly/satisfied with their academic programme; 91.83% were highly/satisfied with the internship programme; and 88.29% of students were highly/satisfied with the service provided by student-related support units.

7.7 The AU Chancellor holds regular (town hall) meetings (Majlis) with faculty, staff and students, both to communicate key institutional developments, but also to listen to feedback from the various University constituencies. Students were unanimous in their view that AU took effective steps to engage them and to listen to their feedback, both verbal and written. The students cited several examples of how their feedback had been acted upon, such as the addition of extra car park spaces and book requests for the library. The evidence cited

above demonstrates that AU has an effective framework to engage and respond to students in a timely way and is **good practice**.

7.8 The review team confirmed, through meetings with faculty and staff, as well as by examining documentary evidence (including sample course monitoring audit trails and performance dashboards), that AU generates and analyses a range of data that effectively informs strategic and operational decision-making.

7.9 AU uses an electronic ticketing system (Kayako), which was demonstrated to the review team. This single system receives requests, general enquiries, complaints and suggestions sent through email, web messenger, social media or direct calls, which are then directed to the appropriate AU contact point for a response to be formulated. The review team affirms the introduction of the unified customer service system that is used by students and parents, and which also facilitates direct communication with students and parents by the University. Noting that this system had still to be fully implemented, the review team would encourage AU to accelerate the system capability in order to utilise the facility to graphically present data summaries and to disaggregate student complaints from other feedback, such as suggestions and queries, to assist management decision-making.

7.10 AU uses a wide range of information and quantitative data sets to inform decision-making, which also feeds into the various internal and external quality assurance monitoring and reporting processes. Consequently, the review team concludes that Standard 1.7 Information management is **met**.

Standard 1.8 Public information

Institutions should publish information about their activities, including programmes, which is clear, accurate, objective, up-to date and readily accessible.

Findings

8.1 The University publishes information relating to its governance, management and curriculum on its website and on printed marketing materials. Course fees are also communicated via the University's website. This information for the public and prospective students was found to be accessible and clear.

8.2 The Office of Marketing and Communications is responsible for overseeing all communication activities, which includes coordinating all print and digital publications that advertise the University, press releases, and maintaining the University's social media presence.

8.3 The Undergraduate and Graduate Student Catalogs provide more extensive information relating to the University's programmes, including information relating to course structure, learning content and contact details for relevant departments. Once enrolled, students are provided with the University's Student Handbook, a comprehensive guide to the University covering all aspects of the student life cycle from the University's academic advisory system to the student support and health clinics available to students. For staff, the University has both a Faculty Handbook and Staff Handbook. These detail roles and responsibilities, performance review policies, as well as grievance and appeal processes. The University also produces a student-focused newsletter which details the current activities and upcoming events, which is coordinated by the Deanship of Student Services.

8.4 There is a clear process through which public information is published and reviewed with oversight provided by the OIPE. Annually, the OIPE audits published information, such as the Student Handbook, to ensure that the information contained within remains accurate. To assist with this process, each college appoints a faculty member to coordinate with OIPE ensuring that the accuracy of information relating to individual programmes is maintained. In the event either the OIPE or a college identifies the need to update documentation within an academic year, the nominated faculty member will coordinate this process with OIPE, as necessary.

8.5 The University provides information about its activities, programmes, and overall direction to both prospective students and the public that is clear, objective and readily accessible. There are clear processes in place that ensure published information is reviewed periodically to ensure currency and accuracy. The review team therefore concludes that Standard 1.8, Public information is **met**.

Standard 1.9 Ongoing monitoring and periodic review of programmes

Institutions should monitor and periodically review their programmes to ensure that they achieve the objectives set for them and respond to the needs of students and society. These reviews should lead to continuous improvement of the programme. Any action planned or taken as a result should be communicated to all those concerned.

Findings

9.1 The accreditation status of programmes by CAA lasts for up to five years, after which reaccreditation is necessary. This means that each programme undergoes a review process on a five-year cycle. This is supplemented by an annual monitoring process involving scrutiny of the course files, which are maintained by the staff member responsible for delivering each course and which contain the syllabi of the current and previous versions of the course, and copies of all teaching material and assessments. Each file also contains an Instructor Course Assessment Review that comprises a comprehensive review of the delivery of the course and quantitative analysis of student performance.

9.2 The Instructor Assessment Reviews are submitted to the departmental Assessment and Continuous Improvement Committees that check that all the necessary information has been supplied and review the reports. Following this review, the reports go to the relevant College Effectiveness Committee and on to the Institutional Effectiveness Committee, which is ultimately responsible for oversight of all aspects of monitoring and enhancing the effectiveness of the institution, including continuous quality improvement.

9.3 Programmes at AU are reviewed and revised regularly, involving students and other stakeholders. In practice, the five-year cycle of CAA accreditation means that major changes to the provision occur every five years, though minor amendments resulting from the annual monitoring process may be made within the five-year timescale. Sample audit trails show that the annual monitoring process is working effectively.

9.4 Programmes are kept up to date with employer requirements, evolving professional practice and the changing needs of society through the effective use of IABs. These operate at both college and programme levels. They meet twice per year to discuss potential changes to curriculum, student feedback, internships and suggestions for new courses or programmes. External members are appointed for three years and may have their appointment renewed once. Staff and members of IABs were able to provide examples of course enhancements and new programmes resulting directly from the boards.

9.5 Externality is also provided through the involvement of alumni, employers, external internship supervisors and other external experts in the preparation of submissions for reaccreditation, a process that begins around three and a half years into the five-year cycle. CAA also appoints external members onto its reaccreditation panels.

9.6 In addition to accreditation by the CAA, a number of the programmes delivered by the University have international accreditation. This provides another external dimension to the continuous improvement process.

9.7 The University has effective mechanisms in place for gathering student feedback on its courses and programmes. At the end of each course there is an evaluation survey and an exit survey, the Senior Students' Feedback Questionnaire. These have recently been supplemented by the introduction of a requirement for meetings between staff and student representatives to seek feedback on the quality of the learning and teaching experience, and the learning outcomes and contents of the courses and programmes. Staff and students

were able to provide numerous examples of the ways in which this feedback had been used to enhance the provision.

9.8 Professional support services are also involved in the preparation for reaccreditation.

9.9 The review team concludes that the University has clear processes in place to monitor and review its programmes regularly to ensure continuous improvements to the quality of its academic provision. Therefore, Standard 1.9, On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes, is **met**.

Standard 1.10 Cyclical external quality assurance

Institutions should undergo external quality assurance in line with the ESG on a cyclical basis.

Findings

10.1 As previously stated, AU is accredited by the UAE CAA at both institutional and programme levels. All higher education institutions in the UAE are required to meet common expectations for academic and institutional quality. These common expectations are set out in the National Standards. The Standards have two key elements: Standards for Institutional Licensure (SIL); and Standards for Program Accreditation (SPA). A National Register of Licensed higher education institutions is maintained and published by the UAE Ministry of Education. Once approved, all licensed higher education institutions are then subject to a periodic monitoring and review process undertaken by CAA. Recognition of academic programmes through accreditation can only take place when the institution itself has been licensed.

10.2 In 2019, CAA introduced an additional risk-based approach Standard to the licensing process. The risk level of institutions is determined by CAA, on the basis of a context-sensitive assessment of institutional performance, benchmarked against a regulatory baseline. The determined level of risk establishes the ongoing licensure and accreditation review cycle for higher education institutions based on a three, five or seven-year interval.

10.3 Key elements of the SIL include: Governance and Management; Quality Assurance; Research and Scholarly activities; Fiscal Resources; Legal Compliance; and Community Engagement.

10.4 A number of AU programmes are also subject to international accreditation and these programmes are also externally reviewed periodically, in accordance with the accrediting body criteria.

10.5 Every five years, AU must apply to CAA for renewal of its licensure. AU has gained CAA accreditation on multiple occasions, the latest being November 2019. The evaluation reports provided by the CAA teams following the site visits to AU contribute to AU's continuing quality enhancement processes. Five of AU's academic programmes have also gained international accreditation, such as ABET, ACPE, ACCA and UNESCO-UIA for Electrical Engineering, Biomedical Engineering, Pharmacy, Accounting, and Architecture.

10.6 Following an examination of evidence provided and in meetings with senior faculty, the review team confirmed that AU has engaged positively with the CAA report and recommendations and those of accrediting bodies to enhance educational provision.

10.7 As referenced under Standard 1.1 above, the review team confirmed that AU utilises a wide range of internal and external feedback to enhance educational provision, including students, employers and industry advisory boards. The review team met a range of external stakeholders during the review visit and found evidence of effective professional engagement, clearly structured relationships and interactions, and a healthy reflectiveness on curriculum development and the student experience generally, and concludes that this is **good practice**. Each college and/or department has its own external industry/professional advisory board. Industry experts and alumni who met the review team expressed their willingness and availability to assist AU with the enhancement of provision and confirmed AU's regular engagement with them concerning curriculum updates and other enhancements.

10.8 The review team examined evidence that demonstrated that AU effectively engages with recommendations for improvement following external cyclical quality assurance review. AU also provides CAA with an Annual Effectiveness Report which includes examples of how the institution has identified and actioned improvements. Further, AU, as with other accredited higher education institutions in the UAE, is required to demonstrate that its academic programmes are appropriately aligned with the National Qualifications Framework (QFEmirates), which itself is aligned with the European Qualifications Framework. The review team examined documentation provided by external review teams, sponsored by CAA, which confirmed that AU's academic programmes were appropriately aligned with the QFEmirates.

10.9 Based on evidence provided and from feedback at meetings with alumni, external industry representatives, student engagement, and external statutory and professional body reporting and UAE CAA periodic review requirements, the review team concludes that there are effective external cyclical quality assurance processes in place, and that, consequently, Standard 1.10 Cyclical external quality assurance is **met**.

Glossary

Action plan

A plan developed by the institution after the QAA review report has been published, which is signed off by the head of the institution. It responds to the recommendations in the report and gives any plans to capitalise on the identified good practice.

Annual monitoring

Checking a process or activity every year to see whether it meets expectations for standards and quality. Annual reports normally include information about student achievements and may comment on the evaluation of courses and modules.

Collaborative arrangement

A formal arrangement between a degree-awarding body and another higher education provider. These may be degree-awarding bodies with which the institution collaborates to deliver higher education qualifications on behalf of the degree-awarding bodies. Alternatively, they may be other delivery organisations who deliver part or all of a proportion of the institution's higher education programmes.

Degree-awarding body

Institutions that have authority, for example from a national agency, to issue their own awards. Institutions applying to IQR may be degree-awarding bodies themselves, or may collaborate to deliver higher education qualifications on behalf of degree-awarding bodies.

Desk-based analysis

An analysis by the review team of evidence, submitted by the institution, that enables the review team to identify its initial findings and subsequently supports the review team as it develops its review findings.

Enhancement

See **quality enhancement**.

European Standards and Guidelines

For details, including the full text on each standard, see www.enqa.eu/index.php/home/esg.

Examples of practice

A list of policies and practices that a review team may use when considering the extent to which an institution meets the standards for review. The examples should be considered as a guide only, in acknowledgment that not all of them will be appropriate for all institutions.

Facilitator

The member of staff identified by the institution to act as the principal point of contact for the QAA officer and who will be available during the review visit, to assist with any questions or requests for additional documentation.

Good practice

A feature of good practice is a process or way of working that, in the view of a QAA review team, makes a particularly positive contribution to the institution's higher education provision.

Lead student representative

An optional voluntary role that is designed to allow students at the institution applying for IQR to play a central part in the organisation of the review.

Oversight

Objective scrutiny, monitoring and quality assurance of educational provision.

Peer reviewers

Members of the review team who make the decisions in relation to the review of the institution. Peer reviewers have experience of managing quality and academic standards in higher education or have recent experience of being a student in higher education.

Periodic review

An internal review of one or more programmes of study, undertaken by institutions periodically (typically once every five years), using nationally agreed reference points, to confirm that the programmes are of an appropriate academic standard and quality. The process typically involves experts from other higher education providers. It covers areas such as the continuing relevance of the programme, the currency of the curriculum and reference materials, the employability of graduates and the overall performance of students. Periodic review is one of the main processes whereby institutions can continue to assure themselves about the academic quality and standards of their awards.

Programme of study

An approved course of study that provides a coherent learning experience and normally leads to a qualification. UK higher education programmes must be approved and validated by UK degree-awarding bodies.

Quality enhancement

The process by which higher education providers systematically improve the quality of provision and the ways in which students' learning is supported.

QAA officer

The person appointed by QAA to manage the review programme and to act as the liaison between the review team and the institution.

Quality assurance

The systematic monitoring and evaluation of learning and teaching, and the processes that support them, to make sure that the standards of academic awards meet the necessary standards, and that the quality of the student learning experience is being safeguarded and improved.

Recognition of prior learning

Assessing previous learning that has occurred in any of a range of contexts including school, college and university, and/or through life and work experiences.

Recommendation

Review teams make recommendations where they agree that an institution should consider developing or changing a process or a procedure in order to improve the institution's higher education provision.

Reference points

Statements and other publications that establish criteria against which performance can be measured.

Self-evaluation document

A self-evaluation report by an institution. The submission should include information about the institution as well as an assessment of the effectiveness of its quality systems.

Student submission

A document representing student views that describes what it is like to be a student at the institution, and how students' views are considered in the institution's decision-making and quality assurance processes.

Validation

The process by which an institution ensures that its academic programmes meet expected academic standards and that students will be provided with appropriate learning opportunities. It may also be applied to circumstances where a degree-awarding institution gives approval for its awards to be offered by a partner institution or organisation.

QAA2535 - R10985 - Apr 20

© The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2020
Southgate House, Southgate Street, Gloucester GL1 1UB
Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786

Tel: 01452 557 050
Website: www.qaa.ac.uk