International Quality Review

American University
of the Middle East

Review Report

June 2023

Contents

About this review

This is a report of an International Quality Review conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at American University of the Middle East. The review took place from 05 to 08 June 2023 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

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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 institution's 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).

In International Quality Review, the QAA review team:

- makes conclusions against each of the 10 standards set out in Part 1 of the ESG
- makes conditions (if relevant)
- 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: Key findings. The section Explanations of the findings provides the detailed commentary.

The QAA website gives more information about QAA and its mission. A dedicated section explains the method for International Quality Review and has links to other informative documents. For an explanation of terms see the Glossary at the end of this report.

Key findings

Executive summary

American University of the Middle East (AUM) is a private higher education provider and was established in 2005, as per the Law on Establishment of Private Universities in Kuwait (2000). Since its establishment, AUM has grown from an initial enrolment of a few hundred students to more than 10,000 students who study at the fully integrated AUM campus in Kuwait.

AUM is committed to facilitating high quality higher education programmes in business and engineering that combine theory with application. The active integration of multidisciplinary professional and technical environments prepares graduates for employment. AUM has two colleges: the College of Engineering and Technology and the College of Business Administration, in addition to a Liberal Arts Department and an English Preparatory Programme.

The mission and vision of AUM is the foundation which supports its students to become leaders and entrepreneurs through an engaged and interactive learning environment. AUM's vision is to be a renowned institution of higher education for knowledge creation and dissemination in the region and beyond. The mission statement of AUM has evolved over the years mainly to become concise and to better reflect the learner centricity, ethical values, and professionalism. AUM fulfils this mission by:

- adopting a learner-centred approach
- providing students with applied and theoretical knowledge
- assuring high quality education
- focusing on creativity, innovation, and critical thinking
- emphasising a continuous learning process.

Established partnerships with international institutions

In addition to its partnership with Purdue University, USA, AUM has established partnerships with renowned international institutions:

- HEC Montréal, Canada: Through this partnership laying at the graduate studies level, students admitted to AUM MBA, who successfully complete the programme, will earn two graduate degrees upon graduation: the Master's in Business Administration (MBA) from AUM, Kuwait and the Graduate Diploma in Business Administration (GDBA) from HEC Montréal, Canada.

- Babson College, USA: AUM and Babson have signed a memorandum of understanding that allows AUM bachelor's degree graduates, who meet established criteria, to enrol in the Graduate programmes at Babson's F.W. Olin Graduate School of Business.

- UC Berkley - AMENA Centre, USA: Through this collaboration, AUM UC Berkeley Certification programme in Artificial Intelligence and Entrepreneurship was launched. The programme aims at identifying promising project ideas and supporting them to become start-ups in an advanced incubation platform designed specifically by UCB for AUM.

Recent major developments for AUM include an enhanced internal and external quality assurance culture. In 2020, AUM underwent renewal of its institutional accreditation from the Private Universities Council of Kuwait (PUC). AUM also created a quality assurance

structure that includes the Quality Assurance and Institutional Advancement department. This development was supported by the earlier establishment of Head of Quality Assurance and Learning Management inside the colleges. Between 2017 to 2019, AUM College of Engineering programmes achieved ABET (Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology) accreditation. The College of Engineering continues to seek accreditation for programmes as cohorts graduate. In 2021, the AUM College of Business Administration achieved accreditation by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) International.

In addition to the Business Innovation Centre and Engineering Innovation Centre, during the previous period, AUM introduced the capstone centres to support engineering final year projects and business capstone courses. In 2022, AUM launched the Smartverse Artificial Intelligence & Innovation Centre in collaboration with UC Berkley AMENA Centre in the USA.

AUM has developed a Teaching and Learning Strategy with annual review of key practices. In line with the AUM mission, it has reviewed its assessment and academic integrity practices. Exams have moved to secure PC-based exams, used for mid-term and final exams.

Over the past five years, AUM has launched two new programmes and obtained approvals for launching new master's programmes. New soft skills self-development courses have been launched with a wide range of elective courses in Academic and Career Skills Development; Character and Leadership Skills Development; and Technology and Innovation.

AUM has also seen major developments to its campus facilities and infrastructure. AUM campus landscape expanded to include new buildings built for educational, research, cultural, health, and accessibility purposes, such as the Library, the College of Engineering and Technology, the College of Business Administration, the Research and Innovation Centre, the Sports Centre, the Cultural Centre, the Multistorey car park 1 and 2, the Central Clinics and state-of-the-art laboratories. The Information technology and communication has also been enhanced through a new website, launching the mobile app, and adopting new technologies for upgrading the virtual learning environment. AUM launched the online forms for students, the online admission form for applicants, and started the journey of automating all forms and requests. Also, AUM implemented a new tool for academic advising to support their progression towards graduation.

In reaching conclusions about the extent to which American University of the Middle East (AUM) meets the 10 ESG Standards, the QAA review team followed the evidence-based review procedure as outlined in the handbook for International Quality Review (June 2023). The University provided the review team with a self-evaluation and supporting evidence. During the review visit, which took place from 05 to 08 June 2023, the review team held a total of seven meetings with the President, senior management team, academic staff, professional support staff, students, alumni and external stakeholders. The review team also had the opportunity to observe the University's facilities and learning resources across the AUM campus in Kuwait.

In summary, the team found eleven examples of good practice and was able to make four recommendations for improvement and enhancement. The recommendations are of a desirable rather than essential nature and are proposed to enable the University to build on existing practice which is operating satisfactorily but which could be improved or enhanced.

Overall, the team concluded that American University of the Middle East meets all standards for International Quality Review.

QAA's conclusions about American University of the Middle East

The QAA review team reached the following conclusions about the higher education provision at American University of the Middle East.

European Standards and Guidelines

American University of the Middle East meets all 10 ESG Standards and Guidelines.

Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following features of **good practice** at American University of the Middle East.

- Commitment to embedding sustainable development goals (SDGs) in institutional processes, including the institutional quality assurance (ESG Standard 1.1).

- Approach to delivering of programmes encourages students to engage with a range of immersive and experiential learning opportunities, both academic learning and extra-curricular learning (ESG Standard 1.3).

- Approach to assessment design enabled students to demonstrate the development of both core academic and employment ready skills (ESG Standard 1.3).

- There is a comprehensive onboarding and learning support in place starting from an insightful orientation and personalised integration at the beginning of the academic year followed by a broad array of support services throughout the student journey ensuring success for all (ESG Standard 1.4).

- MyPath programme provides a distinct opportunity for students to co-create, monitor, and customise their learning journey and continuously review progress across both the credited and non-credited curriculum offer (ESG Standard 1.4).

- Institutional encouragement and faculty embedding of undergraduate student participation in research as part of the learning experience and wider skills development (ESG Standard 1.5).

- Strategic approach taken to supporting and increasing staff participation in continuous professional development (CPD), including the routine evaluation to ensure its ongoing effectiveness (ESG Standard 1.5).

- Support provided by the Academic Advancement Centre and Tawteen Career Centre to all current students and AUM graduates to academic and career progression, which also aligns with national priorities (ESG Standard 1.6).

- Institutional application of integrated data management and coherence evaluation to ensure student success, such as the Student Performance Progress Report (SPPR) to identify students at risk and initiate appropriate interventions (ESG Standard 1.7).

- Management of stakeholder relations through various external and internal communications channels such as institutional CRM, social medial platforms, and MyPath Programme powered by DegreeWorks (ESG Standard 1.8).

- Strategic commitment to continuous improvement and development of internal processes to promote a culture of excellence through external quality assurance, accreditations, regional and international rankings (ESG Standard 1.10).

Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendations** to American University of the Middle East.

- Develop an institutional planner outlining regular review of the Quality Assurance Policy Implementation guide (ESG Standard 1.1).

- Explore how feedback from stakeholders, such as students and industry, could be further formalised through existing University forums (ESG Standard 1.2).

- Increase consistency of the established approach to ensuring new or redeveloped policies are communicated to students and staff (ESG Standard 1.3).

- Reflect on existing mechanisms and practices relating to programme monitoring and review to ensure a cohesive internal approach and consider explicit external stakeholder involvement (ESG Standard 1.9).

Explanation of the findings about American University of the Middle East

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   The American University of the Middle East (AUM), established as a private higher education institution in Kuwait in 2005, has implemented an institutional quality assurance (QA) system that forms a cycle for continuous improvement. The continuously innovating and improving process is declared as one of the values of AUM. Thirteen recent developments have been accomplished, all of them directly related to policies and processes which contribute to the accountability of the institution. An example is the fostering of a quality assurance culture, including a programme accreditation calendar for the College of Engineering and Technology (CoET) and College of Business Administration (CBA). Other examples include launching new academic programmes, developing the teaching and learning strategy, and assessment and academic integrity practices.

1.2   The QA system is rigorous, complex and described in a coherent diagram which connects the Chairman of the Board of Trustees, the President, the AUM Academic Council and Associate Provost. These are linked with the Quality Assurance and Institutional Advancement Department (QAIA) Director, AUM QA Task Force and the two college deans. Moreover, AUM's quality culture involves all internal stakeholders assuming responsibility for quality and engaging in quality assurance at all levels of the institution. For example, a recent minute of the QA Task Force meeting demonstrated the scope of discussion related to the opportunity to enhance and unify the grading rubrics across all colleges.

1.3   A recent comprehensive Quality Assurance Policy Implementation Guide was adopted in April 2023. It provides a general description of the internal mechanisms to pursue the continuous improvement of quality in all activities within AUM. This document includes clarification on standards and provides a calendar for voluntary external evaluation, accreditation and self-assessment. It maps continuous improvement in all colleges, surveys with targeted participants, frequency of events, and the units to whom reports are distributed. It also contains key policies and supporting documents, for example the Student Handbook, Attendance Policy, Admission Policy and Academic Promotion Policy. These documents cover several areas: academic staff, teaching and learning, faculty advancement and research, committees, Student Affairs Department, Academic Advancement Centre and the Tawteen Career Centre.

1.4   The AUM Quality Assurance Policy has a formal status and is publicly available on the website. Its pillars include the following: dedication to excellence, policy-driven practices, data-driven decision making, synergies between units, cross border cooperation in QA, encouraging engagement, commitment to integrity and equal opportunities. Academic growth and excellence are a strategic direction of development included in the Strategic Plan for the 2021-26 period. The effective, efficient, and technology-driven administration is another strategic direction in this plan. The strategic plan for the above-mentioned period focuses on the QA pillars and clearly demonstrates the institutional priority in promoting teaching and learning excellence, promoting communication with all university units, and supporting data-driven decision making, increasing students, faculty, and staff engagement in campus life.

1.5   Dedication to excellence is the first QA pillar at AUM and refers to an adequate institutional prioritisation of continuous improvement of the academic programmes, academic

and administrative operations, resources, and community engagement. Relevant details referring to these areas are included in the AUM Teaching and Learning Strategy which emphasises a continuous learning process as part of the institutional mission process. Goal B aims to ensure that a culture of continuous improvement is included in the set of institutional goals with clearly stated metrics and timelines. Two examples are the training for faculty and staff for continuous improvement achieved in 2021-22 and the development of the soft skills platform. Infrastructure is continuously being developed, listed as being Goal A. One recent facility upgrade is the new additional laboratories for Architectural Engineering, achieved in 2021-22.

1.6   Policy-driven practices is the second QA pillar at AUM. An example of achieving this is the Procedure for Design of New Academic Programmes. The process progresses from initial proposition to the Dean, to the international accreditation of programmes. Another example is the Procedure for Course or Programme Amendment or Addition which evidences the role of the Academic Departments, the Dean, the Director of the Administrative Affairs and Compliance, the Provost and Associate Provost for Academic Affairs. Other internal stakeholders such as Registration Department, College Dean, Admission Department, Compliance Department, and the Communications Department participate in the process.

1.7   Data-driven decision making is the third QA pillar at AUM and provides clear support to ensure accurate measurement of indicators with specific tools used to monitor success, powered by state-of-the-art platforms. The alignment of AUM programmes with regional and international qualification frameworks is comprehensive and clearly explained for both bachelor's and master's programmes demonstrating an interest for adequate benchmarking.

1.8   The Quality Assurance and Institutional Advancement unit (QAIA) consists of three units: QAIA Department, Staff Development Department and Faculty Advancement Department. Synergies between units is a QA policy pillar at AUM. QAIA Department collaborates on a regular basis with the colleges to manage and track quality assurance initiatives as well as the accreditation processes and respective cycles. Academic regulations are effectively implemented at AUM and cover a variety of processes, all described in the Student Handbook. It includes the grading system for undergraduate courses, preparatory programme, Liberal Arts requirements and graduation criteria. Other significant policies include Fees Payment Policy, Fees Refund Policy, Academic and Non-academic Misconduct; all are explained clearly in the Student Handbook.

1.9   Cross-border cooperation in QA is another pillar of the QA policy at AUM and stipulates systematic benchmarking of QA policies and other key practices against recognised references at regional and international level. The QA policy sets out institutional expectations relating to the key pillars of the policy at AUM and to quality networks such as the Council for Higher Education Accreditation International Quality group (CIQG) and the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) UK. Institutional accreditation from the Private Universities Council of Kuwait (PUC) is obtained by AUM. Programmatic accreditations include the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET), and the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACBS). The status of institutional accreditation is publicly available on the AUM website. A summary of ABET accreditation reveals the accredited programme strengths.

1.10   Another QA pillar is encouraging engagement. Different stakeholders are actively participating in the continuous improvement processes, as their input and feedback are essential for achieving the institutional goals. Relevant feedback and surveys include student satisfaction and career aspirations survey, industry adviser survey, and employers feedback about graduates. In addition to the annual Career Fair, AUM created new opportunities to strengthen relations with employers and alumni such as the organisation of career days on

campus, corporate awards, field visits, and alumni activities. Employers are invited to share employment opportunities and provide lectures. Another category of stakeholders, represented by parents, are welcomed at AUM and encouraged to follow student performance to increase academic success. AUM has implemented a Policy for Student Affairs to Organize Parent Relations and the dialogue with parents includes academic and non-academic student performance. In addition, the mission of the Admission Department is to welcome both applicants and parents, to provide information and guidance on a chosen academic programme. Students appreciate parent engagement in university activities such as the innovation fair.

1.11   Commitment to integrity and equal opportunities is another important pillar of the QA policy at AUM. AUM has implemented the Policy for Faculty Recruitment and Hiring which clearly states that the institution is looking for the best candidates and provides fair and equal employment opportunities. Moreover, it specifies the main requirements for the on-campus interview, for example adequate pedagogical content, appropriate teaching strategies, presentation skills. Faculty have a formal contract with the institution clearly stating terms and conditions for the job, for example compensation insurance, medical insurance, annual leave and salary. Additionally, faculty get equal and fair benefits detailed in the Academic Promotion Policy, Research Policy and Policy for Faculty Continuous Professional Development.

1.12   The implementation of quality assurance at AUM was evident in the meetings with staff and students, and visibly integrated into the campus to showcase the culture of quality. Motivating messages delivered across the entire campus generate awareness on important themes. For example, messages are sent relating to the QA pillars and sustainable development goals (SDGs). The sustainability and SDGs are integrated to the teaching and learning process, in priorities and student experience. The team finds that the approach to SDGs is highly supported by the quality assurance of AUM. The commitment to embedding SDGs in its institutional processes has been evident and this was found to be **good practice**.

1.13   The quality assurance policy translates into practice through a variety of internal processes and mechanisms supporting academic integrity. For example, in the admission process and students' access to facilities, fair and equal opportunities are clearly stated. Undergraduate student admission is based on a fair and equal mechanism, transparent and publicly available on the AUM website. The admission process consists of three stages to ensure a fair assessment of students' potential in pursing AUM undergraduate courses. Assessment of student potential includes analysis of documents, skill assessment tests in English and Maths and an application evaluation. For MBA courses, admission requirements are also publicly available. Fair and equal opportunities are in place through internal processes related to student access to facilities and are clearly described in the Student Handbook, and in the List of Student Affairs Forms. Examples include the use of recommendation letters, petition, university withdrawal and parents' request. In April 2023, AUM finalised a policy 'Treating Student Petitions'. This aims to ensure that such requests are processed efficiently and fairly. At the time of the review, AUM was implementing the policy which allows students to raise a problem or concern regarding their experience as a student, the quality or delivery of a service provided by the University, or the conduct of staff/faculty. A special interest is provided to students with special needs, in relation to which the Student Affairs Committee takes responsibility.

1.14   At AUM, quality assurance policies effectively reflect the relationship between research, learning and teaching. They also consider the national and institutional context. Much attention is given to academic integrity and freedom with institutional mechanisms being vigilant against academic fraud. Ethical requirements are adequate and clearly included in the Research Policy. Ethical research criteria stipulated in the policy include

honesty, objectivity, integrity, openness, confidentiality, responsible publication, responsible mentoring, respect for colleagues, professional expertise, social responsibility, competence and legality. In the relationship with students, there is an effective practice of creating a Turnitin (plagiarism-detection software) assignment on Moodle.

1.15   The quality assurance policy supports the development of a quality culture in which students assume responsibilities for quality and engage in quality assurance processes. The Statute of the Student Society plays a role in facilitating this and enables submission of proposals to the Student Activities Officer. Proposals can be academic, non-academic and event related. If a student has special requirements in relation to support, the Student Affairs Department does an initial assessment and recommends adjustments. There is no generic action but is handled on a case-by-case basis; for example, where a student requests additional time at an examination, or requests a writing assistant because of a physical disability. This is decided by the Student Affairs Department.

1.16   The AUM quality policy translates into practice through a variety of internal quality mechanisms and relations that allow participation across the institution. Therefore, the Quality Assurance and Institutional Advancement Department (QAIA) regularly updates the AUM Accreditation Plan, the AUM Programmatic Calendar and the accreditation page on the website. IT services work closely with the QAIA team and QA taskforce who meet regularly to assist in quality assurance and accreditation activities inside colleges. QAIA works closely with the Heads of Learning Management and Quality Assurance at the colleges.

1.17   Different policies are implemented, monitored, and revised based on a clear calendar included in the QA Policy Implementation Guide. It refers to responsibilities regarding which unit maintains and regularly updates which document or policy, for example the AUM Accreditation Plan. The team **recommends** that AUM develop an institutional planner outlining regular review of the Quality Assurance Policy Implementation guide.

1.18   The quality assurance policy, in general, does not cover elements of an institution's activities that are subcontracted to or carried out by other parties. AUM has clear practices of monitoring the quality of services operated by other entities, for example in the case of maintenance services a report is requested by AUM from providers every month.

1.19   The team concludes that AUM policies and governance structures, procedures and practices supporting quality assurance represent an effective part of the academic leadership with the intention to enhance students' learning and experience. The implementation of the Quality Assurance Policy is robust, focuses on continuous improvement of quality in all activities and aligns with the requirements of Standard 1.1, which is therefore **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   AUM offers 15 academic degree programmes, six of which are delivered by the College of Business Administration and the remaining nine by the College of Engineering and Technology. Only one of these programmes, the Master's in Business Administration (MBA), is delivered beyond bachelor level. AUM aims to grow its student population through the continued expansion of its programme portfolio. It has recently approved five new master's-level programmes which will be delivered by the College of Engineering and Technology. Additionally, the University intends to further diversify the range of courses available to students through its Liberal Arts Department.

2.2   The University has a formal procedure in place to manage the systematic design and approval of new academic programmes and constituent courses. This procedure notes the requirement for all programme proposals to include the following:

- an analysis of market demand, including graduate employability and benchmarking relative to local and international providers
- an agreed programme framework, including a specified number of credits and draft programme structure (core and elective courses) and an agreed set of objectives and learning goals
- an indication of resourcing requirements and timelines for taking the programme to market and securing accreditation.

2.3   AUM specifies that a taskforce of faculty with appropriate subject expertise will be designated to assist in designing and benchmarking the proposed programme, prior to submitting the proposal for approval and licensing. In doing so, the taskforce is to specify both the expected learning objectives and structure of the intended programme of study.

2.4   Academic staff who met with the review team noted that they were empowered to raise ideas for new programmes and courses within the colleges, and that they were aware of the process for formalising such ideas. This aligned with the view of the University's Senior Management who had indicated the desire to elicit recommendations for new programmes and courses from both internal and external stakeholders.

2.5   Staff from across the Academic Support Services stated that they were routinely consulted within the programme development process to ensure appropriate resources were in place, or could be procured, to support the launch and delivery of the intended programme or course.

2.6   The University's procedure for the design and approval of new programmes involves the systematic review and evaluation of new proposals by a range of internal and external decision makers. All proposals to launch a new programme of study must be submitted to the University President by the respective Dean of College after the relevant college committee meeting. In response, the University President will then consult as necessary with the University's Academic Council, prior to progressing the programme for formal approval

by the Board of Trustees. External validation from the Private Universities Council (PUC) of Kuwait is then formally sought.

2.7   Notably, the AUM procedure for programme development stretches beyond the point of programme approval and launch, to additionally cover the period through which the first students are recruited, progressed through, and graduated from the programme. It is at this final stage that AUM will seek relevant international accreditation for the programme and will complete the formal approval process. The review team considered this to be a highly distinctive approach that ensured the University could embed realisation of their strategic commitment to securing appropriate external accreditation at all levels within their core quality process.

2.8   Proposals to amend or change an existing programme or course of study are subject to appropriate review and evaluation by the University's senior leadership. Faculties are permitted to submit proposed amendments between September and February for implementation in the following academic year. However, where required, amendments can be subjected to an expedited approval process to permit immediate implementation. The University's approach to reviewing and approving such proposals is outlined within its procedure for course/programme amendments. Overall, the review team considered there to be robust procedures in place for managing the development and enhancement of academic programmes across their lifecycle.

2.9   The University uses appropriate external reference points and frameworks to ensure the alignment and equivalency of programmes offered by AUM and comparator institutions. AUM structures its programmes around the North American Credit System, through which each credit equates to one contact hour. The minimum number of credits required to obtain each qualification is specified in the Academic Manual and is further communicated to prospective and current students via the University website and Student Handbook. Students who met with the review team demonstrated a clear understanding of how their programmes were structured and could identify where they were able to source additional information or guidance.

2.10 As one of the benchmarks, AUM mapped the qualifications it offers against the National Qualification Framework for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which in turn is mapped against the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED). The University provided the review team with a bespoke mapping against the European Higher Education Area Qualifications Framework, which demonstrated broad equivalency in the credits prescribed for each qualification, when translated from US to ECTS Credits.

2.11 The University notes that it 'ensures to engage all its internal and external stakeholders through various initiatives to gather perceptions and recommendations to create new programmes'. Such initiatives include leveraging analysis of Student Satisfaction and Careers Aspiration Surveys to identify student perspectives on programme and course development opportunities. Similarly, the University engages the views of alumni and industry through similar surveys. The review team was provided with evidence which demonstrated how these mechanisms had recently been used by the University to identify the opportunity to expand into the artificial intelligence space.

2.12 External industry representatives and students who met with the review team indicated that they were able to identify opportunities for new programmes and courses to AUM. Similarly, these stakeholders mentioned that where AUM had independently identified an opportunity their views would be sought on the proposal. The review team noted that both stakeholders indicated such engagements typically occurred via existing relationships and informal networks with academic staff. Stakeholders did not directly identify that the

feedback elicited by AUM through the Industry and Alumni Representatives Surveys was also influencing the development and refinement of the University's programmes.

2.13   While the review team considered AUM to have been effectively engaging stakeholders within the design of programmes and courses, it would **recommend** the University explore how feedback from stakeholders, such as students and industry, could be further formalised through existing University forums, such as the Industry Advisory Board.

2.14   The University provided a comprehensive set of programme-level documentation which clearly outlined the premise, structure and intended objectives of the programme of study, including the minimum credit hours required for the qualification. Evidence provided included a Programme Worksheet which demonstrated the different programme paths that could be taken to attain the qualification. Students who met with the review team clearly articulated where they could source additional information or guidance on the structure and content of degree programmes, noting specifically, the value of the MyPath system in enabling them to understand requirements to graduate and available majors (see Section 1.4).

2.15   Staff who met with the review team noted the availability of training and support within the University to assist them in defining appropriate learning outcomes at programme and course level in line with AUM standards. Staff noted that outcomes were typically developed directly from industry feedback, market research or university strategy, before being formatted to the appropriate AUM style. It was also clear that these were being communicated effectively to students through both course syllabi and introductory lectures.

2.16   Overall, the review team considered AUM to have robust procedures in place to ensure that new programmes and courses were holistically designed, ensuring adequate consideration of the resources required to support successful delivery. This procedure included a thorough process of internal and external approval to ensure the adequateness of programmes taken to market. Appropriate use is made of external reference points to ensure the equivalency of AUM programmes to other Higher Education Areas.

2.17   To this extent, the team considered 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   The University's approach to delivering its academic programmes is guided by the Teaching and Learning Strategy, within which AUM has embedded several key practices which shape its approach to pedagogy. The University seeks to equip its students with a core foundational understanding of the academic theory within their chosen discipline. The University provides experiential and collaborative learning opportunities that allow students to understand how knowledge can be applied to real-life situations.

3.2   AUM places a large focus on the holistic development of its students, requiring all students to pursue a liberal arts element within their programme of study. The approach emphasises the benefits of 'enhancing interpersonal, behavioural and communication skills'. Students who met with the team commented positively on the quality of teaching and learning opportunities available noting the personal and professional growth they had witnessed during their time at AUM. The liberal arts component of each degree programme was also positively received by students, highlighting the value of this in developing core skills in English and mathematical proficiency, while also enabling them to explore new interests.

3.3   The University's Faculty Guide for Teaching and Learning provides a prescriptive outline as to how AUM expects faculty to deliver courses. Academic staff are strongly encouraged by the University to explore new and innovative pedagogical approaches, with academic support staff exemplifying to the review team how emergent best practice had been identified and disseminated within their areas (see Standard 1.5).

3.4   The University recognises the growing importance of technology in supporting the delivery of its programmes, with AUM having used Moodle as its virtual learning environment since 2009. The University indicated that all course materials are 'readily available' on the platform, with faculty members required to ensure resources are made available to students on the platform in a timely manner. Faculty are required to undertake training in the use of Moodle, with students also receiving support in using the platform as part of the induction activities provided during AUM's 'Integration Week'.

3.5   Increased importance has been placed by AUM on the Capstone Projects now offered to students across both colleges. These projects provide students with the opportunity to apply learning from academic programmes, with a realistic and professional context. During the review visit, the team was provided with the opportunity to visit the dedicated spaces made available to students to complete these projects. The review team also met with students who had undertaken Capstone Projects across both faculties. The team noted examples provided by the University that illustrated a close relationship between the challenges selected by students and wider societal issues. Students who met with the review team commented positively on the experience of undertaking a Capstone Project.

3.6   The review team considered AUM to be providing a high-quality learning experience, exemplified through the delivery of academic programmes which encouraged students to engage with a wide range of immersive and experiential learning opportunities within academic learning and extracurricular activities. Students are also increasingly enabled to explore opportunities for inter-disciplinary application of theoretical knowledge and practical skills. The impact of this approach upon AUM students was explained to the review team by

current and former students, who noted the extent of the personal growth and development they had experienced throughout their time at AUM. The review team recognised the breadth of opportunities offered by AUM to its students, and the extent to which these were normalised as a core aspect of the student experience to be an example of **good practice**. The expectations AUM places on students are communicated through the course syllabus and during the University's 'integration week' activities. This includes clarifying requirements in respect of 'attending classes, getting textbooks, engaging in classroom discussions and learning activities, taking ownership of learning'. During integration week, faculty deliver introductory sessions to courses which clarify expectations and provide an overview of objectives, content, and assessment structures for each course. This is combined with a wider programme of social and preparatory activities for students, delivered under the 'Welcome Home AUMers' Brand.

3.7 The template course syllabus provided by AUM demonstrates a substantial description of expectations the University has of its students with respect to attending and participating in classes, as well as the implications of failing to do so. There is evidence from the University that time is allocated within the introductory lectures to explain these expectations to students.

3.8 The University incentivises student attendance by enabling students to obtain up to 5% of their course grade by attending classes. The University notes that this is 'determined on a pro-rata basis and will be calculated at the end of the semester when determining the final grade'. AUM also applies this on a negative basis, with absent students penalised to a maximum of 5% of their total course grade. AUM has established a formal attendance policy which defines the behaviours which constitute non-attendance, and penalties incurred as a result.

3.9 The University recognises that there will be cases of unavoidable absence. A list of appropriate justifications for absence are provided within the appendix of the AUM attendance policy. A student has the right to appeal against dismissal from a course by submitting a case with acceptable evidence to the Student Affairs Department. Such cases will be considered by the Student Affairs Committee and will result in the upholding or rejection of the appeal, with or without conditions.

3.10 Student attendance comprises just one of the multiple metrics AUM aggregates into its Student Performance Progress Report (SPPR) through which the University can monitor the participation and engagement of students throughout their academic journey. Additional metrics include the active participation of students within classes and engagement with VLE resources. The resulting SPPR provides a comprehensive report in student engagement, enabling the University to identify at-risk students and design an appropriate support package in response.

3.11 Notably, SPPRs help academic staff to identify high-performing students within classes ensuring appropriate learning experiences can be developed that provide support and challenge to all.

3.12 The Student Affairs Department plays a coordinating role in supporting students. This includes the provision of both academic and non-academic support services, such as counselling and services for students with additional support needs.

3.13 The AUM approach to assessment is demonstrated through standardised gradebooks. Revised annually, these documents provide a consistent approach to the structuring of assessment methodologies and distribution of grade weightings between courses. AUM prescribes two approaches, with each course assigned to either approach by the Head of Department. The University Faculty Guide for Learning and Teaching prescribes the specific form of activities which may constitute a permissible assignment, Graded Class Activity and

Quiz, including the rules and regulations underpinning delivery. Academic staff who met with the review team noted that while the structure of the gradebook is centrally prescribed, academics have the autonomy to design the specific instruments of assessment within courses.

3.14   Academic staff indicated that the University often leverages a mix of formative and summative assessments across each course to ensure students are provided with a variety of opportunities to demonstrate attainment of learning outcomes on a particular course. A Common Grading System is in place across the University, through which numerical grades can be translated into an equivalent letter, grade point and descriptive statement. Normally, students are required to obtain at least a 'D Grade' to secure a pass in the course. Students are provided with information on the grading system via the Student Handbook.

3.15   The University uses its course syllabi to communicate to students how they will be assessed and graded for a particular course. Students who met with the review team verified this, noting that they could access the syllabus to understand what was required of them. Students also commented on the value of the Gradebook and MyPath system in helping them gain insights about their broader performance at programme level, and the courses and degree paths that are subsequently open to them.

3.16   AUM stated the importance of feedback in supporting student learning and development. The University specified that feedback is primarily given in written form, via the virtual learning environment. Students indicated that they were provided with quality feedback on assessments and that this assisted them to both understand where they had performed well, and where they could improve in future. Students also indicated that staff often welcomed requests to further explain feedback, or to provide more information or guidance on how students could improve their performance.

3.17   The University has a formalised procedure in place through which assessment grades are reviewed, finalised, and published. Faculty are responsible for entering provisional grades, following which formal approval is given by Course Moderators, Heads of Department and Deans. The President provides final summative approval on grades, prior to their publication to students. AUM undertakes 'cross-grading' (double-marking) of a random selection of submissions for each assessment on a given course. Where the second marker identifies discrepancies, all course submissions will be required to undergo double-marking.

3.18   Students retain the right to appeal a grade up to five days after the grade has been published. Decisions to revise a grade will be made by the Dean, or Student Affairs Committee in the event of litigation. Students who met with the review team demonstrated an awareness of the procedure and process for appealing a grade they felt was not a true reflection of their performance, noting Moodle to be the primary location through which additional information on this process could be sought.

3.19   The review team considered AUM to have appropriate quality assurances practices in place to ensure student attainment was fairly and robustly assessed. Moreover, the approach taken by AUM to design assessments which enabled students to demonstrate the development of both core academic and employment ready skills is considered to be **good practice**.

3.20   The University's policy on academic misconduct is embedded within its student code of conduct. This includes a non-exhaustive list of the behaviours which AUM would consider to constitute misconduct. A standardised procedure supports the University to consistently manage and investigate allegations of academic misconduct in a systematic way.

3.21   The policy is communicated to students via the Student Handbook and Course Syllabi. Students met by the review team indicated a clear understanding of the University's

approach to handling cases of alleged misconduct and of the tools that were made available by AUM to assist students in avoiding this such as Turnitin.

3.22   Additionally, the review team was informed of a recent update to this policy in Spring 2023 in response to the emergence of artificial intelligence-based services and their potential impact on academic integrity. AUM evidenced recent communications to staff on this trend and the communication made to students via the syllabi.

3.23   The University introduced PC-based paperless assessments in late 2021 for examinations. To support delivery of these examinations in a controlled environment, AUM has deployed an additional security layer to ensure the integrity of the assessments process.

3.24   The University noted the importance of continuous review and improvement in ensuring the continued appropriateness and value of AUM courses to students and its wider stakeholders. Where changes are made to the structure or nature of delivery at an institutional level, these are communicated annually to staff through the 'Guide for Faculty for Teaching and Learning' ahead of each academic year. In turn, AUM ensures student awareness of changes via the 'Course Syllabus Template'.

3.25   AUM noted within the SED that students are given the opportunity to provide feedback on their learning experience, and that great value is placed on this feedback by the University. This view was echoed by students who met with the review team, noting that AUM and its staff welcomed feedback from students and there were clear opportunities through which feedback could be provided.

3.26   The University elicits student feedback through both a formal representative model and through the use of surveys, for example the Student Satisfaction and Careers Aspiration. AUM evidenced how the insights gained from these mechanisms was being used to support the continuous improvement of AUM provision (see Standard 1.9). Evidence provided illustrated the analysis undertaken by the University into the results of these surveys.

3.27   Where a student believes that the University has failed to apply its institutional policies accurately or fairly, they are permitted to submit a formal complaint to AUM. The University has put in place a formal policy which outlines the procedure through which complaints should be submitted, investigated, and responded to. The review team noted that the policy was recently redeveloped by the University, with the finalised version approved in April 2023.

3.28   All student complaints are captured via a standardised form which is made available to students within the Moodle learning environment. The Student Affairs Department is responsible for the handling of all student complaints and coordinates with the respective departments to investigate the reported matter. Notably, students are required to submit complaints within the same academic semester as the reported matter occurred, with any complaints submitted beyond this timescale only pursued in exceptional circumstances.

3.29   The University communicates the procedure for raising a complaint to students through the Student Handbook. Students who met with the review team demonstrated an awareness of how a complaint could be made and explained where to find more information on the procedure for making a complaint.

3.30   A separate policy is maintained by the University for handling formal requests by students to secure an individual exemption, pre-emptive or retrospective, to an academic regulation, or to appeal a prior academic judgement. Such requests are known within AUM as Student Petitions and are governed by the University's 'Policy for Treating Student Petitions'. This policy was recently redeveloped by the University with the finalised version approved in April 2023. The review team noted that while there were similarities in the

processes between raising a complaint and a student petition, the University maintained a clear delineation in the institutional policies.

3.31 The Student Affairs Department also holds responsibility for handling student petitions, playing a key coordinating role across other departments to ensure an appropriate and timely response to petitions which have been raised by students. The University clearly states within its policy which regulations may or may not be petitioned by students.

3.32 Students can raise a petition via the standardised form provided on the Moodle learning environment. Again, the Student Affairs Department plays a key coordinating role across other departments to ensure an appropriate and timely response to the petition. The Student Affairs Department will act as the ultimate authority on petitions. Notably, the University does not specify a maximum timescale for students to raise petitions.

3.33 The petitions policy is not mentioned within the Student Handbook. Although the review team found AUM to have appropriate policies in place to support the handling of student complaints and petitions (appeals), the team also noted considerable differences in the extent to which the petitions policy was communicated to students through the handbook. While students who met with the review team referenced the ability to make petitions, the team would **recommend** AUM consider how to establish a more consistent approach in ensuring new, or redeveloped, policies are communicated to students and staff. Additionally, the review team encourages the University to consider the challenges which may arise from operating an open-ended petitions (appeal) policy in which no maximum timescale for the receipt of a student petition has been specified.

3.34 Overall, the review team found AUM to have established an approach to delivering its academic programmes that was consistent with the concept of student-centred learning. Clear evidence was provided throughout the review that staff, both academic and support, designed their programmes, course, and services in a way that supported the holistic development of students. A robust approach to assessing the attainment and progression of students within the University was in operation, with appropriate mechanisms in place to monitor and identify both at-risk and high performing students to ensure the provision of relevant support or adjustments to ensure a challenging and rewarding learning experience.

3.35 To this extent, the team considered Standard 1.3 Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment is **met** by the University.

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', for example student admission, progression, recognition and certification.

Findings

4.1   A comprehensive admission process along with relevant key requirements, for both colleges, including English and Maths test requirements, has been noted in the SED and through AUM's website. This was confirmed by discussion during the review visit. AUM remains attractive to prospective students with year-on-year increase in the student numbers and there was an increase of 31% in undergraduate direct admissions. The total number of female students enrolled between autumn 2022 and autumn 2019 provided a better balance between male and female students. While the College of Engineering and Technology makes up most of the student enrolment (84%), 16% of student enrolment belonged to the College of Business Administration in autumn 2022. During the visit, it was established that there are no part-time programmes offered. The final number of students enrolled is restricted as approved by the Private Universities Council and includes attributes for assessing the calibre of the candidates. There was also a growth in MBA application numbers and total final admissions over the five years between 2018 and 2022 academic cycles.

4.2   At the review visit, it was established that AUM has seen a significant increase in the number of applications. AUM has several mechanisms in place to ensure appropriate resourcing to support the increase in student numbers and the approach was coordinated across colleges and professional services.

4.3   In relation to this, it was further noted that AUM actively aligns to the 'Kuwaitisation' priorities when it comes to design of the new programmes and when reviewing the existing programme portfolio. For example, new master's programmes in Computer Engineering - Artificial Intelligence emphasis and Electrical Engineering - Power, Energy Sources and Systems emphasis have been developed. It was stated that there is a big demand for new and evolving topics, which is carefully monitored by the AUM senior management team.

4.4   Academic members of staff take an active part in the admission process, including outreach activities, and hold membership of the admission committees. They are further involved in providing support in the selection of major/minor subject areas, where required, throughout the admissions and onboarding process.

4.5   Moreover, there is an outreach team who visit local and regional schools regularly and helps potential applicants with the application process and support, in terms of documentation preparation and eligibility exams. AUM runs three to four annual campaigns where existing students take active part as ambassadors of the institution. These are advertised on billboards and with social media marketing promotions. It was noted, during the visit, that AUM student ambassadors contribute to outreach activities, including curation of promotional campaigns.

4.6   During the visit, it was noted that the admission process and records have moved online and now paperless. There is a dashboard for potential applicants and depending on the subject disciplines, the student records are allocated to relevant academic teams for review, as required.

4.7   The admissions and recruitment of students is distributed in two key areas: expression of choice for subject(s) by applicants, followed by the respective eligibility assessment against the criteria set by AUM. The admissions team works closely with colleges and is fully briefed about subject-specific entry requirements.

4.8   Throughout the recruitment process, the AUM admissions team and student advisers provide support for applicants by taking them through the systems and relative procedures for admissions, followed by the initial onboarding delivered on an individual basis which includes a campus tour. Students are also supported in determining an appropriate programme, where necessary.

4.9   A full set of enrolment data was presented to the team, showing overall student numbers currently registered across all programmes and both colleges. Increases in student enrolments, year-on-year, was noted. Student recruitment for MBA programme was clarified during the visit discussions. There is a planned growth for MBA programmes with the new master's programmes from 2024-25.

4.10   AUM has a comprehensive onboarding and learning support system in place, for success, throughout the student journey starting from an insightful orientation and induction programme at the beginning of the academic year. It provides a good opportunity for students to appreciate the AUM offer and understand the expectations of learning and teaching for their respective programmes. Moreover, personalised support is also made available for all new students, through subject-specific 'integration' sessions offered by advisers and academic team members. The review team considers this to be **good practice**.

4.11   There is an extensive advice mechanism in place for students through the Academic Advancement Centre including MyPath programme. The availability of MyPath programme provides a distinct opportunity for students to co-create, monitor, and customise their learning journey and continuously review progress across both the credited and non-credited curriculum offer, which also represents **good practice**.

4.12   Additionally, the Academic Advancement Centre provides a focused support in terms of the career goal development for students. As captured earlier, where there are special requirements, in terms of subject choice or discipline matters, the College Deans and the academic teams meet with the students for support on a case-by-case basis.

4.13   The Student Performance Progress Report (SPPR) is used to continuously monitor academic progress of students and implement appropriate interventions to support progression and success. It is a combined monitoring approach between the Academic Advancement Centre and college-based faculties. In addition to SPPR, full academic records of the students are accessible to faculty members, and students can access their records in full.

4.14   During the visit, availability and consideration of support mechanisms for those students with additional needs, was presented. Although it is understood that a definite policy detailing arrangements for reasonable adjustments for students is not currently in place, there is a range of support resources made available following review of cases on an individual basis. For example, the Writing Centre supports with formulisation and structure of content for those students in need, a printed version of exam papers made available for a student with visual impairment with availability of scribe support; however, limited insight was captured during discussions at the time of the review visit. The campus accessibility report was noted.

4.15   There is healthy insight into overall progressions, completions and probations for each programme and respective levels/years of study. To support timely progressions, the tutoring

centre aids students with further academic help which can be requested by either faculty members or students.

4.16   The review visit noted the retention dataset per programme and across years of study showed consistently good rates for student retention over five academic years between 2018 and 2022.

4.17   When there is a student withdrawal request review there is a requirement that the student meets with the student affairs team to ensure support for the individual, pastorally or academically. It is understood that most recent withdrawals are linked to students changing their majors. In some cases, internal transfer is allowed with a potential of credit transfer.

4.18   Following the successful completion of learning and accumulation of required credits, a final review of grades is undertaken by the Registrar, Academic Advancement Centre via MyPath and Head of the Departments, which then confirms the graduation requirements for students.

4.19   The Registrar is responsible for the preparation of all the graduation documentation, including graduation certificates, detailed transcripts and diplomas which are sent to graduating students by the student affairs team. A record of graduation documentation is also kept with the Kuwaiti Private Universities Council, as AUM's national accreditor body.

4.20   Overall, the review team concludes that AUM has comprehensive policies and processes pertaining to student admission, progression, recognition, and certification, which is consistently applied and align with Standard 1.4, which is therefore **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   As of February 2023, AUM employed 731 staff members, 59% of which were classified as teaching staff/academic faculty. Of the academic faculty, 64% are aligned to the College of Engineering and Technology, with a further 12% in the College of Business Administration and 11% are allocated to the AUM English Preparatory Programme. The University maintains a student:faculty ratio of 25:1 at the institutional level.

5.2   Of the academic faculty, 98% are classified as 'international' by AUM. The University notes the value this brings to AUM in terms of ensuring a 'highly diverse and multi-background knowledge transfer to students'.

5.3   The University has established the recruitment and retention of highly experienced faculty and staff as one of its key strategic goals for the period running until 2026.

5.4   AUM has a formal policy and procedure in place to govern the fair and systematic recruitment and selection of new academic faculty.

5.5   The University's recruitment activity is driven primarily by the faculty recruitment plans which all colleges are required to prepare on an annual basis in response to student enrolments and longer term organisation strategy. All faculty recruitment plans use a consistent planning methodology for long and short-term planning and are subject to formal approval by the University's President.

5.6   The Human Capital Department partners with colleges to agree the specific requirements of each vacancy prior to advertising the role through appropriate channels. A review of applications identifies suitable candidates who are subsequently assessed during an online interview, prior to review by the AUM President. An ad hoc recruitment committee conducts a formal on-campus interview with the applicant, which includes an observed teaching demonstration. Each recruitment committee involves a broad representation from across the University, including the Dean, Head of Department and members of Academic Council, and the Human Capital Department. The University utilises an On-Campus Interview Evaluation Form to systematically evaluate the extent to which the candidate demonstrates the relevant capabilities required for an offer of employment to be formally extended.

5.7   A formal induction programme for new staff is offered by the Faculty Advancement Department two weeks prior to the commencement of the new academic year. This programme includes institutional, departmental, and job-specific orientation activities, including an overview of the respective institutional policies and regulations, and core educational philosophy of AUM.

5.8   Students who met with the review team responded positively when asked whether the expertise of staff was apparent and supported their learning experience. They noted the value of this expertise in creating aspiration within students. During the review, the team was provided with access to materials which illustrated staff frequently showcase their academic, professional and research credentials to students as part of the introductory course lectures.

5.9   The review team considers the University to have a robust policy and procedure in place to handle the fair and effective recruitment and selection of appropriately qualified academic faculty to AUM.

5.10   The University's Policy for Faculty Performance Evaluation outlines the AUM approach to managing the performance, and recognising the achievement, of individual members of its academic faculty. Staff performance is evaluated on an annual basis, across the three dimensions of teaching, research and service.

5.11   AUM makes use of a standardised self-reflection form to support staff in critically evaluating personal performance across each of the three dimensions. In this evaluation, staff are expected to highlight personal achievements and objectives for the coming year. Academic staff who met with the review team indicated that the University actively encouraged staff to be reflective within these assessments.

5.12   Heads of Department and College Deans are responsible for reviewing all completed performance evaluations with respective staff members through which future goals are formalised. In addition, they provide commentary on the performance of staff and will append a portfolio of evidence drawn from across student feedback, engagement in professional development, research, and peer evaluations.

5.13   The Faculty Advancement Department exercises institutional oversight of faculty performance analysing the contents of submitted forms to identify recurrent themes which in turn drive the training and staff development agenda for the coming academic year. Representatives of the academic support teams who met with the review team provided a detailed account of how this worked in practice. The University also provided their most recent Annual Faculty CPD Priorities Plan, which defines the relevant training and development opportunities available to staff in the current academic year. Examples of these activities included the organisation of a university research conference to showcase active research within AUM and the delivery of seminars on integrating sustainability within learning and teaching.

5.14   AUM operates an annual academic promotion cycle, through which eligible staff members can apply for promotion to the next academic rank. In the latest promotion round, 55 members of staff were successful in achieving promotion to the next academic rank, against a total population of 76 applicants. An institutional policy on academic promotions governs this process to ensure the operation of a well-defined and transparent procedure. This policy defines the specific criteria on which applications for promotion will be evaluated, including the minimum qualifications, experience, and publication levels required for promotion to each level.

5.15   Across the four defined dimensions (professional engagement, teaching and learning, research, service, and other) applicants for promotion are required to attain 60% or greater to be considered suitable for promotion. AUM assigns differentiated weights to each dimension, depending on the level of promotion. This ensures candidates are evidencing achievement across all dimensions. A standardised academic grading pro forma is used to support evaluation across each criterion.

5.16   Suitability for promotion is assessed by the AUM Promotion Panel, which comprises representatives from the Academic Council and Faculty Advancement Department. The panel recommends promotion decisions to the AUM Academic Council for consideration and formal approval by the President and Board of Trustees. Where a candidate is not successful for promotion, written feedback on the outcome is provided. While candidates have no right of appeal against a decision, they can request to meet with the panel for further guidance.

5.17 Academic faculty who met with the review team evidenced a clear understanding of how the University's policy for academic promotions worked in practice and noted that they were able to access support and guidance on promotions should they require it. Notably, staff recognised that the process for advancement 'started with us', requiring staff to both want to advance and seek out the opportunity for promotion by collating a strong, evidence-based case relative to the four defined dimensions.

5.18 The team found there to be effective procedures in place to manage the performance of academic faculty within AUM, this included operating a staff appraisal process which encouraged critical reflection upon performance and the setting of appropriate annual targets. Appropriate linkage between this process and the work of the Faculty Advancement Department ensured training and development needs could be identified holistically within the institution and prioritised for delivery in the coming year. Where staff performed highly, a well understood academic promotions policy was in place to ensure the recognition and advancement of staff.

5.19 AUM views research as a key aspect of its mission and educational philosophy, noting the importance in relation to boosting the reputation of the University, attracting international talent, and strengthening the quality of education. The University's research programme is structured around eight research themes, which are closely aligned to Kuwait's National Development Plan, although staff are permitted to conduct research beyond these themes.

5.20 The University outlines the support it provides to staff to promote and facilitate participation within high-quality academic research, within its research policy. This includes:

- stating the specific criteria for research eligibility
- outlining the institutional and financial support available to staff to enable attendance at conferences, publication of research papers and participation within professional development opportunities
- committing to the provision of appropriate informational resources to support research activity
- establishing a research council to act as a cross-college taskforce to promote innovative and interdisciplinary research activity within AUM
- committing to expanding research network and the scale of AUM's international collaboration through research
- noting the planned expansion of existing and creation of new research centres within the University.

5.21 The engagement of students in research activity is one of the four components of the educational philosophy at AUM. During the review, the team was provided with access to a range of examples which showcased how students had been supported to contribute to live research projects both within the formal curriculum and through participation in extracurricular activities. The review team noted that in a number of cases, participating students had been supported to co-author research papers and to attend and present their papers to appropriate academic conferences.

5.22 Academic faculty who met with the review team noted that the University encouraged students to be involved with academic research opportunities and explained the process through which opportunities for student engagement were identified from their own research activity. This was supported by students who met with the review team. They spoke positively of the value these opportunities had brought to their learning experience. The extent to which participation within such an initiative was considered to be normal across the undergraduate student representatives was also noticed.

5.23 While such initiatives are growing in prevalence across the international higher education sector, the AUM has succeeded in embedding student participation within research as part of the learning experience. The encouragement given by AUM, through its academic faculty, for students to confidently engage and develop research skills, as well as increasing access to professional platforms, was felt to be a standout feature within AUM. This is recognised as **good practice**.

5.24 The University's policy on Faculty Continuous Professional Development (CPD) states its commitment to ensuring all faculty members are engaged within CPD opportunities. The financial support offered by AUM for research activity may also be used by academic faculty to enable participation within relevant development opportunities.

5.25 The University constructs its annual staff development programme through insights taken from staff annual performance evaluations and the strategy and objectives of the University and faculty. The University plan is subject to approval by the President, with the Faculty Advancement Department responsible for delivering on the plan. The review team was provided with evidence which demonstrated a detailed account of the comprehensive range of development opportunities undertaken by academic faculty in the 2021-22 academic year.

5.26 In a meeting with representatives of the academic support staff, a detailed account of how staff development priorities were delivered by the University was presented. The review team noted that upon completion of a development session, participants would be provided with an evaluation form which was used to measure the value of the session. This feedback was routinely considered by the relevant departments to monitor the effectiveness of provision.

5.27 Of particular note was the strategic prioritisation of, and support given to, the continued professional development of AUM staff by university leaders. The University's commitment to supporting the ongoing development of its staff represented a key aspect of its current strategy and the impact was being routinely reported at a strategic level. The strategic approach AUM takes to supporting staff participation within CPD is distinctive and representative of **good practice**. The review team was also highly encouraged to note the routine evaluation of the University's CPD offering to ensure its ongoing effectiveness.

5.28 Academic staff who met with the review team noted their belief that the University actively encourages staff to be innovative with regards to exploring new and emerging pedagogical approaches. Several pedagogy-focused sessions within the Faculty CPD activity for the 2021-22 academic year were felt to be illustrative of staff engagement within this area. Technological innovation also represented one of the key themes for staff CPD activity in the current academic year. The review team was informed of several examples of recent sessions which had supported staff to improve their use of new and emerging educational technologies available within the University (such as BigBlueButton and Moodle).

5.29 Academic staff noted that outside of formal CPD provision, there was time allocated on a weekly basis for staff to share their research topics, trainings, and events. These sessions provided an informal opportunity for practice and knowledge sharing between staff. Additionally, staff noted that where innovative or best practice was identified within faculties, this could be showcased at the college related Development Committees.

5.30 Overall, the review team considered AUM to have suitable procedures in place to handle the recruitment and selection of appropriately qualified academic faculty for their courses. Robust procedures were in place to support the management and evaluation of staff performance, including appropriate procedures for recognising exceptional talent for advancement. The University has a distinctive strategic-level commitment to supporting the

continuing professional development of its staff, particularly in terms of the assessment of impact. The University's growing research productivity was found to be effectively supporting its teaching activity. The extent to which undergraduate students were supported to become engaged in this activity is considered to be a distinctive feature of good practice.

5.31 To this extent, the team considered Standard 1.5 Teaching staff is **met** by the University.

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   AUM's audited financial reports demonstrate healthy, sustained financial position and stability for the institution. The financial position reflects student enrolment growth over the past three years. The SED provides insight into the expenditure spread, notably including various non-academic areas and campus infrastructure, IT and digital transformation, which was also evident at the time of the review visit.

6.2   Business planning, market insights, Kuwaitisation priorities, staffing skills and competencies are the strategic approaches for the introduction and implementation of new programmes, and relative learning resource requirements.

6.3   Availability of a wide range of library resources, including e-learning zones, cinema and individual and group study spaces, and the AUM soft skills e-courses platform was noted. AUM offers e-learning courses to faculty staff and students on various skills. Students receive completion confirmation as they acquire new skills, which includes learning digital applications.

6.4   There is a continuous monitoring and review of the academic resources and digital databases to ensure student learning is sufficiently supported. Moreover, tutors can assign a variety of self-paced online training to students focused on active and immersive learning.

6.5   The pedagogic approach at AUM includes portfolio simulation in teaching, with an assurance for students having access to relevant dataset and learning platforms, such as the trading platform, resources made available through subject-specific clubs, and a broad array of library databases which are accessible remotely.

6.6   There is a comprehensive and contemporary range of technological packages, including academic laboratories and studios available for students. Interactive platforms such as BigBlueButton and MyPath offer value added to student learning.

6.7   Extensive subject-specific learning resources and faculty support, including clubs and societies, are accessible to all students across every level of study. The proactive investment by AUM in the existing and progressive subject areas such as AI, Robotics, Energy and Sustainability is in line with Kuwaitisation priorities. This is commended as a forward-thinking institutional initiative. Moreover, AUM's provision of digital platforms and the Learning Management System (LMS) adequately support equal opportunity and accessibility needs for the student community. The clubs also offer students the opportunity to develop outside their study programme so that they are more competitive in the employment market and have relevant skills. Digital platforms and LMS fulfil the equal opportunity and accessibility needs for the student community.

6.8   All students can access training in academic referencing to ensure that they do not keep making the same mistakes and lose marks in their assessments. There are resources made available on and off campus.

6.9   During the review visit, AUM showcased the use of interactive and education technologies such as video walls, in-house cinema and touch tables whose use was embedded into the curriculum delivery. The students, including recent graduates, were

extremely positive about the digital infusion within learning and teaching, and valued the accessibility of skills-based learning and practical application at every stage of their academic journey.

6.10 Other facilities such as the Writing Lab, the AUM Cultural Centre and other services supported the complete student journey and beyond into employment which was evident from the alumni met by the team during the visit.

6.11 The Academic Advancement Centre (AAC) provides assistance to all students with academic transition and progression throughout their learning journey. Additionally, the Tawteen Centre makes a significant input into the development of employability skills and graduate prospects of all students including alumni. The Tawteen Centre is unique to AUM with its Kuwaitisation priorities at its heart and plays a significant role in the development of students as an essential talent pool of future graduates. The unique support offered by both the Academic Advancement Centre and the Tawteen Centre is identified as **good practice**.

6.12 The Tawteen Centre maintains active engagement with AUM alumni by providing regular counselling, employment-related support and internship opportunities. The centre also connects recruitment services with specific employer organisations for graduates. Moreover, alumni are invited to relevant workshops, seminars and guest lecture events where external speakers are involved.

6.13 Furthermore, in acknowledging the cultural context, AUM has set up an international certification programme in AI and Entrepreneurship which is delivered in Kuwait, in collaboration with the AMENA Centre for Entrepreneurship and Development at UC Berkeley, so that students with interesting project ideas have the experience of being taught by international faculties. The benefit in terms of extensive training and developmental opportunities for students was evident during the review visit.

6.14 AUM considers societal responsibility a key strategic priority and has incorporated the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) within its curriculum offering. This is delivered with an entrepreneurship focus, and aligned with skills-based training for students, including an AUM start-up challenge.

6.15 It was established that faculties also benefit from entrepreneurial training towards learning newest practices. Training is made available through the AUM partnership with Babson College, USA.

6.16 In relation to this, staff performance is evaluated annually which results in performance-based progression and recognition, with training and developmental support put in place as a result. There is Continuous Professional Development (CPD) to provide regular training, both designed at institutional and college levels. Additionally, there were examples of specific training linked to institutional accreditations such as AACSBs continuous improvement review (CIR) and National Career Development (NCDA).

6.17 AUM keenly supports the wellbeing and inclusion for all existing and prospective students and staff. Campaigns and programmes promoting healthy lifestyle are regularly communicated to the AUM community. For example, there is a state-of-art sport centre housing four separate gymnasiums, and other indoor and outdoor facilities accessible to all students and staff throughout the year. The sports centre regularly runs sports, fitness, and wellbeing sessions.

6.18 The on-campus clinic provides health check-up services by two resident nurses. This service is available to all AUM staff and students.

6.19 Overall, AUM's strategic priorities and extensive institutional infrastructure demonstrates a continued focus on enhancing student support, through objectives including development of an entrepreneurial mindset, providing graduates with applied skills, building digital competencies, and strengthening its reputation with strong societal emphasis.

6.20 The review team concludes that AUM provides appropriate funding for learning and teaching activities and ensures that there are adequate and readily accessible learning resources and student support provided, therefore Standard 1.6 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   Relevant data is collected to support decision-making at AUM. Effective processes to collect and analyse information about study programmes and other activities feed into the internal quality assurance system. Feedback is provided from internal and external stakeholders. In the student course feedback issues covered include organisation of the class, instructor's understanding of the topic, and the instructor's effort to increase the learning experience. In the undergraduate student exit survey, the accent is put on how different knowledge areas apply to work, internship experience and so on. The Student Satisfaction and Career Aspiration Survey covers preferences for job areas, and the Industry Advisor Feedback Form provides feedback on the College mission and vision, and how these reflect the industry expectations, evaluation of the learning objectives, how graduates are equipped with professional skills and so on. In addition, Employers Feedback on Graduates is focused on the feedback related to the employers' opinion on hard and soft skills of students.

7.2   The list of all surveys is provided in the QA Policy Implementation Guide and includes nine categories, which besides those completed by students and industry representatives, refer to surveys dedicated to alumni on the programme objectives, faculty self-reflection, and a faculty survey on programme goals. The data collected through surveys is effective and based on several methods with staff and students being directly and appropriately involved.

7.3   The course evaluation at AUM is a mandatory step before the final assessment of each course. Students are invited to express opinions about the course flow, the faculty, and the teaching methods in addition to the achievement of the learning outcomes. The compiled feedback is shared with QAIA and Deans for information and action as needed. The outcomes are communicated to Heads of Departments who discuss them with faculty members in various meetings.

7.4   The information gathered supports the measurement of key performance indicators (KPIs). The KPI dashboard at AUM includes indicators about the number of registered students, allowing the monitoring of progression and dropout rates. The indicators also include the student to faculty ratio and the progress of various indicators over semesters. Other information refers to faculty workloads and special assignments as well as the utilisation of learning resources and classrooms. In addition to these, there are KPIs regarding resource requirements such as new laboratories, new classrooms, and software. The initial pre-registration KPIs are sent to Deans and the Finance Department for an initial validation. The final KPIs are approved by the President. KPIs serve as important information to make informed decisions which affect the recruitment plans for the coming semesters.

7.5   Metrics are defined in relation to long-term objectives and deadlines. For example, the setting of an increase in research outputs by at least 10% per year was declared to be achieved in 2021-22 and subsequent years. AUM relies on a strong information management eco-system powered by state-of-the-art platforms to ensure accurate measurement of indicators and provide tools to monitor success. Moreover, the Students Outcomes Assessment Matrix (SOAM) provides a timeline for the data collection from selected required courses which will be used to evaluate the level of attainment of student outcomes.

7.6   Student performance is regularly monitored and a practical implementation of the learner-centred philosophy is represented by the Student Performance Progress Report (SPPR) generated from the student information system, Banner, in week seven and week 13. SPPR provides useful data, for example a comparison of students' progress and graduation, the situation of students under probation, and data on student retention. The team noted the institutional application of integrated data management and coherent evaluation to provide adequate information, such as the SPPR to identify issues, such as students at risk and to initiate appropriate interventions, which is **good practice**.

7.7   The information gathered at AUM also refers to student population demographics, such as ratios per college, per department, per gender, and per level of study. A dashboard demonstrates registration data on active students, enrolled and registered, active and not registered, potential graduates, enrolment by major, level or year, by gender, by term and by college.

7.8   Students' information and documents at AUM are digitalised and saved. Student profiles are included in the registrar system called Ellucian Banner and this enables the registrar department and the academic advisers to keep track of students' progress and monitor their academic performance and other indicators. The dashboard was demonstrated to the review team. The dashboard also provides data on students' current and previous registrations, CGPA, transcript, and so on. The dashboard supports the faculty members who are requested to observe and report on the performance of students under probation or on students' performance which could be improved.

7.9   The dashboard also includes the student evaluation form, for example, the evaluation conducted in week three referring to the student performance. An evaluation is based on 18 questions, which consider, for example, if assignments were completed on time, how students performed in individual and group tasks, and the integrity towards completing the student work.

7.10   Students' feedback serves as a considerable source of information for programme improvement such as upgrading existing or proposing new programmes or other facilities in the campus. The senior students complete a student exit survey which serves as input for the accreditation processes and for the QA committees within colleges to obtain information about the achievement of learning outcomes and students' perception about the educational objectives of the study programmes. In addition, the QAIA department also organises the student satisfaction and career aspirations survey, where students provide feedback for the improvement of life on campus. The QAIA department shares the students' feedback with Deans for their information and action as applicable. Course evaluation is a mandatory step before the final assessment of each course with students expressing their opinion about the course flow, the faculty, and the teaching methods in addition to the achievement of the learning outcomes. The results are disseminated to Heads of Departments who discuss them with faculty members in various meetings, for example at the College Committee meetings.

7.11   The information gathered at AUM covers the area of learning resources and student support. AUM uses Moodle as the learning management system. Student links include access to My AUM portal for enrolled students and employed staff, e-mail, library, e-learning, starting with a tutorial for soft skills e-courses. My AUM portal has links for student registration, student self-services, the registration user guide, a registration video, and the mobile app. The virtual learning environment includes in addition to Moodle, BigBlueButton for synchronised learning, Microsoft 365 for emails and virtual labs, Laserfiche as a content and process automation tool, Ellucian Banner for student information, Degree Works for academic advising, Explorance Blue for an automated course evaluation system, and Turnitin for plagiarism protection.

7.12 Information for effective management of activities and resources is gathered from students in student exit surveys. For example, information on the library facilities, college facilities, learning environment and personal development is requested. Students can benefit from extracurricular activities. Information on student societies and clubs, in addition to sports facilities, with indoor and outdoor facilities, are described in the Student Handbook.

7.13 The career paths of graduates are a clearly stated institutional preoccupation. Strong support for student success is described as provided through the Tawteen Career Centre, Writing Lab, Academic Advancement Centre, and Tutoring Centre in the overview AUM webpage. The Tawteen Career Centre helps students and graduates to explore career options and take ownership of their career direction and empowers them with the latest learning tools. Writing Lab is an inclusive space where students are free to discuss writing concerns, questions, and inquiries they might have, through consultations, seminar sessions, workshop sessions, writing competitions and mini events. The Academic Advancement Centre enables students to meet their adviser before online registration each semester about courses, majors, and job options. The Tutoring Centre provides one-on-one tutorials, group-based tutorials, peer-to-peer tutorials, project, laboratory support, and homework assistance, and lecture-based or problem-solving sessions.

7.14 Employers felt that the Tawteen Centre was an important aspect of AUM. Employers mentioned that the centre contacts them, which makes them feel like there is support from AUM throughout the students' programme and provides opportunities to help gain employment. AUM has monitored the employers' presence in the campus since 2018, with links and statistics, posts, and videos about the Career Fairs.

7.15 Information on graduate competences is gathered during meetings of the Industrial Advisory Board which exists in both colleges of AUM. For example, in the case of the Business College, participants in the meeting agreed that the AUM graduates are well equipped with the required skills for the job market, including business knowledge, entrepreneurial mindset, critical analysis, problem-solving and multicultural perspective. In the Engineering College, the Industry Advisory Board agreed that the programme educational objectives at the Chemical Engineering Programme match the job market needs and take into consideration industry changes.

7.16 The faculty are required to create a plan for each student which is used to monitor student progression and performance. This is also coordinated at the level of student support function. The Student Affairs Department serves to provide information and support for students. This department also provides counselling sessions for students who show signs of needing support. There is a holistic approach where students are the focus of the learning strategy, and they benefit from an optimal experience.

7.17 Audit teams are involved in evaluating different courses. At the beginning of the semester, the auditor receives a list of assigned courses to audit. For example, the Hybrid/ Online Learning Audit Guidelines in autumn 2021 referred to the organisation of the Moodle course page, the quality of hybrid and online learning facilitation, interaction between students and faculty. At the end of an audit, good practices are identified, for example the active use of forum discussion with high participation of students, or the use of library e-resources.

7.18 The team concludes that AUM effectively implements processes for collection, processing, and secure management of all information. This mechanism is followed by adequate analysis and impactful use of robust information for the effective management of programmes and other activities, ensuring its alignment with the requirements of Standard 1.7, which is therefore **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   AUM has active internal and external channels of communication to provide up-to-date information to its wider stakeholders. The marketing department has the main responsibility for curating and disseminating institutional level information to all stakeholders which includes current and prospective students, alumni, industry partners, employers, and relevant governmental bodies.

8.2   The marketing department uses various forms of communication channels such as social media platforms, LinkedIn, press releases, podcasts, public campus events and community-based activities and events to promote and connect with its diverse stakeholder audiences. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, AUM actively connected with students and alumni through social media channels. MENA Universities Summit 2022, which was hosted by AUM, was heavily promoted within local media using press releases. Similarly, successful AACSB accreditation was communicated using media release to reach a broader stakeholder audience.

8.3   The AUM's social media presence is evident through its active involvement using various platforms, which was also described enthusiastically by the professional services staff as a key medium to communicate with institutional stakeholders, particularly existing and prospective sets of students, local community, and alumni. Social media platforms are used as the main communication medium to promote key events hosted by AUM with societal and environmental impact, or events in which AUM participates such as 'Green Kuwait'.

8.4   The AUM website provides updated information on institutional strategies, mission and values, accreditations, and recognitions. During the review visit, it was established that the marketing team regularly monitors and reviews the institutional web content and updates it with relevant information related to the key events taking place during each academic year. My AUM portal and AUM App is also updated with academic and career-focused content for students.

8.5   Student and staff wellbeing and inclusion is communicated to all through internal channels, including campaigns and awareness programmes around healthy living that are led by the sports centre.

8.6   The information in relation to each of the programmes, its relative study path, entry requirements, programme learning goals and objectives, potential career outcomes, are made available through the respective programme pages online. The college-based leadership team and academic staff monitor the information for their programmes and assess it over time.

8.7   It is understood that the formal review of programme-level learning objectives takes place every five years; however, there is continuous evaluation of the programmes and the student attainment. Any course/programme changes, minor in an intermediate review, including assessment strategies and student support, are communicated to staff and students. As a result, should there be a need of content update on institutional communication channels, this is carried out by the marketing team.

8.8   The academic staff participate in providing content for AUM webpages including programme and course-specific information and staff profiles. They also contribute to the benchmarking activities, through curriculum committees, which feeds into informational update through professional services, following a review of respective changes proposed.

8.9   The registrar, in association with the admissions team, has the responsibility for maintaining the currency of the existing course and programme profiles, including updates to documents, fees publication and policies that remain in the public domain. Although the marketing team has the ultimate responsibility for institutional communication matters, other teams such as Student Affairs and Staff Development Office are responsible for contributing to aspects related to careers guidance, campus life and personnel. The teams in all professional service departments have received training to update content, as necessary.

8.10   During the review visit, it was established that AUM keeps its broader stakeholders involved and informed, for any regular high-level updates to maintain a good mutual relationship.

8.11   Overall, AUM is committed to manage its stakeholder relationship through various external and internal communications channels such as institutional CRM, social media platforms, and MyPath Programme powered by Degree Works, which is identified as **good practice**.

8.12   AUM provides information about its activities and programmes to students and other stakeholders that is clear, accurate, objective, up-to-date and readily accessible. Therefore, the review team concludes that Standard 1.8 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   AUM implements a general process of updating academic programmes which is initiated through the continuous improvement processes of the accreditation cycles adopted by each programme. The updating of programmes can also be initiated at any time by faculty members or moderators to respond to specific needs of the departments such as commissioning of new laboratories, adding new courses, changes of courses (for example from mandatory to elective), embedding input from students, alumni, or employers. The procedure for course or programme amendment or addition is effective stating that all requests are submitted between September and February to the Heads of Learning Management and Quality assurance (LMQA), with the exception of urgent amendments which can be submitted at any time.

9.2   Regular monitoring, review and revision of study programmes are formally implemented at AUM to ensure that the provision remains appropriate and to create a supportive and effective learning environment for students. Updates and amendments are discussed within curriculum committee meetings. An example of curricular updates and recommendation was provided to the team, engaging three departments in a meeting of the Academic Affairs Committee within the College of Business Administration. Another example is the reviewing process of all course projects for senior-level courses from the Industrial Engineering Department Curriculum Committee. Clear debates were evident and pertinent recommendations formulated.

9.3   In addition, course improvements are identified through engagement with students in formulating recommendations through focus groups. One example is the focus group organised to discuss the evaluation and continuous improvement of each course measured, where concrete and appropriate solutions were formulated as recommendations. Examples of recommendations include giving more case studies to students during the class and improving promotion of collaboration between student groups participating in class.

9.4   Recommended updates and other recommendations are discussed within the College QA & Accreditation Committee led by the Head of Learning Management and LMQA in each college. Updates and amendments after being discussed within the curriculum committee are sent to other committees operating at the college for further discussion such as Learning Development Committee, Labs Committee, and the Research and Faculty Development Committee.

9.5   In the general process for updating academic programmes, the Dean/Head of LMQA discusses the amendment with the Associate Provost for Academic Affairs who provides an opinion or suggests further updates to ensure alignment with colleges and university missions. Following this consultation, the Dean seeks approval from the President's Office who may consult with the AUM Academic Council. After presidential approval, the Dean ensures the proper execution of the amendments is completed and reports the progress and the outcomes to the President. The President submits the amendment to the board of trustees for final opinion and approval if a strategic decision is necessary to be made.

9.6   AUM is considered by students as the only university in Kuwait that has the specific subjects they want or need to study, and they appreciate that they can gain knowledge from institutions and faculty abroad, for example, the certification programme in the field of artificial intelligence. AUM has introduced new soft skills courses focusing on self-development and lifestyle with a wide array of elective courses in academic and career skills development, character and leadership skills development, and technology and innovation. A variety of employment opportunities are provided, with students describing their personal and academic development since joining AUM. The positive environment at AUM created aspiration, and the group work allowed them to stay motivated. The Tawteen Career Centre, Writing Lab, Tutoring Centre, Innovation Centres are some examples of opportunities AUM provides to create a supportive and effective learning environment for students. All these substantially contribute to provide students with the best learning experience, to equip them with proper knowledge and skills.

9.7   Sample tools and mappings used for the continuous improvement of engineering and business programmes demonstrate adequate mapping of programme learning goals to learning objectives and courses. In the case of the mapping process for the Chemical Engineering Programme, the proposed corrective actions included the need for extra material in the form of video demonstrations that will enable the students to be able to identify, model and solve real problems and also the need for extra real-life applications. An example of corrective action proposed in the mapping process for the continuous improvement of business programmes in the Accounting Department reveals that instructors need to engage students in more cases and exercises related to critical thinking to effectively enhance the learning process.

9.8   AUM implements the Assurance of Learning (AoL) model at the College of Business and the Assessment, Evaluation and Continuous Improvement (AECI) model at the College of Engineering and Technology with the purpose of improving students' learning, curriculum, and applied pedagogies. The AoL model allocates an important role to the AoL Committee, comprising at least one representative from each department and headed by a coordinator. The AoL process ensures the monitoring of the programmes. This committee ensures that inputs from various stakeholders are taken into consideration for the elaboration of continuous improvement enhancement plans with the aim of leading to the upgrade and improvement of the curriculum and other aspects of the academic programmes. Moreover, according to the model required by AACSB Standards, the College of Business administration adopts a five-year cycle AoL plan. The five-year plan correlates the programme learning goals with measurable learning outcomes.

9.9   The College of Engineering and Technology adopts the ABET programme Assessment, Evaluation and Continuous Improvement (AECI) model recommended by ABET Standards. The process comprises two loops for assessment, evaluation and continuous improvement.

9.10   Each programme in both colleges adopts Student Outcomes Assessment Matrix (SOAM) per two-year cycle. The SOAM outlines the programme-required courses mapped to the student outcomes (SOs) along with the associated performance indicators (PIs).

9.11   An example of an action plan for a business programme continuous improvement includes programmatic curricular changes, for example organising tutoring sessions and non-curricular changes, for example improving the data collection process. AUM provided the document Curriculum and Related Changes, Innovations, and Impact at the College of Business Administration prepared at the end of 2020. Curriculum changes triggered by the Assurance of Learning (AoL) include, for example, designing and organising tutoring sessions, while changes not triggered by AoL include, for example, internship course review.

9.12   The content of programmes is adapted in the light of the latest research in the given discipline. AUM aims to ensure that the programmes are up to date. Research outcomes are shared through teaching. AUM has formalised that research-based teaching and research is incorporated in course projects. Recent research papers are shared with students. In some cases, students working on final year projects write research papers under faculty supervision with the aim of presenting and publishing them at scientific events, such as conferences. An example is the conference paper on 'Optimization of Suspension System Parameters for a SUV'.

9.13   Faculties have opportunities to participate in research events which contribute to increase the knowledge in the field of their teaching and expertise. The input from professional development programmes and conferences helps in ensuring that the programmes are updated with the latest teaching methodologies and technologies. This is an effective practice. Each faculty member is given financial support to attend conferences (2000 KD/year).

9.14   AUM works with entrepreneurs to support academics in embedding expertise into the programmes, so students receive the adequate skills needed for competitive graduate employment. There is also an AUM start-up challenge for students and many students' projects relate to the UN SDGs. An example is the AUM UC Berkeley certification programme in artificial intelligence and entrepreneurship aiming at identifying promising project ideas and supporting them to become start-ups in an advanced incubation platform.

9.15   In reviewing programmes the changing needs of society are considered. Employers and students are involved to provide appropriate and useful feedback. At the last Career Fair, employers and students covered the topic of sustainability and artificial intelligence in particular areas. In response to societal needs, AUM promotes student activities within clubs by including the introduction of new extracurricular activities and new clubs to improve the learning environment of students. For example, the consideration of crypto currency as part of the learning process and the development of relevant activities related to the real capital market at the Finance Club. Where possible, students and faculty work together, and students benefit from research guidance. For example, students are coordinated by faculty to research on artificial intelligence.

9.16   The team **recommends** AUM to reflect on the existing mechanisms and practices relating to programme monitoring and review to ensure a cohesive internal approach to assure itself that programmes meet the needs of students and society. In doing so, consider explicit external stakeholder involvement in the enhancement of existing programmes, in addition to the requirements of the current accreditation bodies.

9.17   Courses at AUM are evaluated by faculty at the end of each semester through filing both the final course report and the final grade review report. The final course report analyses the achievement of learning outcomes, alignment to the syllabus and its course calendar, along with analysis of the progress of the course. Students' performance is discussed in the same report. The final grade reports address challenges, best practices, and recommendations. The final course report covers several sections based on adequate assessment, for example the course learning outcomes, the course progress, referring to what changes have been made to the syllabus and why, the student performance and overall suggestions and recommendations.

9.18   Different committees, such as the Chemical Engineering Accreditation Committee, the CBA Academic Affairs Committee and the Curriculum Committee meet regularly to identify ways for improvement. The Chemical Engineering Accreditation Committee has the responsibility for the elaboration and approval of continuous improvement recommendations, including correction actions, for example implementing a project-based lab report with

simulation. These committees demonstrate the enhancement of programmes, for example updating the gradebook in the Career Planning Course and adding simulation to the International Marketing Course.

9.19   Students evaluate courses as a key part of the measurement of course and teaching effectiveness. Students evaluate the course and the faculty members at the end of each semester. Student course evaluations reveal strengths and areas of improvement in each course. In 2020-21, AUM applied a new automated course evaluation system using Explorance Blue. The example of the Course Evaluation Survey for Online Summer 2020 for the Financial Accounting course starts with a student self-reflection and includes a general evaluation of the course, as well as specific evaluations for the teaching and learning experience, with a final overall evaluation and recommendations for the instructor.

9.20   A graduate exit interview is used to gather information about graduating students' experience, satisfaction, programme completion time, comments, and suggestions. The questionnaire is designed to gather the perceptions of graduating students on programme educational objectives and student outcomes. Respondents are invited to provide opinions about how the department could improve the students' level of achievement of any of these performance skills.

9.21   Brainstorming boot camp sessions are effective practices organised to collect input from faculty members for monitoring and enhancement of programmes. An example of a bootcamp session includes department teams working to create a department logo and to review the curriculum structure. At the same time, cross-functional teams worked on curriculum mapping to assess the programme learning goals and objectives against the College of Business Administration mission.

9.22   The information collected is analysed and the programme is adapted also based on the feedback from different external stakeholders - employers, alumni, and industry advisers. Alumni express their opinion on the programme objectives, starting with the mission of the institution and continuing with different proposals on the students' skills requirement. Industry advisers bring important insights on the current and future needs of the industry, propose topics for projects where the outcomes could be beneficial to all parties, and extend the internship opportunities for students.

9.23   The assessment of students is based on an effective academic regulation. The Student Handbook clearly describes the grading system, the graduation criteria, and other policies, for example of grades review, of course repetition and of change of major. The system includes correspondence on converting grades out of 100 into letter grades and the grade points adopted by the AUM grading system. Each course gradebook describing the required student work is available in the course syllabus provided to students at the beginning of the semester. The syllabus is revised every semester. Several grading examples following different criteria demonstrate that the assessment is adequate; for example, in a grading system for the final presentation, presentation design and skills and discussion and analysis count for 50% as individual tasks, while content relevance and proposed solutions count for 50% as a group task.

9.24   Students have the mechanisms to communicate expectations, needs and satisfaction in relation to a programme. Through the course evaluation survey students provide feedback on what changes could improve the learning environment, or specific activities and materials found to be valuable in relation to their learning. Students can express themselves and are aware that both the process and feedback provided are confidential. Student responses are shared with the Dean and the feedback is considered in the continuous improvement of courses and teaching methodologies. Students also have a permanent option to go to the Student Affairs Department. Students at AUM have a sense of civic duty and support the

future integration of students in the learning environment and campus. The learning environment and support services are effective and fit for purpose for the programme. The report on course evaluation for Summer 2022 scores the overall learning environment at 4.07 out of 5. This score is generated from student opinions on several aspects, for example to what extent the course learning environment is stimulating, and to what degree the learning environment is respectful and inclusive.

9.25   The information collected is analysed and the programme is adapted to ensure that it is up to date. Revised programme specifications are published. A sample of programme specifications is provided for the Bachelor of Science in Accounting, including learning goals, learning objectives, career opportunities, degree requirements, core course policy, free elective requirements, with the number of credit hours and the link with the website information. The same is undertaken for the programme of Bachelor of Science in Chemical Engineering.

9.26   The review team concludes that AUM effectively monitors and periodically reviews its programmes to ensure that they achieve set objectives and strategically respond to the needs of students and reflect the institutional mission. Regular monitoring, review and revision of study programmes contribute to create a supportive and effective learning environment for students, ensuring alignment with the requirements of Standard 1.9, which is therefore **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 AUM has an accreditation plan which includes both the Private Universities Council of Kuwait (PUC), and an international accreditation at QAA. The College of Business Administration is accredited by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB). A list for the engineering programmes accredited by ABET is provided with a plan for other programmes that will undergo accreditation upon graduation of the first cohort. A sample of PUC authorisation to launch a new programme was also provided.

10.2 All accreditation processes are correlated with institutional objectives for which clear metrics are formulated, for example, continuing efforts to accredit all programmes or developing new academic programmes.

10.3 Continuous improvement review for AACSB Accreditation renewal will be managed for all the programmes at the College of Business Administration - Accounting, Finance, HRM, Marketing, MIS, MBA in 2025-26. Programmes at the College of Engineering and Technology have accreditation renewal in 2023-24 for Chemical Engineering, Computer Engineering, Electrical Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Industrial Engineering and Telecommunications Networking Technology.

10.4 The information about the accreditation status of AUM and ranking is publicly available on the website. Therefore, AUM demonstrates its intention to inform the public of the quality of university activities, directly and appropriately. External quality assurance takes place in various forms which verifies the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance of AUM. Several changes in AACSB and ABET accreditation supported the continuous improvement of quality assurance, such as instituting the head of learning management and quality assurance inside colleges (2018), establishing the quality assurance and institutional effectiveness office (2020) and the development of AUM business innovation centre. The role of the Head of Learning Management and Quality Assurance is appropriate and useful to provide an adequate control of the quality of the delivered courses and monitor the academic performance of students.

10.5 In the same context, the University focuses on international rankings such as QS World University Rankings and Times Higher Education Arab University Rankings. Achieving a high-ranking position is a strategic direction included in the strategic plan for the period of 2021-26. AUM is committed to continue to engage in UI GreenMetric World University Rankings and gain a leadership position in terms of sustainability in the country and region.

10.6 External quality assurance is a continuous process that does not end with the external feedback or outcomes report or its follow-up process within the University. Several developments have taken place since previous accreditations. This demonstrates that progress is made continuously, across areas such as launching new academic programmes - BSc in Civil Engineering and BSc in Architectural Engineering; developing the teaching and learning strategy; developing the infrastructure; integrating sustainability in various forms; establishing new centres and networks. Other forms of continuous improvement include curriculum updates, library database upgrades, staff hiring, students' activities and clubs.

10.7 AUM uses these external processes to support continuous improvement and enhancement of the institution and its reputation. AUM works to ensure that rankings reflect staff and student efforts. AUM is strategically committed to achieving continuous

improvement in all areas and to develop internal processes to promote a culture of excellence, applying to a diverse range of accreditations, as well as regional and international rankings aligned to the institutional vision, which is **good practice**.

10.8 Established policies and procedures, and its engagement with internal and external stakeholders, proves that AUM is adequately operating in ensuring the continuous review of programmes. The review team concludes that AUM is effectively committed to continuous external quality assurance in line with ESG on a cyclical basis, ensuring its alignment with the requirements of Standard 1.10, which is therefore **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.

Condition

Conditions set out action that is required. Conditions are only used with unsatisfactory judgements where the quality cannot be approved. Conditions may be used where quality or standards are at risk/continuing risk if action is not taken or if a required standard is not met and action is needed for it to be met.

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, which 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.

Externality
The use of experts from outside a higher education provider, such as external examiners or external advisers, to assist in quality assurance procedures.

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.