



This review was conducted in compliance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)

International Quality Review

Gulf University for Science
and Technology

Review Report

October 2024

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About this review

This is a report of an International Quality Review conducted by The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Gulf University for Science and Technology (GUST). The review took place from 21 to 23 October 2024 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

- Katie Akerman
- Dr David Dowland
- Dr Harry Williams (student reviewer).

The QAA Officer for this review was Dr Irene Ainsworth.

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

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

Gulf University for Science and Technology (GUST) was established as the first private university in Kuwait in 2002. GUST is licensed by the Private Universities Council (PUC) under the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) in Kuwait and is subject to PUC reassessment and renewal of licensure every four years and periodic re-accreditation by the National Bureau for Academic Accreditation and Education Quality Assurance (NBAQ). GUST's Board of Trustees is the highest University authority and is responsible for overall governance of the University to ensure that it operates in accordance with the legal and regulatory requirements that apply.

GUST operates on one campus which was expanded in 2022 when it established the College of Engineering and Architecture (CEA) to offer programmes alongside its existing College of Arts and Sciences (CASS) and College of Business Administration (CBA) provision. GUST currently offers 16 higher education programmes (two Foundation year, 13 Bachelor's level and one Master's level) through its three Colleges. In February 2024, GUST had a total of 4,083 higher education students (Foundation year: 1,072; BA level: 2,736; Master's level: 230). The total number of students had risen to 4,726 by the time of the QAA review visit. It currently has 182 academic staff and 216 non-academic staff.

GUST's mission 'To create enduring societal impact by advancing research and education' is underpinned by four guiding principles, namely: education; advancement; societal impact; and enduring excellence. It has identified six strategic goals to support its mission, as follows:

- Expand University Scope
- Enable Faculty Achievement
- Advance Research and Development
- Cultivate a Growth-Oriented Environment
- Drive Societal Engagement and Impact
- Diversify Revenue and Strengthen Financial Practices.

GUST has multiple partnerships including, for example with the University of Missouri-St. Louis (UMSL) and Missouri University of Science and Technology in the USA as well as other universities in the UK, Austria, Canada, India and Spain to facilitate student and faculty exchanges, joint research initiatives and shared academic resources. Several of its programmes are accredited by international accreditation bodies including the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET), the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB), the American Communication Association (ACA), the National Organization for Student Success (NOSS) and the Commission on Intensive English Programme Accreditation (CEA).

GUST is committed to supporting its students to achieve high academic standards in an environment conducive to learning, personal growth and the development of knowledge and skills its students will need to thrive in the future. To that end, it makes use of state-of-the-art technology and has invested in digitisation to support student learning and streamline its processes. GUST's rebranding of its Professional Advancement and Continuing Education Center (PACE) into GUST Executive Education (GUST ExecED) provides improved opportunities to engage with the wider community through the provision of programmes tailored to business needs. GUST also has an international summer scholarship programme, enabling its students to interact with peers from renowned institutions and to experience global exposure. GUST seeks to attract and retain high-performing faculty staff through new

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benefits it has introduced and through prioritising faculty and staff development with a view to contributing to the further development of GUST's academic community.

In reaching conclusions about the extent to which Gulf University for Science and Technology (GUST) meets the 10 ESG Standards, the QAA review team followed the evidence-based review procedure as outlined in the handbook for International Quality Review (October 2023). The University provided the review team with a self-evaluation and supporting evidence. During the review visit, which took place from 21 to 23 October 2024, 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.

In summary, the team found four examples of good practice and was able to make some recommendations for improvement/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. The team did not set any conditions.

Overall, the team concluded that Gulf University for Science and Technology (GUST) **meets** all standards for International Quality Review.

QAA's conclusions about Gulf University for Science and Technology

The QAA review team reached the following conclusions about the higher education provision at Gulf University for Science and Technology (GUST).

European Standards and Guidelines

Gulf University for Science and Technology (GUST) meets all of the 10 ESG Standards and Guidelines.

Conditions

The team did not set any conditions.

Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following features of **good practice** at Gulf University for Science and Technology (GUST):

- the wide opportunities for students to engage in the co-creation of research, as well as work-based projects, the solution of “real world” problems in industry and business, and international collaborative activity (ESG Standard 1.3)
- the opportunities for students to engage in extracurricular activities, in particular peer-to-peer tutoring, opportunities for students to support peers with additional learning requirements, and volunteer work in the wider community, which support a broad sense of community (ESG Standard 1.6)
- the comprehensive support for student and alumni entrepreneurship and enterprise through, for example, the Incubation Lab, which has led to the creation of many student- and alumni-led businesses that support their local communities (ESG Standard 1.6)
- the use of the Student Performance Enhancement and Active Retention (SPEAR) System to monitor, analyse and implement supportive measures to ensure students' success (ESG Standard 1.7).

Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendations** to Gulf University for Science and Technology (GUST):

- further develop the policy for academic integrity to articulate possible penalties arising from academic misconduct (ESG Standard 1.1)
- with the approval of institutional committees, introduce and embed an explicit institutional policy and procedure for the approval of new programmes. The institutional committees should check the alignment of the policy to Standard 1.2 (ESG Standard 1.2)
- introduce a planning mechanism to link strategy and operation, driving the consistent implementation of the institutional learning and teaching goals across the university and sharing of good practice between colleges, departments and programmes (ESG Standard 1.3)

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- create and implement policies for the handling of student conduct and grade appeals to support the equitable treatment of students (ESG Standard 1.3)
- develop and implement a mechanism by which applicants can appeal negative admissions decisions, and ensure this policy is published (ESG Standard 1.4)
- develop a mechanism or tool that allows for the ongoing monitoring and review of published information (ESG Standard 1.8)
- introduce an internal policy for periodic monitoring and review to give the university full ongoing assurance of all aspects of academic programmes (ESG Standard 1.9).

Explanation of the findings about Gulf University for Science and Technology

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 GUST is monitored and licensed to award degrees in the State of Kuwait by the Private Universities Council (PUC) under the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE). The most recent PUC assessment was in April 2024, for a four-year period. The legal setup of GUST was completed, as the first private university in the State of Kuwait, and operations commenced in the 2002-2003 academic year. The National Bureau for Academic Accreditation and Education Quality Assurance (NBAQ) is a member of INQAAHE (International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education) and GUST holds institutional accreditation. The State of Kuwait is a member of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), which also includes Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Oman and Bahrain. Programmes of study are based upon the US system of a four-year degree allowing for majors, which are graded using a grade point average (GPA) system.

1.2 GUST implements various policies to monitor its academic programmes. Designated programme coordinators develop programme measures, oversee activities, and evaluate overall success against international criteria, for curricula and reference data analysis including for graduate destinations. The Assurance of Learning (AOL) and curriculum committees' processes involve evaluating teaching and learning activities and assessment measures to ensure programmes meet expected learning outcomes. These processes are integral to the continuous improvement strategy. These processes are supported by a Data Science Specialist and a Senior Accreditation Specialist, and there is also an Accreditation Officer in each of the three colleges of the University. The roles of the quality team include developing, implementing, and monitoring quality assurance processes and initiatives. The Accreditation and Quality Assurance Office aims to promote and develop a culture of academic excellence and continuous improvement of teaching quality which leads to offering a high standard teaching and achieving internationally recognised standards.

1.3 GUST has a policy for quality assurance, which is a public document, available on their website, that forms an integral part of the University's strategic management, ensuring the quality and relevance of academic programmes, enhancing teaching and learning methodologies, fostering a culture of continuous improvement, and ensuring compliance with regulatory requirements and accreditation standards.

1.4 GUST employs several platforms to monitor and maintain quality standards, including ASANA as a project management tool overseen by the strategy office to measure the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) of each unit. These tools help GUST manage quality and standards by setting clear goals, objectives, KPIs and targets ensuring that every department is aligned with GUST's strategic goals. ASANA supports the Project Management Process (PMP) by providing a centralised platform for planning, executing, and monitoring strategic projects, thereby enhancing accountability and transparency.

1.5 The Accreditation and Quality Assurance Office (AQA) at GUST is pivotal in promoting and developing a culture of academic excellence and continuous improvement of teaching quality. The Curriculum Committees are responsible for checking curricula. Benchmarking exercises, for example, are documented in meetings, such as the Assurance of Learning meetings. The Center for Teaching, Learning and Research supports staff in

their professional development, introducing innovative educational methodologies, techniques, and technologies, and acting as a research hub for educators.

1.6 GUST has robust governance and management arrangements to support the development, implementation, and ongoing monitoring of policies for quality assurance and enhancement. GUST's Board of Trustees (BOT) is the highest authority of the University, responsible for safeguarding the interests of the University, developing, and/or proposing general university policies, ensuring their implementation, and monitoring all academic and research activities as well as other matters related to the University's operations, all in accordance with the bylaws, regulations, and resolutions regulating its activities. The University Council (UC) is the supervisory body of the University that oversees the overall activities, namely those related to academic, educational, and scholarly research.

1.7 A structured committee system ensures effective deliberation and decision-making on important academic issues such as quality and standards within GUST. Various committees have been formed to address specific academic concerns, such as the University Curriculum Committee. These committees have representation from diverse stakeholders, including faculty members, administrators, students, and external experts, as required. Each committee has a clear purpose and set of responsibilities, with reporting lines linked to senior decision-making bodies such as the President/Vice President of Academic Affairs (VPAA). Additionally, external stakeholders are involved in the design and delivery of policies for quality assurance and enhancement.

1.8 Each college is expected to develop appropriate procedures consistent with guidelines established by the University Curriculum Committee for initiating and reviewing curriculum changes and adjustments for all programmes within their respective jurisdictions. External stakeholders inform curriculum development.

1.9 During the review visit, the review team explored how the policy and its corresponding processes were being used in strategic decision-making and sought examples which could demonstrate all stages of the quality cycle, from inception, implementation, monitoring, review and feedback to stakeholders who had contributed to these processes. New development of the academic portfolio is challenging as any programme of study has to be developed in accordance with the requirements of both the University partner and the appropriate accreditation body, which has to be approved prior to presentation to the PUC/Ministry for accreditation. This can take several years to accomplish, given the complexity of the regulatory requirements. The team received examples of new proposals including a major in cyber security within the computing provision.

1.10 Planning of new provision was subject to strategic decision-making but the internal policy and process for approval was unclear to the review team because the Quality Assurance Policy includes no policy or procedure for programme approval (or re-approval). Clearly articulated responsibilities set out for reviewing the quality assurance policy and the corresponding procedures were not evident to the review team. There was no evidence for a clear schedule for review of policies more generally.

1.11 Academic Programme Review documents give schedules for the review of programmes with UMSL but lack reporting and resulting actions for GUST. Although meetings with students are scheduled, the activity appears to lack any external stakeholder representation. The GUST Committees' terms of reference do not address oversight of academic quality or standards. Minutes for Assurance of Learning (AOL) meetings are very thorough, detailing proposed changes to individual courses with confirmation of the revised syllabus although the extent of student involvement was not clear. The detailed policy for

AOL does not articulate a process, resulting in differing approaches taken by the three Colleges.

1.12 External stakeholders confirmed their involvement with the University through various mechanisms, including future programme development. Both the University and external stakeholders were clear on the value of their involvement. Employers confirmed that they were consulted upon proposals for new provision and that the University's provision is sufficiently aligned to market need within Kuwait and the GCC as well as being especially well adapted to private sector need.

1.13 The University understands the value of external participation in quality assurance processes and strives to develop relevant levels of engagement with different stakeholder groups. The Lead Student Representative is nominated as Head of the Undergraduate Student Advisory Board by senior management. However, there did not appear to be training for this role but students who met the reviewers confirm their voice is heard, that action is taken in response to their feedback, and that they did not find themselves disadvantaged by the nomination system (rather than an election system) for representation, although this does raise questions of impartiality.

1.14 Although there is a policy for academic integrity, it is not clear how consistency is assured regarding outcomes and possible penalties applied to cases of academic misconduct. The policy appears to delegate responsibility to academic staff to judge the application of penalty. The team therefore **recommends** that GUST further develop the policy for academic integrity to articulate possible penalties arising from academic misconduct.

1.15 The University should give additional attention to the formalisation of all quality assurance activities, to its arrangements for the sharing of good practice and areas for improvement identified through external approval and accreditation activities. The policy for quality assurance is publicly available. Overall, the review team concludes that Standard 1.1 Policy for quality assurance is **met**.

Standard 1.2: Design and approval of programmes

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

Findings

2.1 Programme approval is directed by the national regulatory authorities, including the Private Universities Council (PUC) and the National Bureau for Academic Accreditation and Education Quality Assurance (NBAQ). The review team viewed documentation about new programme developments, including a submission to PUC for the introduction of engineering programmes, which was subject to extensive scrutiny over several years. The proposals comprehensively addressed the criteria relevant to Standard 1.2. There was benchmarking against international comparisons. There is a formal connection with GUST's partner institutions to support programme development, as required by the national authorities. The team noted indications of effective strategic thinking and "horizon scanning" on the part of the University. GUST uses a consulting firm to identify educational, societal and market needs as required by governments. The programme submissions to the PUC included a full statement on relevance to national societal and economic priorities.

2.2 The University Curriculum Committee has responsibility for overseeing new programme provision. The College Curriculum Committee and the Departmental Curriculum Committee are charged with all aspects of curriculum design and delivery locally within each college. They set learning goals for each programme and establish Assessment Plans to ensure the measurement of learning goals across the curriculum with a unit of analysis at programme level and the stipulation of assessment rubrics and a variety of assessments. Curriculum maps aligned to international accrediting standards are used to ensure that programmes and courses have sufficient time, content coverage, student workload and student faculty interactions to meet learning goals. There is an institutional statement of competencies to be developed through each programme, including communication, technology, ethical and societal impact, creativity, quantitative skills, leadership and teamwork and critical thinking. Student workloads and academic progression are planned through major sheets and study plans, benchmarked with partner universities.

2.3 The course syllabi are prepared with a standard template to ensure consistency of programmes under the oversight of the departmental, college and university curriculum committees. The syllabi are electronically stored on the GUST academic management system, which enables the systematic management of the curriculum.

2.4 The University uses study plans as standard forms of programme specifications, outlining learning requirements, course sequences and intended learning outcomes, using a standard template.

2.5 GUST has mechanisms to consult industry and business contacts and other internal and external stakeholders about the development of programmes, including industry advisory panels and other forums. Students told the team that they had been consulted about new programme and course developments, citing various examples, including the introduction of a major in Economics, partly in response to their feedback.

2.6 The University did not explicitly mention the four purposes of the Council of Europe in the documentary evidence presented to the team. Students, staff and employers, however, gave multiple examples of growing opportunities to support student preparation for the labour market, life as active citizens in democratic society, and personal development, as well as for entrepreneurs and start-up initiatives. The team heard of the close links between industry, business organisations and GUST in Kuwait and internationally.

2.7 The review team noted the comprehensiveness of the programme proposals prepared to comply with external regulatory requirements. At the start of the IQR process, there was no specific internal programme approval policy or regulatory statement. GUST accords a degree of autonomy to colleges and departments, which may pose a risk, especially given the ambitions for further programme development, since decision-making is not informed by articulated processes for approval, which could have a negative impact on consistency of good practice.

2.8 The review team recognised, however, that programme approval is closely regulated by the regulatory authorities, including the PUC and NBAQ, leaving limited scope for institutional initiatives. The University enjoys good standing with the national regulatory authorities. The outcomes of international accreditation exercises are positive.

2.9 Nevertheless, the review team encourages the University to establish its own internal policy for the approval of programmes in preparation for submission to the national authorities and the accrediting bodies. This would contribute to the growth of an internal culture of quality, transparency and clarity within the institutional quality assurance framework and a foundation for ongoing monitoring of programme development. At a later stage of the review, GUST sent the team a policy for the design and approval of new programmes, noting approval by the President on 23 October 2024. The policy has, however, not yet received scrutiny or approval from institutional committees; it remains to be fully aligned to the detailed criteria in Standard 1.2 and embedded as institutional practice. The team therefore **recommends** that the University, with the approval of institutional committees, should introduce and embed an explicit institutional policy and procedure for the approval of new programmes. The institutional committees should check the alignment of the policy to Standard 1.2.

2.10 The team found that GUST has designed programmes in alignment with the criteria in 1.2, having consistently maintained good standing with the national regulatory authorities as well as accreditation bodies. Overall, the review team concludes that the standard 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 Strategic Goals include commitment to offer a rich experience enabling students to solve complicated problems, become entrepreneurs and leaders, faculty advancement, research and development, commitment to innovation, societal engagement and impact and to diversity revenue and strengthen financial practices. The Strategy highlights themes including student centricity, collaboration, interdisciplinary connection, community engagement and societal impact, encouraging student leadership and problem solving skills and experiential learning.

3.2 The General Education Programme is a 40 credit foundation within the higher education, undergraduate programmes, offering students a broad educational basis for their subsequent specialist studies through majors and minors, encouraging interdisciplinary thinking, global perspectives and lifelong learning skills.

3.3 The team heard from students and staff of many examples of provision to enable student participation, active learning and critical thinking skills. This includes the use of interactive teaching methods such as discussions, group projects, case studies, interactive lectures; there are practical activities, independent learning and scope for students to pursue their own interests within the curriculum. There are, for example, level 3 and 4 courses with student participation included as a graded component. There are specific courses to foster critical thinking and problem-solving skills, including, for example, the Free Elective Critical Thinking course. There are laboratories to support each major supported by business and industrial organisations such as the Interpreting Translation Center, GUST FAB Lab, Huawei Lab, AWS Lab. There are wide opportunities for projects, internships, international exchange opportunities as well as resources to facilitate student entrepreneurship and innovation. There is a course designed to ingrain entrepreneurial spirit in applicants. The Capstone Project is a means for students to address “real world” problems in connection with industrial and business organisations. Guest lectures are delivered by industrial and business practitioners. Students across programmes have opportunities for internships and other work-based learning. The Live your Major course is a project-based form of learning which involves students attending field visits, workshops, lectures and training by experts in the field. Students are assessed on the quality and execution of projects according to criteria determined by faculty.

3.4 Project-based programmes are offered each semester with various leading companies in Kuwait. There is a series of partnerships with leading international universities, which supports academic exchanges, research projects and shared resources. Indeed, students, alumni and employers told the review team that the integration of theory and practice is a strength of the University.

3.5 The University has several research centres. Students and staff told the review team of many examples of the positive impact of research on teaching, with opportunities for student engagement with research projects, conferences and published papers participation in summer scholarship programmes in leading institutions nationally and internationally.

3.6 The review team recognises **good practice** in the wide opportunities for students to engage in the co-creation of research, as well as work-based projects, the solution of “real world” problems in industry and business and international collaborative activities.

3.7 A Center for Research into Teaching and Learning has recently been established as a resource to support pedagogical development. There is an institutional policy on professional development, based on a competency framework, which is being created across the University. A programme of professional development is offered, designed on the basis of demand identified through annual appraisal. A collaborative initiative with the University of Missouri University of Science and Technology has included professional development sessions on grading and integrating student learning through projects, and integrating soft skills to the curriculum. Annual appraisal includes a mechanism to check on the take-up of professional development opportunities. The review team encourages the continuing growth and embedding of these initiatives.

3.8 GUST uses Moodle for course management, assignments, assessments and access to learning materials and as a basis for interactive and flexible learning.

3.9 Students spoke positively to the review team of how they were consulted and action taken promptly in response to their feedback through course evaluation and other student satisfaction surveys, committees and other routes. Students are apparently required to feedback on courses and instructors before proceeding with registration. There is a student complaints policy and students were clear that their issues are addressed promptly.

3.10 Despite the priorities of the University Strategic Plan, there is no specific learning and teaching strategy or plan. The review team recognised the many initiatives in place but thought that, without some specific mechanism for learning and teaching development, beyond the Assurance of Learning process, there was a risk to the University’s capacity to promote and track a consistent drive across the institution toward student centred learning and teaching. The review team therefore **recommends** that the University should introduce a planning mechanism to link strategy and operation, driving the consistent implementation of the institutional learning and teaching goals across the University and sharing of good practice between colleges, departments and programmes.

3.11 Each College Curriculum Committee is responsible for setting learning goals for each programme and major, the establishment of an Assessment Plan to ensure the measurement of learning goals across the curriculum with a unit of analysis at programme level and the stipulation of assessment rubrics. There is also a curriculum map aligned to external accreditation standards and benchmarks, ensuring that programmes and courses have sufficient time, content coverage, and appropriate student workloads to ensure that learning goals are met. There is an institutional statement of competencies to be developed through each programme, including communication, technology, ethical and societal impact, creativity, quantitative skills, leadership and teamwork and critical thinking.

3.12 There is an Assurance of Learning (AOL) system intended to facilitate the continuous improvement of programmes and their performance against learning outcomes. There is provision for the definition of programme competencies and learning objectives, and the use of data to support evaluation of learning and teaching, assessment and programme quality. The process involves detailed mapping and reports on the achievement of programme learning competencies. A variety of assessments is used, including essays, exams and group project. Participation and critical thinking are integrated into grading structure and course outcomes. Student assessment results are analysed and improvements identified. Teaching staff use standardised assessment tools to evaluate learning outcomes, determine necessary improvements and ensure the alignment of teaching methods with programme objectives. There are some variations in the application of AOL across colleges, reflecting a

level of autonomy allowed to colleges and departments, but the process appears sound and thorough.

3.13 Each course instructor is required to prepare a syllabus for each course, which is the basis for a contract with students and is made available through the GUST portal. The process is overseen by the Dean and Head of Department as well as the Vice-President Academic. The course syllabus includes identifying details and the semester of the offering, prerequisites, the contact details of the instructor, the course description, learning outcomes and a statement on plagiarism together with required reading, a schedule of lectures, a grading scheme, attendance policy and dates of class examinations.

3.14 Students told the review team of their satisfaction with the reliable turnaround of feedback on assessed work and the clarity of the course syllabus. Students are informed through the course syllabus and at the start of teaching sessions about the importance of academic integrity and how to avoid offences.

3.15 A manual of Academic Policies and Regulations includes coverage of degree and graduation requirements, grading, marking and examination policy, academic probation and dismissal arrangements, as well as student conduct policies, although the policy framework would be strengthened through further development.

3.16 For courses taught by more than one instructor, a course coordinator is appointed to oversee the alignment and coordination of the course materials, including examinations. This leads to the preparation of a common examination across all sections. For non-coordinated courses, the individual lecturer ensures assessments meet learning objectives. Grades are submitted electronically and approved by the instructor under the oversight of the Dean/Head of Department. Subsequently, grades can only be changed on the basis of recognised error through a formal process. There are rules for dealing with mitigating circumstances through make up examinations.

3.17 The Grade Appeal policy allows appeals under defined grounds although the detailed procedure was not clear to the review team. Similarly, there is a procedure for addressing student misconduct, including academic misconduct. Cases are heard by the Student Conduct Committee. The team noted that the procedure was silent on a student's right to be accompanied to a student conduct hearing. There is provision for a student to serve as a member of the committee but no information about the appointment or training of the student member. The procedure states that the decision of the committee is final, with no right of review or appeal. The team saw no evidence of unfairness toward students but considered that the Student Conduct Procedure should be amended to make explicit a series of checks and balances to ensure fair treatment. The review team therefore **recommends** that the University should create and implement policies for the handling of student conduct and grade appeals to support the equitable treatment of students. Overall, the review team concludes that Standard 1.3 Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment is **met**.

Standard 1.4: Student admission, progression, recognition and certification

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

Findings

- 4.1 There is information on the University's higher education offer online. This includes information on which programmes are available, course fees, and entry requirements. Policies and procedures relating to student admission, progression, recognition and certification are also available online.
- 4.2 The admissions process is overseen by the University's Admissions Department and Registration and Enrolment Management Department, the heads of which ultimately report to the VP Academic Affairs. At the time of the review visit, the VP Academic Affairs post was vacant, and instead both heads reported directly to the President of GUST.
- 4.3 Students apply to GUST via their online admission and registration system. Applicants must submit their completed application, application fee, and supporting documentation prior to the start of the semester for which they are applying. Once an application has been received, the University's Admissions Department will check to ensure that all documentation has been submitted and that documents, such as degree certificates, have been confirmed as genuine by the relevant authorities. Once this is complete, where possible, an offer is made. Offers (and rejections) are communicated by email. Incoming students are invited to complete two placement tests: one for English, another for Maths. Students who met the team during the review visit reflected positively on the admissions process saying that it was simple, easy-to-understand, and quick.
- 4.4 There are no minimum English language requirements for the University's programmes. To support those with limited English abilities, all new students undertake an English (and Maths) placement test and are then offered targeted language support. Applicants who can demonstrate proficiency in English, for example, via TOEFL or IELTS, can fast-track themselves into higher-level language classes upon enrolment.
- 4.5 All new students are provided with the University Student Handbook and relevant programme-specific information. Some of these documents are also available on the University's website. There is also an induction programme for new students, referred to locally as an orientation week. During the review visit, the team met students and student representatives who reflected positively on the admissions process and the induction programme.
- 4.6 There are arrangements for the recognition of prior learning (RPL) and these are set out in the Admission Policy and Procedure. Course content must be sufficiently similar to that delivered at GUST including degree of difficulty, length, depth of study, and content covered. This is a decision taken by subject-matter experts usually teaching on the applicant's proposed programme of study. During the review visit, the team met students who had experience of the RPL process, most of whom had a positive experience, although it was clear that the University could perhaps provide more information on the overall process.
- 4.7 During the desk-based analysis, the team noted that there was no explicit reference to an appeal mechanism against negative admissions decisions in the University's Admissions Policy. Exploring this during the review visit, the team heard that applicants

could appeal a decision by virtue of simply re-submitting their application. Further, the University informed the team that the President's Office was currently reviewing the admissions policy with a view to including a suitable appeal mechanism. However, as this work had not concluded at the time of the review visit, the team **recommends** that the university develop and implement a mechanism by which applicants can appeal negative admissions decisions, and ensure this policy is published.

4.8 There are processes to monitor and support student progression throughout their academic journey including the academic advising and academic probation system. All new students are assigned an academic advisor from the first day of their admission by the One-Stop Student Service Centre (OSC). The role of the advisor is to provide guidance on any academic matters, including course advising, tutoring, and counselling. While these advisors are not academics in and of themselves, they are provided with regular training by colleagues in academic roles on, for example, suitable major pathways to ensure that they can support students in their role.

4.9 Students must maintain a Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) of 2.0 or higher to avoid being placed on academic probation. Students on academic probation are restricted to taking no more than four courses, per semester. If the student fails to improve, their case will be reviewed for dismissal by the Academic Administrative Committee. In evaluating its effectiveness, the team reviewed data showing the number of entrants/exits to the academic probation system, and met advisors who support students on probation, concluding that the system worked well, and allowed the University to support those most at risk of failing.

4.10 The University has standard requirements for graduation and these are outlined in the GUST Academic Policies and Regulations. All degrees at GUST have a minimum of 120 credits and, in order to graduate, a student must have a CGPA of 2.0 or higher. Students in their last semester before planned completion of their degree must apply for graduation online via the University's portal. This application is processed by the Admissions and Registration Department which is responsible for maintaining all student academic records. The Registrar will submit a list of graduates to the University Council, as the senior academic authority, which will ultimately then approve students meeting the University's graduation requirements.

4.11 The review team reviewed a sample of graduation certificates and transcripts and concluded that the documentation explained the qualification gained, including the context, level and status of the studies that were pursued and successfully completed.

4.12 Notwithstanding the recommendation in this Standard, the review team concludes that the processes for the admission, progression, graduation and certification of students are aligned with the requirements of Standard 1.4 Student admission, progression, recognition and certification. Therefore, the review team concludes that Standard 1.4 Student admission, progression, recognition and certification is **met**.

Standard 1.5: Teaching staff

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

Findings

5.1 GUST adheres to the PUC standards and requirements. These requirements indicate that PhD holders should constitute not less than 70% of the faculty members, 20% should hold master's degrees, and 10% hold bachelor's degrees. In addition, 67% of faculty should be full-time, 33% part-time with a staff student ratio of 1:30. In terms of outcomes, GUST exceeds the PUC standards in all cases: PhD holders represent 79% of full-time teaching staff, 95% are on full-time contracts and GUST maintains a staff student ratio of 1:21 for the 2023-24 academic year. The review team noted that faculty members are drawn from different countries including Jordan, Kuwait, Turkey and the US, for example. The document outlining criteria for academic positions requires that the applicant must have completed a full-time PhD degree on-campus from a university in North America or Europe. However, universities from other countries, such as Japan, Singapore, Taiwan and elsewhere may also apply, if they are top-ranked in the subject field and GUST offers a range of benefits such as return flights, health insurance, furniture allowance, and school tuition fees. There are different criteria for adjunct, assistant and full professorial positions.

5.2 GUST fosters a culture of innovation in teaching methods and the use of new technologies, led by its Center for Research into Teaching and Learning. Faculty members are encouraged to engage in scholarly activities and research, as well as co-creation with their students to strengthen the link between education and research and to inform their teaching practice. GUST supports these endeavours by providing resources, including funding.

5.3 GUST sponsors a faculty fellowship programme that allows faculty members to collaborate with other institutions on research projects. In recognition of outstanding research contributions, GUST publicly acknowledges its faculty members and rewards them monetarily, as well as granting course releases throughout the academic year to encourage high performance. Research-active faculty are also granted course releases to further encourage exceptional performance. GUST provides a limited number of fellowships for research and development at a partner university (or any of the QS/THE/ ARWU top 100 universities in the subject field of the applicant) during the summer semester. The Summer Faculty Fellowship provides a grant of a certain amount in support of GUST faculty activities including research, writing, and programme development. The Research and Development Office (RDO) - Graduate Studies and Research (GSR) administers these funds, partially based on recommendations from the applicant's Head of the Department and College Dean and which should be approved by the President/Vice President for Academic Affairs.

5.4 GUST state in their SED that they encourage innovative teaching methodologies and pedagogical approaches which ensure the achievement of learning outcomes, including stakeholder (including students) involvement in curriculum design and assessment practices. Professional development opportunities are available for faculty to enhance teaching skills and incorporate best practices, including through the regular evaluation of teaching effectiveness through student feedback, and the peer observation of teaching.

5.5 GUST states that it promotes academic excellence by fostering a culture of continuous learning, research, and scholarly activity among its faculty members. This provides students with opportunities to learn from experts actively engaged in advancing their fields and enhances the reputation of GUST's programmes. To support faculty, GUST

provides opportunities for continuous professional development, such as attending conferences, workshops, seminars, and training sessions related to their academic disciplines. GUST also provides resources, funding, and administrative support for research endeavours and scholarly activities, including conducting research, publishing scholarly articles, and presenting at academic conferences. The Missouri University of Science and Technology has provided staff development workshops on student-centred learning and teaching strategies.

5.6 The Faculty Recruitment Policy outlines the selection process that results in the appointment of faculty staff but does not specify qualifications required although the Staff Hiring Policy requires equivalency by the Ministry of Higher Education in Kuwait which is essential for candidates seeking academic positions.

5.7 GUST conducts annual performance evaluations at the end of each academic year to ensure that rigorous teaching standards are upheld. This process includes collecting and considering student feedback, which is integrated into the faculty members' performance review to ensure continuous improvement. When faculty members' performance falls below expectations, as indicated by the faculty assessment procedure, a structured approach is used to address their needs and facilitate improvement. Faculty members identified as needing improvement receive personalised mentoring within their respective departments. This mentoring is provided by experienced colleagues or department heads who offer guidance, support, and feedback tailored to specific areas that need improvement. In addition to departmental mentoring, GUST offers targeted professional development sessions designed to address the specific needs identified through faculty assessments to elevate faculty performance to meet or exceed expectations.

5.8 The Procedure for Faculty Assessment sets out how performance is rewarded by pay increases, based upon teaching, research and administration. There is a clear and succinct document outlining the teaching load reduction for research excellence.

5.9 GUST also utilises an in-house developed application to inform staffing decisions based on teaching and student needs. This application provides valuable insights into the required faculty composition per department, allowing for data-driven planning and optimisation of staffing resources. By leveraging technology to analyse teaching demands, student enrolment trends, and programme requirements, GUST enhances its capacity to allocate academic staff efficiently and ensure that faculty members are appropriately distributed to meet instructional needs across various disciplines.

5.10 The review of evidence and meetings with GUST senior staff confirmed that teaching staff were using learning and teaching technologies to support student learning. The reviewers' tour of the resources including the Amazon Web Services facility, laboratories and other teaching spaces further confirmed this. Moodle is used and the programme is constructed within this, providing materials for students. Announcements to students and assessment tasks are shared. All books and journals are accessible via Moodle.

5.11 The recently established Center for Teaching, Learning and Research assists staff in their professional development. Professional development has not yet generally included training on pedagogical approaches, but the Center will offer workshops on pedagogy. Technicians such as laboratory instructors and supervisors also support the faculty.

5.12 Senior staff and faculty members confirmed the opportunities for professional development outlined in the SED. They also confirmed the application of policies in regard to staff recruitment and noted that faculty were interviewed by the President. Staff further confirmed that they had opportunity to attend orientation sessions on commencing their employment with GUST. Staff explained that their future intention is to utilise competency based appraisals. Academic support staff also confirmed the availability of professional

development opportunities to develop their skills and capabilities. GUST has gained “Great Place To Work” certification to evidence their commitment to creating a workplace where staff feel valued and engaged.

5.13 The University also utilises opportunities made available by accreditation bodies such as the AACSB, for example. Senior staff confirmed that there is an holistic training and development plan for both faculty and administrative staff. The HR team develops training needs analyses and identify professional development informed by these. This includes conferences, and a focus on the development of soft skills i.e. communication and themes, for example mental health. There are faculty mentors for new academic staff. The faculty evaluation process also includes questions on attendance at professional development workshops.

5.14 The review team concludes that GUST processes for staff recruitment and professional development align with the requirements outlined in the Standard. Therefore, Standard 1.5 Teaching staff is **met**.

Standard 1.6: Learning resources and student support

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

Findings

6.1 The University has a wide range of learning and teaching resources that support and enable students to achieve both academically and professionally. Classrooms allow for the delivery of in-person teaching; however, there are also specialist facilities that support the delivery of the University's technical courses. For example, the Interpreting and Translation Center (ITC) is used in the delivery of GUST's BA in English Linguistics/Translation programme. The review team undertook a tour of the University's teaching and learning facilities during the review visit and considered them an asset to the University. To ensure optimal usage of the University's learning facilities, they conduct regular analysis to identify usage patterns. This allows the University to optimise the usage of key rooms, laboratories and other facilities. During the visit, the team also visited some of the University's non-academic spaces, including, the amphitheatre (which is typically used for graduation), the gym and swimming pool, which are free-to-use for all students, staff, and alumni, and the University's conferencing facilities.

6.2 The library provides a focal point for students looking for textbooks, access to online articles or eBooks and other material. At the time of the review visit, in total, GUST students have access to around 25,000 physical books, 490,000 eBooks, 60,000 eJournals, and 26 bibliographic/full-text databases. The review team undertook a tour of the library and concluded that the facilities were well-established and the library staff welcoming. During this tour, the team found several collections donated by local Embassies, including, for example, a collection donated by the Embassy of India, Kuwait. The team also noted several workspaces permanently reserved for students with additional learning requirements. Separately, during the review visit, the team met students and student representatives who reflected on their experience of using the library as a workspace and repository for course material. Overall, the team concluded that the University's library facilities, including the e-library resources, were high-quality and staffed appropriately.

6.3 The University's virtual learning environment (VLE), known locally as MyGUST, allows students to review course content, submit assessments, and participate in discussions with other students and teaching staff. Alongside this, the University has developed a Student Information System (SIS) which allows students to view their grades and study plan, which is updated as they progress through their studies. An induction to the University's various IT systems, some of which are still being implemented, is provided during the University's induction day. During the review visit, the team was provided with a guided tour of several university systems, including the SIS, which the team considered overall to be useful resources for both students and staff.

6.4 All students are assigned an advisor, whose role it is to be an ongoing source of advice for students in relation to their academic goals and performance. Newly admitted students are eligible to enrol only after consulting with their assigned academic advisor during the registration period. Students wishing to change their degree major are encouraged to meet with their academic advisor prior to making the final decision. Similarly, students wishing to change their college (for example, from the College of Arts and Sciences to the College of Business Administration) are required to obtain permission from their academic advisor beforehand. Students in their first year of study at GUST are assigned an advisor from the One Stop Student Services Center (OSC), whereas students in later years are assigned college-based advisors who can provide more subject-specific support as this

becomes necessary. Students who met the review team during the visit reflected positively on their experience of academic advising at GUST.

6.5 The OSC co-locates several student support services including the Tutoring Center. Students can avail themselves of individual online or face-to-face tutoring in a variety of subjects. During the review visit, the team heard from students and alumni about their experience as peer tutors and note-takers for students with additional learning requirements, for whom such support was transformational. The team also heard several examples of students contributing to their local communities through volunteering and charity projects. All of these activities are recorded by the University and reported in an Office of Student Life Transcript, which is available to students, upon request. Reflecting on this, the strong sense of community at GUST, and clear commitment by the University to be a force for social good in Kuwait, the team recognises as **good practice** the opportunities for students to engage in extracurricular activities in particular peer-to-peer tutoring, opportunities for students to support peers with additional learning requirements, and volunteer work in the wider community, which support a broad sense of community.

6.6 Key to the University's mission is developing students' skills in relation to entrepreneurship and enterprise. This is clear in several of the courses that students can choose as part of their degree programme, including the so-called "Live Your Major" initiative. In addition, the University has established an Incubator Lab which offers students and alumni support in establishing their own businesses and scaling up existing enterprises. This has led to several businesses successfully starting, scaling-up and expanding throughout Kuwait. The review team was particularly pleased to see student and alumni-run businesses forming part of the University's main concourse, further demonstrating the university's commitment in this area. Therefore, the team recognises as **good practice** the university's comprehensive support for student and alumni entrepreneurship and enterprise through, for example, the Incubation Lab, which has led to the creation of many student- and alumni-led business that support their local communities.

6.7 Providing students with wrap-around care, the University has a Physical Fitness and Health Centre, which includes a gym and other exercise facilities including a swimming pool and squash courts, and a health clinic. At the time of the review visit, the University employed one counsellor to provide mental health support to staff and students, with a second counsellor set to join GUST immediately following the review. Faculty members can also recommend students who may require the assistance of academic advisors and counsellors. They can do this via the Student Performance Enhancement and Active Retention (SPEAR) system, which allows any staff member to direct/refer a student to one of the university's core services, such as, the OSC or counselling service.

6.8 The University employs 216 professional support staff across multiple different departments. This includes staff involved in the library and IT departments, as well as the OSC. During the review visit, the team met students and student representatives who reflected positively on the support available. Separate to this, the University employs 29 staff in what it calls the Faculty Support Group. These are lab instructors, supervisors, and technicians, who support the delivery of technical content and the University's curriculum. There are ample opportunities for professional support staff to develop themselves professionally, for example, by undertaking courses (some of which are delivered by GUST staff) and attending conferences.

6.9 The review team concluded that GUST has appropriate funding for learning and teaching activities. The team was happy to find that there is a range of suitable services in place that students enjoy and use frequently. Therefore, the review team concludes that Standard 1.6 Learning resources and student support is **met**.

Standard 1.7: Information management

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

Findings

7.1 GUST ensures the collection, analysis, and use of relevant GUST information for the effective management of its programmes and other activities. An established Strategy Office was put in place to monitor and channel strategic projects and plans for GUST. The mission and strategic goals are communicated to all key stakeholders through a cascaded implementation plan process that connects department projects to the University's strategic goals and mission. The Strategy Office conducts two meetings per semester (beginning and end) with key stakeholders to ensure that all projects are progressing according to the strategic plan. GUST uses a digital platform ASANA, which is accessible to all the stakeholders, to track and manage the strategic goals of the University and measure the key performance indicators. This system facilitates task management and collaboration among faculty and staff, assisting in the establishment and monitoring of strategic objectives. It offers a centralised platform for planning and executing projects, providing real-time updates and visibility into the status of strategic initiatives.

7.2 Furthermore, GUST has developed in-house software packages, known as GUST APPS, hosted both locally and on the cloud. These applications streamline numerous processes for students, faculty, and staff, enhancing operational efficiency across the University. For example, GUST APPS include a Talent System for managing faculty and staff, Process Hub for workflow automation, Event Organisation subsystem, PUC Financial Report System, Faculty Profile Management System, and many more. These systems support various administrative and academic functions, such as generating teaching load reports, managing faculty research profiles, processing grade appeals, and handling financial transactions securely and efficiently. By leveraging these specialised applications, GUST maintains a high digital standard of service and support for its students, faculty, and staff.

7.3 The review team explored in various meetings the degree to which the Student Performance Enhancement and Active Retention System (SPEAR) and data produced by the Strategy Office is used in relation to the identification of the needs of students with disabilities. Faculty and other staff explained that they take a proactive approach. Faculty confirmed the usefulness of SPEAR, alongside monitoring attendance and grades noting that, if a student achieves lower than 2.0 GPA, they are placed upon academic probation and if this does not improve, then the student will eventually have to leave, as they must improve their GPA. The number of courses students can take is limited whilst on probation to better support them in improving their GPA.

7.4 In addition to SPEAR being employed as a platform to track the students' academic performance and progress throughout their academic journey, it provides insights about retention rates to identify areas for enhancement for student support services and assists in the early identification of at-risk students. The system enables the implementation of intervention strategies, such as recommending students to visit their advisors and counsellors. Moreover, SPEAR leverages student success and overall academic outcomes by streamlining communication between the teaching faculty, administrators, advisors, and Tutoring Center for early detection and swift intervention when students are at risk of failing by referring them to the Learning Support Services Center for tutoring sessions. The review team identified SPEAR and its use of learner analytics to monitor, analyse and implement supportive measures to ensure students' success as a **feature of good practice**.

7.5 Extensive use is made of the Assurance of Learning (AOL) and the Colleges evidence robust consideration of data emanating from AOL. The University's accreditation and quality staff can advise and guide Colleges on the approach to AOL. AOL includes regular evaluation of academic programmes, including their learning outcomes, curriculum, and assessment strategies. The Strategy Office monitors strategic goals for the University. The use of ASANA enables the connection of department projects to the University's strategic goals. A student satisfaction survey is undertaken through requesting all students to complete an online tutor and course evaluation form consisting of questions tailored to cover teaching, resources, and student experience aspects. A thorough data analysis is undertaken, and staff can access this.

7.6 GUST takes considered steps to ensure that it collects, analyses and protects relevant information, and overall, the team concludes that Standard 1.7 Information management is **met**.

Standard 1.8: Public information

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

Findings

8.1 GUST is committed to publishing clear, accurate, objective, up-to-date, and readily accessible information about its activities. The first port-of-call for public information is the GUST website or social media. The University also engages in local in person events, such as hosting school visits, exhibitions, and career fairs. Its Public Relations (PR) Department is responsible for developing and implementing communication strategies, coordinating with internal departments to develop and update content, manage social media accounts, and oversee the University's communication activities.

8.2 Prospective students, the public, and other key stakeholders can find information on GUST's strategy and policies and procedures online. This includes the University's Quality Assurance Policy and Assurance of Learning Policy. Key policies relating to the student academic experience, including the Admissions Policy and Academic Regulations, are also available online. Curriculum overviews for each of the University's programmes are available via dedicated college and programme pages. The team reviewed a sample of pages on the website and found them to be accessible and the information accurate and fit-for-purpose.

8.3 There are processes by which the university ensures the ongoing accuracy and currency of published information. Historically, this has boiled down to regular reviews by responsible departments, i.e. the Admissions Department reviews information in relation to admissions and recruitment. On occasion, the PUC has also identified errors on the University's website, flagging these for review. In theory, where changes are made, this should be logged, however, the team could not find a central or complete record of all changes made to the university's website during the assessment period. Exploring the arrangements for the ongoing checking of published information in meetings with senior staff and professional support staff, the team heard that GUST is moving towards a policy whereby the Public Relations Department will take responsibility for checking the ongoing accuracy of all published information and, where errors are identified, these are logged. However, as this is not yet fully embedded, the review team **recommends** that the University develops a mechanism or tool that allows for the ongoing monitoring and review of published information.

8.4 Once enrolled, students are provided with the University's academic calendar, student handbook, and programme-specific handbook. Students can access information relating to the University services, including information on student support and counselling, via the University website. Furthermore, students can access the University's VLE, SIS, and GUST APPs hub.

8.5 On completion of their programme, transcripts and certificates are made available to students by request to the Dean of the Admissions and Registration Department (see Standard 1.4 for further information).

8.6 The review team concluded that the University publishes information about their activities, including programmes of study, that is clear, accurate, objective, up-to-date and readily accessible. Therefore, the review team concludes that Standard 1.8 Public information is **met**.

Standard 1.9: Ongoing monitoring and periodic review of programmes

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

Findings

9.1 GUST complies with the requirements set by the National Bureau for Academic Accreditation and Education Quality Assurance (NBAQ) and the Private Universities Council (PUC). The national regulatory authorities maintain close management of the monitoring process, with the University subject to periodic re-licensure by PUC. The regulatory authorities require GUST to retain international accreditations. The University has a robust record of positive responses to accreditation exercises from the accreditation bodies. The review team saw evidence of GUST feeding back to PUC on a periodic academic visit for ongoing programme monitoring.

9.2 The Assurance of Learning (AOL) system is intended to facilitate the continuous improvement of programmes and their performance against learning programmes, based on a series of systems and processes. Student assessment results are analysed and improvements are supported by extensive use of data. The process goes successively through the Department Curriculum Committee, followed by the College Curriculum Committee, and then the University Curriculum Committee for final approval. The AOL process varies, to some extent, between colleges, but is aligned to the requirements of accreditation bodies.

9.3 The review team noted examples of course changes which had been implemented in response to issues identified through programme and course monitoring. The Foundation Programme was reformed, leading to a significant reduction in failure rates. GUST also improved the transition process for students moving from foundation to college level. The high failure rates within the Foundation Programme were identified through routine monitoring and analysis of student performance data, faculty evaluations and student feedback reports. The reform of the Foundation Programme included additional student support services, enhanced teaching methods, mentoring and more effective progress monitoring. Any changes to courses are reflected in revised study plans, published through the university's electronic system and following input from departmental, college and university curriculum committees.

9.4 The AACSB re-accreditation report commends the arrangements for the systematic review of learning goals and assessment and improving curricula, citing an example of the introduction of an entrepreneurship course as an enhancement identified through the monitoring process.

9.5 The University has arrangements for reviewing the efficacy of learning resources and student support to take account of changing programme needs. For example, staffing needs are reviewed by the HR department using an IT-based application to track staffing levels, faculty recruitment and workload distribution. The GUST library annually reviews resource requirements.

9.6 There is wide use of data collection, analysis and reporting to inform programme monitoring and review. That is based on a suite of information systems and applications,

including a series of in-house software packages – GUST APPS and various dashboards – to support programme administration and monitoring and associated decision-making. Student performance and retention are monitored through the Student Performance and Active Retention (SPEAR) system.

9.7 The review team saw evidence of wide-ranging involvement of internal and external stakeholders in the ongoing monitoring and review of programmes and courses and action taken in response. There is no specific University programme monitoring and review policy. The review team considered there is scope for GUST to introduce its own policy for periodic monitoring and review as a means of ensuring comprehensive coverage of all aspects of academic delivery and to further develop the institutional internal quality culture. The team therefore **recommends** that the University should introduce an internal policy for periodic monitoring and review to give the University full ongoing assurance of all aspects of academic programmes.

9.8 However, the review team noted the thorough institutional engagement with the detailed requirements of the national regulatory authorities and the solid record of external, international accreditation as well as the data-informed improvements to courses and programmes through the Assurance of Learning process and other programmes. Overall, the review team concludes that Standard 1.9 Ongoing monitoring and periodic review of programmes is **met**.

Standard 1.10: Cyclical external quality assurance

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

Findings

10.1 According to legislation, GUST undergoes compulsory external scrutiny by the Private Universities Council (PUC). As such, it responds to quality criteria set nationally. The next accreditation process is scheduled for 2028, with GUST having been awarded a four year academic and institutional accreditation in 2024. The PUC mandates specific requirements for licensure. Any new academic programme must be reviewed and approved by the PUC and is required to be accredited by an international academic accreditation body, ideally after the graduation of the first cohort. The National Bureau for Academic Accreditation and Education Quality Assurance (NBAQ) visits GUST every four years for reaccreditation purposes.

10.2 Since its establishment in 2002, GUST has partnered with the University of Missouri-St. Louis (UMSL) and, currently, with Missouri University for Science and Technology (Missouri S&T) for its newly established College of Engineering and Architecture (CEA). GUST's programmes are also accredited by various international organisations, including: the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET) for the Computer Science major; the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) for all programmes offered by the College of Business Administration (CBA); the American Communication Association (ACA) for the Mass Communication and Media majors; the National Organization for Student Success (NOSS) for the Mathematics Foundation Programme; and the Commission on Intensive English Programme Accreditation (CEA) for the English Foundation Programme.

10.3 The CBA AOL Progress Report - Assessment Summary (May 2023) noted that another assessment would be conducted in the Fall 2023 to ensure the closure of any identified gaps and to confirm that the AACSB standards are met; however, the team did not have sight of the Fall 2023 report, and it is therefore difficult to ascertain whether actions identified were completed successfully. The AOL for the College of Business is informed by the AACSB's 2020 business accreditation standards and focuses on Programme Learning Competencies and Outcomes. This means the AOL appears somewhat limited in scope, and does not fully consider learning and teaching strategies, assessment practices, or support for student progression. Terms of reference for committees do not appear to give membership so it is not possible to ascertain student engagement in the committee structure.

10.4 GUST has received international academic accreditations from well-known bodies such as ABET, AACSB, ACA, NOSS, and CEA. As individual programmes undergo accreditation with different bodies, this has the potential to generate a difference in views about policies and processes with implications for the quality assurance policy, and, if considered together and in detail, these views should reinforce the overall future development of the University's academic portfolio, enabling the sharing of good practice. Formal opportunities for cross-programme deliberations would ensure that shared actions are identified so that implementation may become more strategic and more proactive. In summary, oversight through appropriate governance structures may offer a catalyst for improvement.

10.5 With these arrangements, the University faces a risk that important recommendations may be implemented only at programme level without there being any formal opportunity for sharing insights across other areas. The quality assurance policy could be strengthened if

outcomes for individual programmes more clearly demonstrated an integrated approach, both from the bottom-up and top-down – an aspect the University was unable to substantiate to the review team during their visit.

10.6 However, there is sufficient external scrutiny to allow the University to benefit from different international perspectives. The review team also noted that all of the external quality assurance and accreditation bodies promote a cyclical approach and require periodic renewal of the accreditation status. Additionally, the national system itself promotes a cyclical approach. Although there is more that might be done in respect of the strategic integration of actions derived from external quality assurance, the review team concludes that Standard 1.10 Cyclical external quality assurance is **met**.

Glossary

Action plan

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

Annual monitoring

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

Collaborative arrangement

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

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, that enables the review team to identify its initial findings and subsequently supports the review team as it develops its review findings.

Enhancement

See **quality enhancement**.

European Standards and Guidelines

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

Examples of practice

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

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.

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