



Executive Summary

Renewal of Licensure

Al Ghurair University

April 14 – 17 2019

An External Review Team (ERT) visited Al Ghurair University (hereafter AGU) in Dubai from 14-17 April 2019, to assess its Application for the Renewal of Licensure. The exit interview was held on 17 April 2019.

AGU is a private institution of higher education that was founded in 1999. AGU has occupied its permanent campus in Dubai Academic City since 2006. The AGU campus is located in the Academic City Free Zone, on a detached campus geographically near Zayed University, Emirates Aviation University, and the University of Dubai. There is ample room for expansion and development with the total constructed land area of 275,000 sq. ft. within the 2,942,201 sq. ft land owned by AGU.

In recent years the cohorts have reduced in size from Fall Semester 2012, where the enrolment was 1260 to the 2018/19 intake of 1021 students being the lowest intakes to date. The current student undergraduate population consists of 512 Male and 387 females, and graduate level with 62 male and 60 females. The student cohort comprises $\approx 35\%$ Emirate national students. There are 52 faculty providing an SSR of $\approx 20:1$.

AGU has undergone changes at the presidential and senior management levels since the last Renewal of Licensure. The current president was appointed in 2017, and several senior positions at AGU remain vacant or are covered by people in acting positions.

The ERT review of Al Ghurair University and its activities, has noted strengths and positive development within the University. AGU continues to benefit from the support of the Al Ghurair family and group of companies, which gives it a secure base on which to contemplate its future. Faculty and staff also appear committed and generally satisfied with their employment at AGU. The recent appointment of Dr. Basem Al Zahabi as President of Al Ghurair University has been well received throughout the University and is seen as a positive factor for ongoing institutional management.

The ERT notes the effective and efficient integration of the HR department into the University,

with clear and focussed management throughout all aspects of the HR process. The ERT further notes the improved commitment to community engagement of AGU, in its ability to widen the opportunity for student placements.

The ERT notes that although the Senate is required by the 1999 Al Ghurair University Act it is not evident in the AGU Organisational structure. This is an important element for AGU to review. As a University, and an institution of Higher Education, AGU has a limited research presence or output. The alignment of its research strategy to the AGU mission is not clear. Internally the high levels of teaching required of faculty appear to be having an effect on research output. Similarly, as many individuals are fulfilling additional roles within the University, this is a further constraint on research activity and output. The ERT also identified continued instances of faculty overload, or else teaching outside their areas of expertise. This overload whilst providing financial compensation to the individual, it takes away time from the faculty to fully achieve the academic requirements of the University in teaching, research and service. The appointments required at a senior level at AGU are a concern to the ERT.

The existing physical facilities are well-suited to their purpose but are becoming 'tired' in appearance and effectiveness. The current student intake is the lowest recorded in recent years by AGU. This decline in student numbers and attributable revenue stream are of increasing concern. Discussion with senior managers identified that AGU has ideas about the reasons, and is considering its options in relation to this issue. However, the ERT strongly urges AGU put in place a strategy to support increasing its student numbers. Further, work is needed to ensure that actions are taken on the findings of evaluation surveys, and that greater use is made of needs analyses within the region.

The ERT puts forward its Requirements and Suggestions in the spirit of continuous improvement, with the aim of ensuring that Al Ghurair University is able to meet the CAA *Standards* as required for institutional Renewal of Licensure.