



Executive Summary

Initial Licensure

University of Birmingham Dubai

June 9 – 12, 2019

An External Review Team (hereafter the ERT) appointed by the Commission for Academic Accreditation (CAA) of the Ministry of Education (MoE) of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) visited the University of Birmingham Dubai (UoBD) from 9 to 12 June, 2019 to evaluate an Application for Initial Institutional Licensure (hereafter, the *Application*) of the University. The *Application*, consisting of a self-evaluation document (SED) and appendices, had been received by CAA on 3 and 4 June, 2019. The *Application* was the first to be considered under the 2019 version of the CAA *Standards* and as such was undertaken as a pilot of the new *Standards*.

UoBD is a branch campus of the University of Birmingham (UoB) which is a large (approximately 34,000 registered students), comprehensive university located in England's second City, Birmingham. UoB is well-established (founded in 1900) and has a high reputation both within the UK where it is a member of the prestigious Russell Group, and internationally. At the time of writing, UoB was ranked #116 in the Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings and #14 in the THE UK University Rankings. It was ranked #79 in the QS World University Rankings. The University claims to fall within the top 0.4% of universities globally.

The University is compliant with the UK Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Quality Code, was judged to have met UK expectations of academic quality and standards (with commendation for both the quality of student learning opportunities and the enhancement of student learning opportunities) at its last QAA Higher Education Review (2016). It was awarded in the Gold classification in the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF), which is a national classification system for teaching excellence in the UK.

The UoBD is recently-established, having enrolled its first students in 2018 following approval by KHDA in 2016. It is currently located in Dubai International Academic City (DIAC) where it has access to shared resources with other education entities. The space that it currently occupies has a floor area of approximately 3,300m². It has well-developed plans to build a large campus (with a target population of 4,500 students) in DIAC with a floor area of 50,000m² to which it will relocate in 2021. UoBD had 97 registered students at the time of the visit and

offered the following programmes: BEng Mechanical Engineering, BSc Business Management, BSc Economics, MSc Computer Science, and MSc International Business. The undergraduate programmes all lead to the award of degrees 'with honours'. All programmes are currently based upon the same curricula as offered at UoB in the UK. The baccalaureate (undergraduate) programmes are credit-rated under the UK Credit Accumulation and Transfer System (CATS) as 360 CATS credits which equates to three years of full-time study (approximately 3,600 hours of student effort). This approximates to 180 US or UAE credit hours (CH). The master's programmes are all 180 CATS which equates to approximately 45 CH. Additionally, UoBD offers Foundation Programmes in Engineering and Physical Sciences and in Social Sciences Business and Law that require one year of study and equate to 120 CATS or approximately 30 CH. The degree programmes are due for consideration for initial accreditation in July 2019. For accreditation purposes, the undergraduate programmes will be considered as constituted of the combined relevant Foundation and the BSc/BEng. The University also plans to introduce a Psychology Foundation, multiple additional bachelor's and master's programmes, and Postgraduate Certificates (that cannot be accredited as the UAE National Qualification Framework [NQF] does not recognize Graduate Certificates) in 2019-20 and 2020-21. The number of Dubai-based faculty in post at the time of the visit was 20. UoBD also uses a limited number (approximately 13) of 'flying faculty' from UoB in the delivery of its programmes.

In the area of governance and management, the ERT was pleased to see that UoBD inherits the strong organizational structures and quality assurance processes of UoB, adding appropriate additional leadership posts and local protocols in order to support activities in Dubai. There is evidence of shared academic culture and values and a strong commitment to the UoBD project by UoB senior management. UoBD also demonstrates commitment to work in partnership with the CAA in order to ensure alignment with the *Standards*. There is a comprehensive approach to the determination and monitoring of risk associated with all aspects of the establishment of the campus, and a well-planned approach to the phased establishment and development of UoBD. All these governance arrangements, strengthened by strong communication protocols, should prevent any potential mission drift at UoBD; a common problem for branch campuses.

In order to bring itself into full compliance with the *Standards*, UoBD needs to demonstrate that its policy frameworks and stakeholder information resources, meets the specific requirements set out in the *Standards*.

As UoBD now engages in its academic activities, particularly at the postgraduate level, it will be necessary to demonstrate a commitment to research through appropriate financial support and to monitor research achievements.

There is evidence that UoBD has already developed a range of worthwhile community engagement activities. As new academic activities develop, there will be a greater need to adopt a more explicitly strategic approach.

The ERT notes that UoBD is moving forward with the establishment of an Advisory Board at the campus level. Area-specific advisory boards will be needed in future to support the academic programs.

The ERT makes its requirements in a spirit of constructive engagement, with the aim of ensuring that the *Standards* are met, and to aid UoBD in its desired objective to establish a strong presence in the UAE.