



Executive Summary

Renewal of Licensure Zayed University

March 21 – 25, 2021

A Re-Licensure Review Team (hereafter RLRT) undertook a blended review visit of Zayed University (ZU) between 21st and 25th March 2021 to evaluate its *Self-Study* for Renewal of Licensure. Zayed University is a comprehensive, federal institution of higher learning with campuses in Dubai and Abu Dhabi. The original vision was given to the University in 2003 by His Excellency Sheikh Nahyan Bin Mubarak Al Nahyan, who was then both Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, and President of Zayed University. That original statement established a vision that “Zayed University shall become the leading university in the region, embodying the same rigorous standards and intellectual elements found in major universities throughout the world.”

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The University website reports that it offers 29 bachelor’s and master’s degree programs in 8 colleges enrolling nearly 11,000 students of both genders and different nationalities. There is a diverse international faculty with backgrounds and experiences in academia, government and industry. The Fact Book for 2019/20 reported 715 faculty from 62 countries, showing the depth of the diverse nature of faculty.

Through its consideration of ZU’s *Self-Study* submitted for Renewal of Licensure, examination of other documentation, and interaction with faculty, students, and others, the RLRT identified many strengths, including the following:

- The impressive resource base to deliver student learning and teaching across both campus locations. This spanned many aspects including laboratory provision, an effective CEI (Center for Educational Innovation), a unique Student Accessibility Service, student learning resources, opportunities for hands-on learning, and ample space for student activities and social events, all of which provided added value to the educational experience. The RLRT also noted the high quality of the arrangements for

the maintenance and management of the campus and facilities and the University's commitment to student welfare and the environment.

- The effective PALS (peer-assisting leaders) initiative, with its thoughtful and comprehensive student selection and training processes, the facilitation of the transformation of students into articulate and enthusiastic leaders, and the resulting advantages in providing improvement of learning for all students.
- An enthusiastic and supportive faculty who are committed to delivering the best achievable learning experience for the students and who are genuinely interested in the welfare and success of their students.
- A good record of working with alumni, employers, government agencies and members of the Advisory Committees to help develop ideas and initiatives which positively contribute to developments at ZU, including potential opportunities for community engagement and alumni professional development.

Matters which need addressing to bring the institution into full compliance with the *Standards* are identified by the RLRT and most of the critical requirements can be grouped into four thematic areas:

- Decision making: It was noted that a significant proportion of the senior management at ZU are recent appointments and are keen to steer the future direction of the University. The RLRT also heard much about the proposed review of the 2020 revamped Organizational Structure which the senior management stated now needs to be further updated to align with the next generation Strategic Plan (2022-26). The RLRT understood that some key decisions have already been taken in restructuring academic provision. During various meetings, the RLRT explored the extent to which this was a consultative process or a management-driven approach. Whilst there is evidence of consultation, there is greater evidence that key-decisions are being taken at a high level and faculty and staff advised of those decisions.
The expectations of *Stipulation 1.5.5* requires that institutional planning involves a wide range of stakeholders. ZU is therefore expected to demonstrate that wider consultation in setting out its Strategic Plan (2022-26) and any other institutional planning approaches have taken place in order to capture the experience and strengths of the institution and external stakeholders.
- Faculty Workloads: The RLRT was provided with faculty workload data, covering both full-time and adjunct faculty. It is clear from this data that the maximum workload for faculty and number of adjunct faculty employed, as a percentage of the faculty workforce, regularly exceeds the thresholds defined in *Stipulations 5.7 and 5.8*. The clear message is that the University is not employing a sufficient number of full-time faculty to meet its needs. Additional faculty must be hired to ensure effective delivery of all programs, thus meeting the workload limits and qualifications requirements specified in the *Standards*.
It is recognized that addressing these shortfalls will require significant time and resources. Nevertheless, it is CAA's expectation that all programs will be fully compliant with the *Standards* in less than three years. Hence, ZU is required to: provide timed and resourced action plans for the hiring of additional faculty to support all programs over the next three years; demonstrate that such plans will bring all programs

into compliance with the workload limits and qualifications requirements of the *Standards*; and provide to CAA annual progress reports for each of the next three years demonstrating steady progress toward reaching the targets specified in the action plans for all programs.

- Course Files and Closure of the Continuous Improvement Cycle: The RLRT reviewed a range of course files and noted that the content does not fully match the requirements expressed in *Annex 16 of the Standards*. Hence ZU needs to ensure it extends the range of information it currently holds in course files so that it meets the *Standards*. Maintaining course files is facilitated by a fairly well-structured IT system for recording and updating entries. However, the RLRT judged the approach taken by faculty to recording entries in their course files was focused on compliance rather than enhancement and improvement, evidenced by limited systematic analysis of the data recorded. If the course files become an integral part of a quality assurance approach which systematically considers all issues and recommendations raised following the full analysis of data, then continuous improvement at the course level can be secured. Such course level improvements will feed through to program level improvements. ZU must demonstrate that it is embracing the concept as a continuous improvement cycle through systematic approaches at all stages of its QA processes.
- Community Engagement: Although the efforts of community engagement have been productive, the approach to date has not embraced the wider opportunities available. ZU should now embrace the opportunity in the development of its Strategic Planning to develop its community engagement activities.

The RLRT makes its requirements and suggestions in a spirit of constructive engagement, with the aim of ensuring that the *Standards* are met, and to aid ZU to receive Re-Licensure. Our requirements and suggestions can, and should, be viewed as “Opportunities for Improvement” as ZU progresses towards excellence in learning and teaching, research, and community service.