



Executive Summary

Renewal of Licensure

Higher Colleges of Technology

October 27 - 31, 2019

An External Review Team (hereafter ERT) visited Higher Colleges of Technology (HCT) from 27-31 October 2019 to evaluate the Application for Renewal of Licensure (hereafter the *Self-Study*). The exit interview was held on 31 October 2019. This report presents the observations and recommendations of the ERT. The ERT visited three HCT campuses (DBM in Dubai, AAW in Al Ain, and FJW in Fujairah).

HCT system was established in 1988 as a system of post-secondary institutions that would educate UAE nationals for professional and technical careers. In 2019, HCT launched the *HCT 4.0 Employability & Beyond Strategic Plan*, based on the directives of HH Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, UAE Vice President, Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai. HCT 4.0 is based on three foundational pillars, which are: Technical Leaders, No Emirati Left Behind, and Graduating Companies.

HCT has 16 campuses in five of the seven Emirates. Female and male students attend classes in separate facilities at each campus. Total enrollment during the academic year 2019/20 is 20,435 students. Of the enrollment 62% of the students are female. HCT has six academic divisions offering qualifications in 71 programs. All 71 programs are accredited by the CAA and 28 of them have international accreditation. The divisions are Applied Communication, Business, Computer and Information Systems, Education, Engineering Technology and Sciences, and Health Sciences. Total full-time faculty is 1111; of which 45% is with a terminal degree; however, this figure becomes 58% when excluding the 238 faculty with Master degree dedicated for General Studies. HCT has 23 part-time faculty during fall 2019. The full-time faculty-to-student ration is 1:18.

The ERT is pleased to note that HCT has made substantial progress since the last licensure visit and the CIS Program visit of 2015. It commends HCT on providing excellent facilities across its many campuses that are continuously improved and access to worthwhile educational opportunities for a large number of national students.

There is good evidence of improvements regarding the coordination between campuses, particularly regarding the consistency and coordination of delivery of the academic programs and their courses, and the design of the systems for institutional and program effectiveness.

HCT is now embarking on a new and very ambitious strategy, HCT 4.0, which is clearly in line with its historical mission. This is very welcome and raises challenges for HCT leaders to meet in the next few years. The vision and the level of funding of the programs and operations of HCT including HCT 4.0 is evidence of the commitment and effectiveness of the institutional leadership of the institution and of the country, to ensure that *no Emirati is left behind* and that all citizens have the knowledge, skills, and competencies, to be productive members of society. Interviews with students, alumni, employers, and faculty demonstrate commitment to, enthusiasm for, and engagement with the institution. The ERT wishes HCT well with its new strategy.

In the ERT's opinion, the most crucial concern is human resource. HCT has been provided with substantial funding to create excellent facilities to support much of the HCT 4.0 agenda. However, ultimately, it is *the activity of people* that will lead to the successful achievement of HCT 4.0 goals. These people are students and faculty, and the former will not succeed without the latter. In terms of resources, it is *time* more than anything else that faculty will need in order to contribute to HCT 4.0 success: financial and facility resources are largely evident.

In terms of areas that require attention, the most important are as follows:

- The Submission: The *Self-Study* usefully included material from the Procedural Guidelines for Renewal of Licensure (*PGRL*), but then provide narrative relating directly to the sub-sub-standards. In many cases this meant that the requirements of the *PGRL* were not met. In many cases the submission provided only very limited data and analysis. HCT is a large and complex organization – in providing and analyzing data, the proper approach should have been to recognize this complexity and to ensure appropriate disaggregation of the evidence. This was also discussed in the Introduction.
- Policies and Procedures: HCT has been working on its policies and procedures for some time, but this is still very much work in progress. There is a lot more that needs to be done in order to develop a comprehensive set of policies, procedures, and regulations that will meet its own needs and meet the *Standards*.
- The Curricula: the major areas of general concern relate to remedial courses (which need to be zero-credit rated and not included in the program credit weighting); a comprehensive and transparent set of policies, procedures and regulations covering academic offences (to ensure all personnel are aware of their responsibilities, and that cases are dealt with appropriately and fairly); and program effectiveness (which needs to be more rigorously implemented according to an established framework that is of high quality).
- Faculty: HCT has made pleasing improvements in this area over the last five to six years. In particular, the numbers and qualifications of faculty have improved, leading to an improved educational environment, more manageable workloads, and greater research activity. More remains to be done, both to meet the challenges of HCT 4.0 and the *Standards*. A second comprehensive faculty plan is now required to cover the coming years.

- Research: HCT has established an improved framework for encouraging research, including financial support. At present workloads and the quality of applications remain a barrier to fully activating these initiatives.
- Community Engagement: While there is significant evidence of community engagement activity, HCT 4.0 will require an institutionally led strategic approach to mutually beneficial links with external partners, specifically companies and others involved in applied research, entrepreneurship, and innovation.

The ERT makes its requirements in a spirit of constructive engagement, with the aim of ensuring that the *Standards* are met, and to aid HCT in its desired objective to renew its license.