



**Executive Summary**  
**Renewal of Licensure**  
**United Arab Emirates University**

**November 9 – 14, 2019**

An External Review Team (ERT) appointed by the Commission for Academic Accreditation (CAA) of the Ministry of Education (MoE) of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) visited the United Arab Emirates University (UAEU) from 10<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> November, 2019, to evaluate an Application for Renewal of Institutional Licensure of the University by CAA (hereafter the *Application*) consisting of a self-evaluation document (hereafter, the *Self-Study*) and appendices. The *Application* had been received at CAA in May, 2019. The exit interview was held, on 14<sup>th</sup> November, 2019.

The UAE was the first federal university to be established in the UAE, having been founded in 1976 by His Highness the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, the founding President of the UAE. UAEU enrolled its first students in 1977 onto undergraduate programs taught in Arabic and located in multiple sites around the city of Al Ain. In 2003, English became the principal language of instruction in most programs, and in 2008 UAEU began developing graduate programs. In 2011-2012, the University completed a move to a single purpose-built campus. UAEU has grown into a comprehensive academic institution with a student enrolment of approximately 13,860 undergraduate and 859 graduate students and employing approximately 1,000 faculty and 1,300 staff. In addition to the main campus in Al Ain, the University also offers a limited number of programs in Abu Dhabi and Dubai. UAEU is ranked by the 2020 Times Higher Education World University Rankings as the top-ranked university in the UAE, 300-350 in world ranking and 70<sup>th</sup> in the Young University Ranking.

UAEU currently has 11 colleges: Business and Economics, Science, Education, Engineering, Humanities and Social Sciences, IT, Law, Medicine and Health Sciences, and Food and Agriculture, supported by the University College and the College of Graduate Studies. Together, these offer approximately 80 degree programs. It has also established nine research centres and a science and innovation park.

Prior to 2013, UAEU, in common with other Federal Higher Education Institutions in the UAE, it had been exempted from the requirement for CAA licensure. UAEU applied for its licensure in October, 2013, was awarded licensure on 14<sup>th</sup> April, 2014. The current *Application* is

considered against the 2019 version of the CAA Standards (hereafter, the *Standards*) that were released in June 2019.

The ERT is pleased to note that UAEU has made substantial progress since the last licensure visit in 2013. It commends UAEU on the level and stability of its fiscal resources and provision of excellent facilities to support the education of its students, and particularly to support research.

UAEU is now embarking on a new and very ambitious Transformation Project in order to meet the challenges ahead. Interviews with students and faculty, and senior leaders, demonstrate commitment to, enthusiasm for, and engagement with the institution. The experience and credentials of the faculty are aligned with the aspirations of being a leading research intensive university. The ERT wishes UAEU well with the developing Transformation Project and hopes this review will help to identify areas that will support the University in achieving its Vision.

In the ERT's opinion, the most crucial concern is human resource: ultimately it is *the activity of people* that will lead to the successful achievement of UAEU's ambitions. 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 the success of UAEU's renewed strategy.

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

- Policies and Procedures: There is a range of issues concerning policies and procedures. In addition to policies which are missing, some are not well drafted, and others are documented inappropriately. A comprehensive, complete, well drafted, and definitive Policies and Procedures Manual is required, from which other documents can base their content.
- Risk Management: This has remained a problem area since initial licensure. The ERT notes the current initiatives, and looks forward to a comprehensive approach to risk management being developed and implemented at UAEU.
- Quality Assurance: Whilst individual quality assurance units appear to be well functioning, the overall system is complex with some uncertainties regarding division of labour, a tendency for individual units to work in isolation, and no clear execution of institution-wide quality assurance and enhancement. Limited attention is given to the quality assurance of some academic, student and administrative services.  
A satisfactory and well operating framework for program effectiveness must involve deep engagement by faculty. It needs to include policies and procedures for ensuring that the delivery of academic programs is well coordinated and ensures comparable educational and assessment experiences for all students. This is critical for courses taught with multiple sections and multiple teachers, whether within or between branches. The program effectiveness framework needs to be revised to address current weaknesses.

- Campus Coordination: UAEU is planning to extend its activities on its branch campuses in Dubai and Abu Dhabi. At present appropriate governance arrangements and detailed principles for campus coordination are lacking.

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