



Executive Summary

Renewal of Licensure Abu Dhabi School of Management Abu Dhabi

9-14 January 2022

A Renewal of Institutional Licensure Review Team (RILRT) appointed by the Commission for Academic Accreditation (CAA) of the Ministry of Education (MoE) of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) undertook a review at the Abu Dhabi School of Management (ADSM) in January 2022 to evaluate an application from ADSM for Renewal of Institutional Licensure (RIL) consisting of a *Self-Study* document and attachments (hereafter collectively the *Application*) initially submitted to the CAA on 28 October 2020 and resubmitted with updated attachments on both 29 November 2021 and 6 January 2022. The *Application* is reviewed against the 2019 version of the CAA *Standards for Licensure and Accreditation* (hereafter the *Standards*).

ADSM is a not-for-profit company (Abu Dhabi School of Management Sole Proprietorship LLC) wholly owned by the Abu Dhabi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ADCCI). ADSM is located in Zone 1 of the Abu Dhabi Municipality, adjacent to the Sheikh Zayed motorway with approved plans to move to a new campus at Al Shawamekh in 2025, although these are being reconsidered for an alternative location in Shakhbout City and an interim campus at Sas Al Nakhl is also under consideration.

ADSM applied for initial licensure in 2010 which was followed by confirmation of initial licensure in 2011. ADSM was the subject of a CAA interim visit in 2013 and instructed to cease enrolling new students. This restriction was later lifted and ADSM applied for full institutional licensure in 2015 and received full licensure in 2016. ADSM inaugurated its MBA program in 2013. It has previously received accreditation of an undergraduate program (BS in Management) but it was not inaugurated and accreditation is expired. More recently, further graduate programs (MS in Leadership and Organizational Development (MSLOD); initially accredited 2016, MS in Quality and Business Excellence (MSQBE); initially accredited 2016, and MS in Business Analytics (MSBA); initially accredited 2018) have been accredited by the CAA and were inaugurated but the MSLOD and MSQBE programs were subsequently put on probation in 2019. The probationary status was lifted in April 2021 following an audit visit in February—March 2021. The CAA has undertaken review of an application for renewal of program accreditation of the MSBA in October 2021. ADSM's responses to the ERT report (hereafter, *Oct 2021 MSBA RPA Report*) on the MSBA is ongoing.



At the time of the review, ADSM had 15 full-time faculty members with a further faculty member slated to join in January 2022 and five more to join later in Spring 2022. A total of 332 students were enrolled in Fall 2021 (206 MBA, 69 MSLOD, 38 MSBA, and 19 MSQBE). Student enrolment for January 2022 was awaiting confirmation with only the MBA and MSLOD programs having an intake of new students.

The RILRT is pleased to note various strengths of ADSM, not least of which are:

- ADSM's approach to addressing issues leading to previous probationary of two of its programs has produced an enhanced critical self-analysis and thorough review of ADSM's policies, processes, and procedures for the purpose of improvement. This approach resulted in changes that are major contributors to the recent lifting of probationary status and it is clear that ADSM is continuing to embed a self-critical approach.
- ADSM also benefits from the quality of its Board of Trustees and the support it has from ADCCI. ADSM has invested appropriately in resources, including an ERP, that provide it with better tools to record and monitor its performance and to integrate previously disparate systems and improve its efficiency and sustainability.
- The engagement with the external community is also recognized as a strength. The RILRT believes that ADSM has demonstrated agility in effectively adjusting to the exigencies of the coronavirus pandemic, protecting the safety of its students and personnel and ensuring business continuity and delivery of its academic programs to a good standard.

As with all quality assurance reviews, some areas of improvement have been identified which included in the following themes:

- **Quality Assurance:** ADSM has, and is continuing to develop, complex and multi-layered processes for quality assurance and enhancement. These have helped to identify and promote changes for improvement but would benefit from streamlining and better integration between processes. They also need to be considered for their proportionality in a small higher education institution such as ADSM. These processes and ADSM's planning processes need to be applied in a phased manner according to defined timelines and milestones, and short-term operational plans need to be developed along with rigorous consideration of the resource requirements of the proposed actions with periodic opportunities to adjust plans, including financial forecasts, in response to changed internal and external environments.
- **Policies:** ADSM has been very active in policy review and development but further work is needed, including discontinuation of the Contingency Admissions policy and development of a policy on thesis supervision and examination with accompanying changes to programs to ensure that students are admitted on the basis of the qualifications required by the *Standards* and that all programs include a required thesis.



The faculty workload policy must also be properly implemented.

- **Governance and Fiscal Management:** ADSM previously adopted a top-down approach that limited the contribution of key stakeholders in the governance and management of the institution. Adjustments are being made to make the governance and management more inclusive that include changes to the terms of reference of management committees and changes to fiscal processes, but some are not yet implemented. Further work is needed to establish a Student Council, and provide students and external stakeholders, such as industry representatives, on the APACs with more appropriate representation in line with the expectations of the *Standards*.
- **Faculty:** Academic staffing levels remain an ongoing concern that has also been noted in recent audit and accreditation reports. The RILRT appreciates that action is being taken to address this through proposed new faculty appointments, but the current position of ADSM appears to be that there is not sufficient faculty to teach on all programs. Current faculty workloads are high with teaching loads exceeding ADSM's own policies, as well as research expectations, membership of several committees, and involvement in considerable QA activities.
- **Research:** Perhaps the weakest aspect of ADSM is its support for research. The *Standards* place explicit expectations on a minimum level of support, including financial support, an area in which ADSM currently falls far short of requirements. More attention is needed in this area to develop a robust research culture which will lead to quality research outcomes.

The RILRT makes its recommendations in a spirit of constructive engagement, with the aim of ensuring that the *Standards* are met, and to aid ADSM in its desired objective to achieve renewal of institutional licensure.