



Executive Summary

Renewal of Licensure

Al Falah University

August 23-24, 2017

A Re-Licensure Review Team (hereafter RLRT) from the Commission for Academic Accreditation (CAA) visited Al Falah University (AFU) from 23 to 24 August 2017 to review the University's *Self-Study* for Renewal of Licensure. The exit interview was held on 24 August 2017.

AFU was licensed in 2013 as Al Ruwwad University. The present name was adopted in 2014 (see Section 9.3) and the first students began their studies in Fall 2015. In Spring 2017 AFU enrolled 590 students, of whom 548 or 93% were undergraduate students. AFU has 26 faculty and employs 44 administrative staff. AFU's campus is centrally located in the Al Garhoud district of Dubai.

Al Falah University has submitted an appropriate *Self-Study* for Re-Licensure. The *Self-Study* is generally comprehensive in its treatment of the Standards; a few exceptions are noted in the preceding sections. The RLRT found much to admire during its visit including the sense of commitment and "pioneering spirit" evidenced by students, faculty, staff and administration; the well-kept and well-located facilities (albeit temporary ones); the qualifications and experience of faculty members, and their growing involvement in research; and the willingness of the Board and sponsors to sustain the University in its initial period of growth and provide it with the needed support, including the planned permanent campus.

The *Self-Study* includes a handful of sections of reflective analysis, particularly in its first two chapters, which demonstrate the commitment of AFU to continuous improvement, which is at the heart of the Re-Licensure process. However, a consistent theme running through the Requirements that need to be addressed is the need for AFU to provide more evidence that it is "closing the loop" in terms of its quality processes, not only assessing the operations of its academic and administrative units but also making use of those assessments to identify improvements which, in turn, are themselves monitored and evaluated. A number of other Requirements ask that AFU provide further documentation, to bolster statements made in the *Self-Study*.

The RLRT also makes particular mention of four additional concerns:

- a) To date, evidence available to the RLRT suggests that a portion of the AFU faculty have teaching loads that are excessive. For the upcoming academic year, the RLRT requires a plan for teaching assignments that will demonstrate AFU's compliance with the Standards for faculty workloads. Such a plan will need to take into account the introduction of new courses as AFU's upper-level courses are phased in; the AFU class size policy; limits on the teaching loads for undergraduate and graduate instruction expressed in the Standards; and the limits defined in the Standards on the contribution and numbers of part-time faculty.
- b) The current situation under which the Chancellor is both a member of the Board of Trustees and a senior manager, assuming some of the responsibilities (albeit ones more focused on strategic matters) assigned to the President, is unsustainable. The Standards require a clear separation of managerial responsibilities and Board oversight. AFU needs to appoint a President, responsible directly to the Board as a whole, and allocate other roles to the Chancellor. At the same time, AFU needs to clarify the title, qualifications and responsibilities of the officer(s) responsible for financial affairs.
- c) Although AFU places an admirable emphasis on maintaining academic integrity, the RLRT requires AFU to develop and enforce consistent policies and procedures relating to plagiarism, including the use of Turnitin.
- d) The proposed new campus represents a tremendous new opportunity for AFU to firmly establish itself among the premier institutions in the UAE, as the Vision statement suggests. To this point, the plans for the campus are only on paper. While recognizing that many factors might intervene to delay the building of the new campus, the RLRT requires AFU to provide its best judgment as to the timeline for completing this essential project.

The RLRT makes its Requirements and offers its Suggestions in a spirit of constructive engagement, with the aim of ensuring that the Standards are met, and to aid AFU in making necessary improvements in order to receive Renewal of Licensure.