



Executive Summary
Renewal of Licensure
Anwar Gargash Diplomatic Academy
(Formerly: Emirates Diplomatic Academy)
Abu Dhabi

June 14 – 25, 2020

An External Review Team (hereafter ERT) was appointed by the Commission for Academic Accreditation (CAA) of the Ministry of Education (MoE) of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to conduct a distanced review visit at the Anwar Gargash Diplomatic Academy (AGDA) from June 15th to July 2nd, 2020, to evaluate the Application for Institutional Re-Licensure.

AGDA was established pursuant to Cabinet Decree No. 29, 2014 issued by His Highness the Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates. The immediate objectives of the Academy are to train civil servants and new diplomats for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MoFAIC) and meet the growing trained human resource needs of the federal government. The current campus is a site in the central city area of Abu Dhabi. AGDA has 59 employees and has graduated 194 Students since 2015.

The ERT is pleased to find that AGDA is firmly committed to the success of its academic programs. There is a clear need for these programs that is unlikely to diminish, and they provide excellent opportunities for the UAE's future diplomats.

Since AGDA's inception, the institution has developed and introduced innovative academic programs that keep pace with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs changing needs and requirements and has successfully balanced their needs with graduate-level instruction. The ERT is impressed by the proposed mix of skills courses and traditional seminars as a novel approach to graduate education.

It is clear that AGDA has excellent educational facilities and resources – and that these will only improve once the institution moves to its new building.

There is evidence of high-value research outputs and good levels of external engagement. The ERT noted opportunities for improvement in several areas. The following four sections cover the fundamental findings of the ERT:

- Governance: AGDA lacks leadership capacity for its higher education. This has been an issue for some time, having been raised on previous occasions – and the ERT is disappointed to find that it has not been addressed. AGDA urgently needs to appoint a senior officer to lead its higher education mission, a person who has expertise and good experience of higher education leadership, in particular experience of outcomes-based education. Given the centrality of higher education to the institutional mission, this role should have the status of a deputy director general.

While AGDA has a functioning office for strategic planning, its dual role – which also covers quality assurance – is not operating effectively. This is due to a lack of leadership and capacity. AGDA needs to appoint a Director for Quality Assurance with expertise and experience in quality assurance relevant to higher education. This office also requires additional capacity to manage the data gathering and analysis that is implied by a properly functioning quality assurance function.

AGDA does not have a Director of Finance. This needs to be addressed.

- Quality Assurance Frameworks: AGDA does not have a framework for quality assurance that is sufficiently detailed and robust to meet its needs. Once again, this is an issue that has been raised before and the ERT is disappointed to find it remaining problematic.
There is, currently, no systematic and comprehensive quality assurance system covering all non-academic units and functions (specifically, all student, academic, and administrative services).
What is currently documented regarding program effectiveness is inadequate. A comprehensive framework for program quality assurance needs to be developed, documented, and then implemented.
- Academic Programs: There is lack of an adequate and functional framework for program effectiveness means that AGDA is not able to demonstrate that its programs are meeting national and international standards.
- Insurance: The ERT is concerned that AGDA does not have appropriate insurance and indemnity cover. This should be addressed as a matter of urgency.

The ERT makes its Requirements and Suggestions in a spirit of constructive engagement, with the aim of ensuring that the *Standards* are met, and to aid AGDA to receive Re-licensure. The ERT requirements and suggestions can, and should, be viewed as “Opportunities for Improvement” as AGDA progresses towards excellence in education, research, and service.