



Executive Summary

Renewal of Licensure University of Sharjah

September 25-29, 2016

A Re-Licensure Review Team (hereafter RLRT) visited the University of Sharjah (UoS) from 25 to 29 of September, 2016 to evaluate the *Self-Study* for Renewal of Licensure (hereafter the *Self-Study*).

UoS is a non-profit institution for higher education, founded by a decree of his Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan Bin Mohammed Al Qassimi, Member of the Supreme Council, Ruler of Sharjah and Supreme President of the University. Educational programs inaugurated in October 1997 began to address the Emirate of Sharjah's educational and cultural needs within its Islamic values and tradition.

The UoS is located in the University City and occupies a major part of it. This city is located about 12 kilometres from the centre of Sharjah City. The University occupies an area of approximately 130 hectares. The campus consists of 27 buildings that house various colleges and administrative buildings. In addition the University has two central laboratory buildings, medical clinics, sport facilities and separate dormitories for men and women students. UoS is a comprehensive university offering both undergraduate and graduate programs. With its principal campus in University City, the University also maintains campuses in other parts of the Emirate of Sharjah including a principal community college campus in Khorfakan, which the RLRT has visited during the review.

UoS consists of 13 colleges: Shari'a and Islamic Studies; Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences; Business Administration, Engineering; Health Sciences; Law; Fine Arts and Design; Communication; Medicine; Dentistry; Pharmacy; Sciences; and the Community College. The University offers 93 programs ranging from diplomas at the Community College to doctoral programs. The fall 2016 enrolment for UoS is just under 14,000 students enrolled across the several campuses, of which 65% are females. The University maintains residence halls for both men and women at the main campus. Most undergraduate programs of the University are offered on a gender segregated basis. An exception is the College of Medicine. The University has more than 600 full-time faculty and uses some adjunct faculty. There is a commensurate level of professional staffing.

In support of its application for Re-Licensure, the UoS has submitted a comprehensive *Self-Study* covering all sections required by the *PGRL* with appropriate supporting documentation. There has been considerable change at the University since the last licensure in 2009. The dramatic growth of the University since its founding, the commitment to all levels of higher education, the range of programs in both Arabic and English, and the physical facilities of the University are clearly documented.

Many positive observations were noted by the RLRT, including:

- The strong commitment, support, and engagement of HH the University President.
- The abundant resources supporting the institute's education, research and service missions, along with the well-equipped laboratories and excellent facilities.
- The highly-competent faculty and staff who are clearly committed to the success and advancement of the university.
- The proactive leadership who are constantly striving to expand the reach, stature, and impact of the university, through agreements with leading universities around the world and establishment of a wide range of new programs.

There are, however, substantive concerns documented as requirements which must be addressed to comply with the Standards. Many of the concerns can be grouped into four areas:

- Inconsistent and/or incomplete documentation: Examples include inconsistent descriptions of the organizational structure in various documents; inconsistencies between the *Campus Coordination Manual* and other university documents; inconsistent references to institutional objectives versus goals; and lack of policies on various topics, including faculty and staff grievances, use of human subjects in research, advanced standing, and limits on transfer credits.
- Program Accreditation and Performance Improvement Shortfalls: The large number of programs being offered or introduced, coupled with the large number of vacancies in the Deanship of Quality Assurance, Institutional Effectiveness and Accreditation, and moderate progress in electronic compilation of data, makes it impossible to close the performance improvement cycle at the program and university levels as required by the *Standards*. Severe understaffing of the Deanship of Quality Assurance, Institutional Effectiveness and Accreditation has also contributed to considerable delays in renewing accreditation and/or seeking full accreditation of more than half of the university's programs. Such understaffing is particularly impactful given the need to implement the Taskstream system and guide faculty and staff on its use in a timely manner.
- Faculty-Related Issues: Many faculty members have expressed concerns regarding the high teaching loads, coupled with what they view as unrealistic research expectations, which make it challenging to meet the promotion criteria within the ten-year limit for promotion and contract renewal. This, together with the opaque nature of the current

annual performance evaluation process and lack of formal contracts since 2013, has resulted in a high level of anxiety and may lead to low morale among the faculty. The low levels of engagement in research among faculty at branch campuses and terminal degree holders at community colleges, coupled with the lack of strategy to promote faculty engagement in research at all campuses, and the potentially adverse effects of some research policies on the faculty's motivation to engage in research (e.g. the ten-year limit on promotion/contract renewal), may hamper the university's ability to meet the research-related goals of its strategic plan.

- Vacant High-level Positions: The large number of vacant high-level administrative positions throughout the organization and the long-term understaffing of some units will adversely impact the university's ability to accomplish its mission, and will impede progress towards its desired elevated stature among the world leading universities. These positions must be promptly filled.

A related suggestion of note, namely, the RLRT recommends that UoS develop a "succession plan" to identify and groom capable individuals to fill high level positions within or outside their units in either an acting or a permanent capacity should such positions become vacant.

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 the UoS to receive Re-licensure. Our requirements and suggestions can, and should, be viewed as "Opportunities for Improvement" as UoS progresses towards excellence in education, research, and service.