



Executive Summary

Renewal of Licensure

British University in Dubai

November 18 – 21, 2019

An External Review Team (hereafter ERT) visited the British University in Dubai (BUiD) from 18 to 21 November 2019, to evaluate the Application (hereafter the *Self-Study/Application*) for Renewal of Licensure. The exit interview was held on (21 November 2019).

Located in Academic City in Dubai, BUiD is an independent and autonomous institution established as a legal entity by Law No. 5 (2003). The University grew out of collaborations between the founding group that included the Maktoum Foundation, the British Business Group, Rolls Royce, the National Bank of Dubai (now Emirates NBD), the Investment and Development Authority in Dubai (now Dubai Holding) The UK associate Universities of Manchester, Edinburgh, and Glasgow, later joined by Kings College London and Cardiff University have had an ongoing relationship with BUiD. BUiD is currently partnered by the three Russell Group Universities of Manchester, Edinburgh, and Glasgow. Master's students were first enrolled for 2004 with the initial graduating cohort in 2005. The first Doctoral programmes were approved in 2009, with the first Doctoral graduation in 2012. In 2010 the University moved to its current premises in academic City. The language of instruction for all programmes is English.

In 2018 BUiD introduced an undergraduate portfolio and acquired 50% additional campus space in the adjacent block. Following the portfolio development and expansion for the University, the ERT was pleased to hear of the new campus proposal from BUiD which seeks to place the University in a bespoke campus building in Academic City, usefully located near to the main entry and exit for the E611 Emirates Road, providing excellent access to the University.

BUiD currently offers 25 postgraduate programmes, including six at Doctoral level. There are four undergraduate programmes. There have been 1556 graduate students since 2005. The current student population across the University is 1146 students. There are 32 faculty with 15 at Professor Level, and 18 at Associate / assistant Professor level. The current institutional student staff ratio is 36:1.

BUiD has a successful record of accomplishment of growth since its inception in 2003 and has progressively introduced a number of master's programmes. In 2009 BUiD introduced its first Doctoral programmes and by 2019 the university has a portfolio of 19 Masters and 6 Doctoral

programmes spread over the faculties of Engineering/IT, Business/Law and Education. In all cases, these programmes are being delivered successfully, producing a steady stream of graduates. In 2018, BUiD embarked on an ambitious growth strategy underpinned by a move to deliver undergraduate programmes.

With this as a backdrop the ERT reviewed and analysed the materials provided for the re-licensure in the *Self-Study* document and associated support materials.

A number of positive aspects were identified such as the complimentary feedback from students in the area of the learning experience based on:

1. The high quality of taught materials delivered by the faculty.
2. The quality of the service provided by the library.
3. The IT provided by the university, e.g. laptops, and the technology in the classrooms.

The ERT found examples of good practice and well-organized processes within several of the support areas, such as the professionalism, integrity, and competencies within the OQIE department. Likewise noteworthy is the management of finances, especially in the areas of managing student fees, managing, and reporting of financial transactions such as auxiliary activities.

The development of the Doctoral Training Centre in 2016 was also seen as a strength with an impressive array of workshops that are made available to both students and staff. Given that BUiD takes pride in differentiating itself from other institutions because of the strong research ethic that runs through all of its programmes, the ERT considers the level of research funding provided to faculty as noteworthy. In addition, the ERT was impressed with the openness of the University to explore ways and means of engaging more closely with local institutions.

The overall conclusion from the ERT is that BUiD has intrinsically sound processes and practices and a clear statement of its Vision combined with specific areas that are regarded as examples of good practice.

However, the ERT also concluded that there are areas of weakness where BUiD is currently not compliant with requirements in the Standards. For example, currently the university does not provide a budget line item for the IT budget or for the Library budget.

The ERT was particularly concerned by an apparent lack of integration of programmatic strategic planning and institutional effectiveness management with the University's financial management, budgeting, reporting, and forecasting. Not only was this apparent for the current operations, but it was also viewed by the ERT as a factor that will take on even greater significance if the undergraduate student numbers grow rapidly as predicted in the five-year forecast.

Currently the Institutional Effectiveness Manual is not published in keeping with its schedule for a revision every five years and there is no evidence of funding being applied to a three-year cycle of IT replacement as defined in the IT Policy. Given the significance of the research

theme, the ERT concluded that the Research Strategy should be a high profile, stand-alone document and not be subsumed in the Policy and Procedure manual as at present.

Although the *Self-Study* provided limited evidence of faculty publications the ERT concluded that several aspects were potentially misleading. For example, a figure was quoted that the average publication per academic per year was 1.14 papers, which could be viewed in a positive sense. However, deeper investigation revealed that in the past five years a small number of faculty were responsible for 60-80% of the Q1 and Q2 publications. The ERT concluded that this could represent a risk in terms of BUiD's research reputation, in the event that two or three particular individuals departed from BUiD.

Through detailed analysis during the review, the ERT does not have confidence in the methodology used to generate the five-year financial forecasts. The team's misgivings were exacerbated by the fact that a very large variance has existed for each of the past six years between the forecast deficit/surplus outcomes. Significant over-estimates of costs combined with significant under-spends have resulted in bottom-line variances in the range of 3-8 million AED. The ERT expressed a view that there is scope for improvement in the way BUiD addresses these financial matters and resourcing issues that would result in a more efficient and effective operation of the university.

The overall conclusion for BUiD is that a number of key functional areas work very well and need to be maintained. At the same time, the ERT see major weaknesses where BUiD is not compliant with the Standards. BUiD must address these in turn. The ERT identified particular areas where improvements to operations will put BUiD in a far stronger position to deliver its planned growth.

The Requirements and Suggestions of the ERT are offered in the spirit of continuous improvement, with the aim of ensuring that the *Standards* are met, and to aid BUiD in achieving its stated objective, and to support the University in the achievement of its stated mission.