



Executive Summary

Renewal of Institutional Licensure American University in Dubai (AUD) Dubai

25-28 September 2023

An External Review Team (ERT) appointed by the Commission for Academic Accreditation (CAA) conducted a review to evaluate the application (*Self-study*) for Renewal of Institutional Licensure of the American University in Dubai (AUD). The site visit took place from 25 — 28 September on the premises of AUD in Dubai. The exit briefing was held on 28 September 2023.

The AUD was founded in 1995 under the leadership of Mr. Elias Bou Saab, with unwavering support from His Highness Sheikh Mohammad Bin Rashid Al-Maktoum, the Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and the Ruler of Dubai. Situated in the heart of Dubai, AUD is a privately-run establishment of higher education that places a strong emphasis on academic and cultural diversity and inclusivity.

With a diverse student body representing approximately one hundred nationalities, AUD stands as a genuine embodiment of American educational values, promoting inclusivity and diversity. Since its inception in 1995, the university has consistently maintained national and international accreditations that guide its commitment to achieving institutional effectiveness, implementing quality enhancement plans, and pursuing excellence in teaching, learning, and scholarly and creative activities. These accreditations are firmly grounded in globally recognized standards.

AUD boasts six distinct schools: the School of Engineering, the School of Business, the School of Education, the School of Arts and Sciences, the School of Architecture, Art and Design, and the Mohammed Bin Rashid School for Communication. The university offers a comprehensive range of undergraduate and graduate degree programs, totaling 12 undergraduate and 8 graduate programs:

- Bachelor of Architecture
- Bachelor of Arts in International Studies
- Bachelor of Arts in Psychology
- Bachelor of Business Administration (Concentrations: Accounting, Economics, Finance, Management, Marketing, Advertising and Integrated Marketing Communications)
- Bachelor of Communication and Information Studies (Concentrations: Digital Production and Storytelling, Journalism)
- Bachelor of Fine Arts in Interior Design (Concentration: Hospitality Design)
- Bachelor of Fine Arts in Visual Communication (Concentrations: Advertising, Digital Media, Graphic Design, Studio Art)
- Bachelor of Science in Biology
- Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering
- Bachelor of Science in Computer Engineering
- Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering
- Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering
- Master of Arts in Intellectual Property and Innovation Management
- Master of Arts in International Affairs
- Master of Arts in Leadership and Innovation in Contemporary Media



- Master of Business Administration (Concentrations: Finance, Marketing, Strategic Human Resource Management and Leadership)
- Master of Education
- Executive Master of Business Administration
- Master of Science in Construction Management
- Master of Urban Design and Digital Environments

As of Fall 2023, AUD's enrollment stands at 2,129 students, out of which 205 are graduate students with 45% male and 55% female representation. Thirty percent of the student body are the UAE nationals, while expatriates comprise the remaining 70%, representing over 99 different countries. The university's faculty consists of 109 full-time professors and 28 adjunct faculty members during the Fall of 2023, resulting in a full-time faculty to student ratio of 1:19.5.

Through the evaluation of the *Self-study* report, together with the thorough site-visit and review of several other documents and meetings with the management, faculty staff, students, alumni, and members of the industry advisory boards, the ERT has identified strengths and areas of further improvement. These are summarized as follows:

- The visionary leadership that is steering the University in promoting its aspirations and goals.
- AUD's conducive environment for teaching and learning, with well-maintained physical facilities that are fit for purpose, including the buildings and housing infrastructure.
- AUD's diversity in its faculty and student population enriches student experiences and contributes to a vibrant community of students.
- The pride of students and alumni of their identity is associated with AUD. The university ensures that students are assisted in finding the right employment opportunities and they are supported throughout the process. AUD has well-placed alumni and active advisory boards, which is commendable.
- Dubai Government's support in all aspects that further assists the University to fulfill its obligations.

The ERT has identified some major issues broadly clustered into following thematic areas to be addressed by the AUD:

- **Policies and Procedures:** the ERT expects that, since the last licensure, AUD worked to comply with the stipulations and standards. Critical policies are either entirely unavailable or recently developed and awaiting approvals to be implemented. The policy nomenclature is largely not aligned with the content of the policies (for instance, the policy for continuing education is labeled as policy for the center of excellence). The version control and history in most of the policies are missing and, in some cases, policies are yet to be developed. The ERT believes that AUD will take this issue seriously, as the lack of due diligence regarding policy creates a risk that the AUD will miss out on the essential undertakings. The procedures for policy design, approval, and review are not adequately developed nor implemented.
- **Quality Assurance System:** the ERT notes that the quality assurance system is fragmented, with limited integration with university functions and organizational culture. The current approach must be more proactive, targeting closing of identified gaps. Hence, AUD should further review and enhance its approaches to internal quality assurance to enable a systemic approach, enabling informed decision making leading to a closure in the quality assurance loop.



- **Faculty:** the ERT notes that AUD has qualified and dedicated faculty members. AUD relies on part-time faculty to a greater extent than is allowed by the upper limits set in the standards for some of its programs. The upper limits in the standards are set as absolute maxima, any exceeding of this maxima requires special approval for justifiable cases. The ERT expects that AUD will reduce reliance on part-time faculty. The ERT expects AUD to proactively recruit faculty so that the faculty workloads do not exceed the stipulated requirements.
- **Research:** although AUD took a positive step by launching a new strategy for research, the ERT believes that AUD must ensure concrete efforts in achieving this strategy and ensuring that spending on research is judicious. Furthermore, the expectation for faculty research needs to be reviewed in the light of the UAE's priorities and international benchmarking.
- **Documentation:** the ERT notes that the application for re-licensure submitted to CAA appeared to be significantly crafted out of the SACS COC application, which posed the challenge to review the relevant information addressing the specific CAA standards and stipulations. Moreover, several documents reviewed by the ERT on-site are either in draft format or have no evidence of approvals. The ERT believes that the university will address this issue in its forthcoming submission to CAA.

The ERT makes its requirements and suggestions in the spirit of constructive engagement, with the aim of ensuring that the *Standards* are met, and to aid the AUD in its desired objective to license the institution.