



Executive Summary

Renewal of Licensure

American University in Dubai

1-4 April, 2018

A Re-licensure Review Team (hereafter RLRT) visited American University in Dubai (AUD) from 1 to 4 April 2018 to review AUD's *Self-Study* for the Renewal of Licensure.

The American University in Dubai was founded in 1995. Initially operating as a branch campus of a US-based institution, AUD achieved Southern Association of Colleges and Schools accreditation in 1996. Initial Licensure through the Commission for Academic Accreditation (CAA) came in 2000 followed by subsequent Re-Licensures as appropriate, the most recent being in 2013. AUD was reaffirmed by The Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACSCOC) in 2012 after a successful campus visit. This application for Re-Licensure with supporting documents was received at the CAA 18 December, 2017. Off-site document review occurred in late December 2017 and early January 2018.

In 2017-2018, AUD enrolled a total of 2,129 students, 46% of whom are male and 54% female. Sixteen percent of the students are from the UAE with 49% from other Arab Countries. Expatriates make up 39%, with more than 100 countries represented in the student body. The largest number of students is enrolled in the business administration programs (36.9%). Undergraduate students account for 94% of the total number of students, and 84% are full-time. At the time of the RLRT's visit there were 126 full-time faculty (total faculty including part-time was 171). Almost 40% of faculty is from North America, and 88 faculty are male, while 83 are female. The institution maintains residence halls in which 397 students are currently housed with approximately equal numbers of male and female residents.

Through its consideration of AUD's self-evaluation submitted for re-licensure, examination of other documents, and interactions with faculty, staff, students, alumni, employers and others, the RLRT identified many strengths. These include the following:

- The well-maintained facilities, including campus housing, which provide an excellent physical environment for teaching and learning;
- The residential life program which is well integrated within the larger learning communities of student life and the academic programs;

- The highly diverse campus population which enriches the students' academic experience;
- The high levels of employment of the university's graduates in their fields, particularly graduates of the Mohamed Ben Rashid School of Communications;
- The university's clear commitment to meeting international standards and accreditation of its programs; and
- The articulate and highly-enthusiastic students and alumni with whom the RLRT met.

Major issues that must be addressed in order to bring the university into full compliance with the *Standards* can be grouped into four thematic areas:

- Declining Student Enrollments. The persistent declines in student enrollment over the past several years present a major threat to the university and the long-term sustainability of its programs. The University has reached a point where it is now marginally profitable. Further declines in enrollment could have severe implications on AUD's financial sustainability. AUD personnel have anecdotally attributed such declines to "*increased competition*" and/or the "*economic downturn*". However, no evidence-based explanations have been offered. Other possible contributors to enrollment declines include the absence of a comprehensive marketing communications strategy for the university, erosion of AUD's reputation (or perception thereof) among prospective students, high tuition levels, and the potential need to identify school/program-specific target populations of prospective students who would value an AUD education. It is important that the issue be systematically evaluated, that the underlying causes be identified, and that a comprehensive, evidence-based, plan with both near- and long-term actions, be developed to reverse such enrollment declines.
- Faculty Workload. The workload for many faculty members is excessive as evidenced by widespread use of overloads and over-reliance on part-time faculty. While faculty members are compensated for overloads beyond the limits specified in the *Standards*, such overloads are counter to the university's goal of increasing its research output and visibility, inasmuch as it affects the faculty's ability to engage in research and the University's ability to attract and retain outstanding research-active faculty. They also limit the faculty members' ability to explore, develop, and adopt more effective teaching strategies in concert with the University's increased emphasis on pedagogical transformation AUD must ensure that programs have sufficient faculty to deliver them effectively while allowing faculty to engage in research and scholarly activities.
- Shortfalls in Information Technology Management and Infrastructure. The current IT infrastructure does not adequately support future needs of the university and its intention to move towards a technology-driven pedagogical transformation. Whereas the current systems are not grossly deficient, IT provision is an area that has received limited attention at AUD for the past few years and has fallen behind international best practices. The shortfalls are exacerbated by the long-term absence of an IT Services Head, the absence of a comprehensive IT strategy, and the current focus of IT services primarily on maintenance. It is important for AUD to address its IT shortfalls if it wishes to achieve its ambitions of cutting edge pedagogy, meeting US standards of educational provision of IT services, and increasing efficiency of the university's administration.

- Documentation. While the *Self-Study* report is highly organized and remarkably detailed, the lack of recognition that the Application must adhere to the requirements specified in both the *CAA Standards* and the *Procedural Guidelines for Renewal of Licensure* has resulted in the absence of many analyses from the documentation submitted prior to the RLRT visit. Examples of missing documents and analyses include: (1) an assessment of the effectiveness of the institution's risk management plan; (2) analysis of the effectiveness and appropriateness of preparatory and remedial programs offered by the institution; (3) assessment of the effectiveness of research-related policies; and (4) assessment of the effectiveness of cooperative relationships for research, scholarship, and other creative activity. These analyses and documents must be prepared and submitted to CAA.

The RLRT makes its requirements and suggestions in a spirit of constructive engagement, with the aim of ensuring that the *Standards* are met, and to aid AUD to attain re-licensure.