



**Executive Summary**  
**Renewal of Licensure**  
**University of Strathclyde Business School - UAE**

**March 24- 28, 2019**

An External Review Team (ERT) visited University of Strathclyde Business School – UAE (hereafter USBS) in Abu Dhabi and Dubai from 24-28 March 2019, to assess its Application for the Renewal of Licensure. The exit interview was held on 28 March 2019.

USBS's campus is centrally located in the CERT Technology Park facility in Abu Dhabi, and in Dubai uses facilities at Dubai Women's College, HCT. In recent years both the Dubai and Abu Dhabi cohorts have reduced in size, with the 2018/19 intakes (given as) 18 (Dubai) and 8 (Abu Dhabi) being the lowest intakes to date. The origins of University of Strathclyde in Scotland can be traced back to 1796, and the Strathclyde Business School (SBS) offers one of the oldest MBA degrees in the United Kingdom. The Business School is accredited by AACSB, EQUIS, and AMBA, and is one of only a small number of schools with this “triple accreditation”. For more than 20 years SBS has offered its MBA degree at international locations. Presently the international centres include three in the Middle East (Oman, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates).

The University of Strathclyde is a long-established and highly respected university based in Glasgow, Scotland. The MBA has been operating in the home campus and through a global network of branch campuses including the operation in the United Arab Emirates where it is delivered to part-time students in the two city HCT campuses of Abu Dhabi and Dubai. As a branch campus there are specific expectations as indicated in *Standard 1.8* but other sub-sections of the *Standards* are not applicable to this particular arrangement of an overseas branch with a home campus. This review and the resulting Requirements and Suggestions are made in those areas of the *Standards* where benefit and improvement would result to the program and the student experience.

The Renewal of Licensure is aimed to gain approval to operate for the next five years and therefore the concerns of the ERT regarding the future location of the Abu Dhabi campus and the declining enrolments on the program as a whole need to be recognised as a significant risk and urgent amelioration strategies are necessary. Consequently, the Commission for Academic Accreditation (CAA) calls for a Facilities Master plan. In order to plan strategically the re-

establishment of a functional Advisory Board is essential to provide insight to the local demand, curriculum contextualisation, and necessary graduate attributes. The quality assurance/ institutional effectiveness system relies heavily on the analytical services provided in Glasgow. The return of useful data and information on the specific performance of the UAE program is lacking and thus fails to inform a process of continuous improvement of the program and support services provided locally. There are of course some benefits of having such a large and mature home campus including access to the extensive online library resources to support teaching & learning as well as research. IT systems, support and back-up are also effectively managed by staff on the home campus with considerable specialist expertise. The opportunity to benchmark standards and conduct comparative studies on performance of students in different locations is evidently not reported in relation to the UAE.

In essence, the connection and communications between the home campus and the UAE operation, and between the two campuses in the UAE, needs to function to better effect in serving the faculty and students on the MBA program. Unfortunately, the ERT noted that the Requirement stated in the last Renewal of Licensure review of 2012, to develop a 'Coordination Manual' to define the mechanisms of communication and collaboration between campuses, was not completed.

With regard to the Renewal of MBA Program Accreditation, this review has highlighted some issues of 'level' in relation to courses/modules. There has been no attempt to consider the alignment of Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) or Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs) with the Level Descriptors of the National Qualifications Framework (*QFEmirates*). The ERT has identified number of instances where outcomes are pitched below that expected in a graduate program (Level 9 in *QFEmirates*). There are also some issues of low contact hours, inappropriate assessment, and the scheduling of courses that need to be addressed. The ERT did not receive Course Files that were complete with respect to *Standards Stipulation 7* and such files would have assisted the ERT to evaluate the performance of courses based on the full range of evidence.

Regarding the faculty and Local Counsellors appointed to the MBA program, the ERT has raised questions on the requisite qualifications for teaching at the Graduate level, the contribution of part-time faculty and the match of training specialty with the course subjects that are assigned to the faculty. The ERT points out that any lack of a terminal qualification in faculty having extensive experience in the workplace, must be the subject of special consideration and approval from the CAA.

The Requirements and Suggestions of the ERT are offered in the spirit of continuous improvement, with the aim of ensuring that the *Standards for Licensure and Accreditation* are met, and to aid USBS in providing an MBA program that achieves its stated objective and supports the University in the achievement of its mission.