



Executive Summary
Renewal of Licensure
Emirates Aviation University
Dubai Academic City, Dubai, UAE

October 4-15, 2020

An External Review Team (ERT) undertook a virtual visit to the Emirates Aviation University (EAU) from 4 October 2020 to 15 October 2020 to assess its Application for Renewal of Institutional Licensure. The Application (comprising a Self-Study, a set of institutional publications, and a number of Appendices) was submitted in July 2020. During the virtual visit, the ERT reviewed all relevant documents, and was able to view the campus in Dubai via a set of videos, and had extensive discussions with EAU officials, faculty, students, and other stakeholders. The Exit Meeting was held on 15 October 2020.

EAU was established in 1991 as Dubai Aviation College. It adopted the name Emirates Aviation College in 2001, following its affiliation with Emirates Group, and adopted its current name in 2014. EAU offers undergraduate and Master's-level programs in engineering, mathematics, and business disciplines, mainly in fields of special relevance to aviation, as well as a number of vocational programs. There are four Schools covering Engineering, Mathematics, Business, and Postgraduate studies. Programs are offered in partnership with Coventry University in UK. In Fall 2020, EAU had 1395 students on roll of which about 71% are male. Of the 70 faculty employed in Fall 2020, there are 52 full-time faculty members and 18 (26%) part-time. Student to full-time faculty ratio across the institution as a whole is 27:1.

Through its consideration of EAU's Application for Renewal of Licensure, other documentation provided during the online visit, and interaction with faculty, professional staff, students, alumni, and employers, the ERT identified significant strengths.

The ERT was pleased to find that EAU continues to be a well-supported part of the Emirates Group, having excellent accommodation and facilities. The University is supported by active management, committed faculty and professional staff and happy students and graduates. EAU continues to successfully educate students with both technical and personal competencies, who progress into employment.

Matters which need addressing to bring the institution in full compliance with the *Standards* can be grouped into six thematic areas:

- **Governance:** While the relationship with the Emirates Group is largely positive, there is some evidence that greater autonomy would be beneficial. The present composition

of the Board does not meet the *Standards* or even EAU's own by-laws. There is insufficient representation of a broader community on the board. Moreover, there the by-laws are silent regarding reappointment – which has led to a Board whose core has remained the same for some time. This is not a healthy situation for the institution. While EAU has a comprehensive set of policies and procedures, many of these are inherited from the Emirates Group more widely. This is not problematic in principle. However, the lack of ownership leads to a situation in which there is some evidence that policies are not appropriate and not widely understood or followed.

- Strategy: EAU has a Strategic Plan that nominally covers the period from 2019-2024. However, the ERT understood that the 2019 implementation plan has met all strategic goals. This means that EAU is currently operating without a clear strategy. The most recent Strategic Plan was based on goals of a very general nature. EAU does have self-identified challenges, such as declining student numbers, levels and qualifications of its faculty, and underperformance in research (some of which are considered in more detail below). A revised Strategic Plan should be based on addressing EAU's current challenges rather than general aspirations of excellence.
- Quality Assurance: The ERT noted some weaknesses in the quality assurance framework as recorded in the quality assurance manual. It also noted that, since EAU works closely with an international partner, the importance of demonstrating that it has control of all aspects of its educational programs is of particular importance. This was not addressed sufficiently in the application. While there is some evidence of quality assurance processes leading to action plans, there is much less evidence of how these are implemented, assessed, resourced, and used in future planning and budgeting. In many areas in which quality assurance processes appear weak to the ERT, these weaknesses may be due to poor drafting of the Self-Study and the Application more generally. The ERT noted that, in many respects, the Application did not properly address the *Standards* through the guidance provided in the relevant Procedural Manual. This is, itself, a weakness in quality assurance processes. In this regard, quality assurance systems themselves need to be regularly assessed and revised to ensure fitness for purposes. Independent quality assessments (such as this Renewal of Accreditation review and earlier Renewal of Program Accreditation reviews) are one source of input for such a process. Some of these weaknesses may be a consequence of the human resource available in the Organizational Performance and Quality Assurance Unit, a matter that needs to be assessed and addressed as necessary.
- Faculty: The ERT notes the recent drop in EAU's student numbers and shortage in full-time faculty appointments. At present, and as noted in recent program accreditation reports, EAU does not have sufficient faculty to avoid systematic overloads, beyond workload levels permitted by the *Standards*. Moreover, the proportion of the existing faculty with terminal qualifications leads to a situation in which EAU is out of compliance with the *Standards*. This state of affairs also affects EAU's ability to meet its research goals, to which we now turn.
- Research: It is clear that EAU wishes to strengthen its research in line with an ambitious mission. While there is, nominally, a current Research Strategy, it is not sufficiently focused on current challenges in this area and it is not being implemented with sufficient vigor. The appointment of a dedicated Director of Research will offer an

opportunity for reconsideration of EAU's research challenges and an aggressive implementation of initiatives aimed at addressing these.

- Communication: There is considerable confusion regarding the portfolio of academic programs currently offered by EAU. The programs that the CAA indicates are accredited do not align with the details on the EAU website. Moreover, EAU's publications – and the representation of EAU by its academic partner Coventry University – are not internally consistent in both naming and content. EAU will need to work directly with the CAA to ensure that names and approvals are properly communicated in all EAU publications and, where relevant, those of its international partners.

The ERT makes its requirements and suggestions in a spirit of constructive engagement, with the aim of ensuring that the *Standards* are met, and to aid EAU to successfully renew its license.