



## The Commission for Academic Accreditation

Ministry of Higher Education & Scientific Research

# Strategic Plan

## 2008 - 2014

Reviewed and Revised 2010

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## Executive Summary

The Commission for Academic Accreditation (the CAA) is part of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research of the United Arab Emirates. The authority to license non-federal educational institutions to grant degrees and other academic awards and to accredit their programs rests with the Ministry, and the CAA has the responsibility of discharging that authority. The CAA developed its first Standards for Licensure and Accreditation in 2001. These have been revised periodically, with the most recent fourth edition published in 2007. The Standards are currently undergoing further revision and the development and publication of associated 'Procedural Guidelines' will assist institutions in addressing the particular needs of Licensure and Program Accreditation processes.

Since it was established and began operating in September 2000, and as of October 2010, the CAA has licensed a total of 66 institutions and has accredited 479 Programs. The workload has approximately tripled in the last eight years but the size of the Commission has increased by only 33%, partially offset by improvements in efficiency. Due to efficiencies in operation, the cost to institutions of accrediting each of their academic programs remains comparable with five years ago, and in many cases, is significantly less.

This Strategic Plan is expected to steer the CAA through a period when further significant expansion of Higher-Education in the UAE is anticipated. Alongside this expansion, the range and type of educational provision, its place in the international community, modes of study, and the portability of qualifications, will all impact on the quantity and type of business that the CAA has to undertake. All of this is to be achieved while maintaining, indeed while enhancing, quality. The CAA Strategic Plan reflects the importance of quality, service, efficiency and an international perspective. It includes supporting strategies, and the resources and governance structures necessary for these to be achieved. In the current review of the CAA Strategic Plan (September 2010) the fundamental Goals and Objectives remain relevant and the review has evaluated progress against the set targets.

Central to the CAA's Strategic Plan is the goal of ensuring quality and academic standards. The CAA aims to maintain and further develop its quality framework so that institutions of higher education in the UAE operate in line with international academic, administrative, managerial, and operational standards. In order to adapt to change, the CAA's second goal aims to diversify services. It will offer a broad range of appropriate services and activities that further enhances quality and covers new types of educational provision. In meeting these first two goals the CAA will ensure its effective operation and deliver its quality-enhancing services efficiently and cost-effectively in the interest of all its stakeholders. It will embrace technology, ensure it has a working environment suitable to support its function, and continue to recruit commissioners, reviewers and consultants with wide international experience. Finally, the CAA will develop its international profile. In order to assure itself, and its stakeholders, that its operations are fit for purpose, the CAA must play an active, cooperative and influential role in the international community of organizations that provide similar services elsewhere. In doing so, it will be properly informed of the latest approaches to quality enhancement and to changes in international conditions that may impact on higher education in the UAE. In meeting all its goals, the CAA must operate objectively, accountably, transparently, cooperatively and with integrity. In order to assure itself and its stakeholders that it does so, the CAA will establish an appropriate organizational structure and subject itself to a continuing review by an independent advisory panel.

This CAA Strategic Plan was developed following extensive reflection, consultation, and external international review. Its strategic goals and objectives show that the CAA is committed to play its key role in assuring all students, parents, employers and members of the national, regional and international communities, that the non-federal institutions of higher education in the UAE that fall under its jurisdiction offer programs meeting international standards. The CAA Mission Statement and Strategic Plan have been reviewed and updated in 2010 and this document incorporates the revisions resulting from that internal review and commentary on progress towards achievement of strategic targets. The fundamental Goals and Objectives remain relevant and have been retained with appropriate KPIs.

## Introduction

The Commission for Academic Accreditation (the CAA) is an authority within the federal Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (the Ministry) of the United Arab Emirates (the UAE). The authority to license non-federal educational institutions to grant degrees and other academic awards, and to accredit their programs, rests with the Ministry, and the Commission has the responsibility of discharging that authority.

In the UAE any non-federal institution that provides regular, theoretical, practical, or applied curricula of one academic year or longer beyond the UAE Secondary School Certification (or its equivalent) and that leads to an academic degree, certificate, or diploma, must be licensed and have its programs accredited in order to be officially recognized by the Ministry. The CAA developed its first Standards for Licensure and Accreditation in 2001. These have been revised periodically, with the most recent edition published in 2007. A new edition will be published in 2011.

This document is the CAA's Strategic Plan covering the 5-year planning period 2008-2012 and includes implementation details. It comprises several components:

- ◆ **The CAA's Purpose: its Mission, its Goals and those Values and Guiding Principles that characterize and govern its operation (pages 5-6).**
- ◆ **The CAA's Strategic Goals and Objectives together with time-phased tasks, measures and targets that will ensure that they are met during the planning period (pages 7-25).**

# The CAA's Purpose

## Mission

(Revised September 2010)

**CAA Mission Statement:** The Commission for Academic Accreditation is the Federal Government's Quality Assurance Agency charged with promoting educational excellence across diverse institutions of higher learning in the UAE. Through licensure of post-secondary educational institutions, and accreditation of individual programs, the Commission strives to assure high quality education, consistent with international standards.

## Goals

### Ensuring Quality and Academic Standards

Maintain and implement a quality framework which assures that institutions of higher education in the UAE operate in line with international academic, administrative, managerial, and operational standards.

### Diversifying Services

Offer a broad range of appropriate services and activities that further enhances quality.

### Ensuring an Effective Operation

Deliver efficient and effective quality-enhancing processes for a strongly developing higher education sector.

### International Profile

Play an active, cooperative and influential role in the international community of quality assurance organizations for higher education.

# Core Values & Guiding Principles

## Excellence

We continually strive to improve the quality of higher education in the UAE.

## Internationalism

We follow standards and procedures consistent with the best international practice, with the goal of making higher education in the UAE comparable to that of internationally recognized institutions of higher education.

## Integrity

We adhere to our established standards, policies and procedures in all our relationships with institutions.

## Communication

We communicate clearly, accurately, and fully with all parties.

## Objectivity

We are fair and impartial to all institutions in the UAE, regardless of their mission, size or resources.

## Independence

We maintain our independence and are not subject to external influence.

## Diversity

We respect each individual institution's mission and goals and allow for diverse approaches to higher education.

## Accountability

We are accountable to the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research and to the people of the UAE.

## Transparency

We are transparent in all our activities while respecting each institution's confidentiality.

## Cooperation

We work in a spirit of cooperation with institutions in the setting and maintenance of standards to assure a high quality education for students in the UAE.

## Responsiveness

We do our best to respond to institutional requests in a timely manner.

## Strategic Goal I

### Ensuring Quality and Academic Standards

Maintain and implement a quality framework that assures that institutions of higher education in the UAE operate in line with international academic, administrative, managerial, and operational standards.

#### Objective I.1

Maintain, develop, publish and distribute written Standards that meet international norms for quality, and which provide criteria to ensure high academic, administrative, managerial and operational standards in non-federal institutions of higher education.

#### Objective I.2

Maintain and develop processes, meeting international standards, for the licensing of non-federal institutions of higher education that ensure their sound governance, their operational and administrative effectiveness, and that they are properly resourced.

#### Objective I.3

Maintain and develop processes for the accreditation of academic programs offered by non-federal institutions of higher education that meet international academic standards.

#### Objective I.4

Undertake efficient institutional licensure and academic program accreditation processes.



## Strategic Goal 2 Diversifying Services

Offer a broad range of appropriate services and activities that further enhances quality.

### Objective 2.1

Broaden the coverage of the CAA to include additional and newly-emerging academic developments and modes of teaching and learning, and to accommodate the features of different systems of education.

### Objective 2.2

Provide additional activities to support the higher education sector, in order to enhance quality.

## Strategic Goal 3 Ensuring an Effective Operation

Deliver efficient and effective quality-enhancing processes for a strongly developing higher education sector.

### Objective 3.1

Embrace technology to improve operational efficiency and effectiveness.

### Objective 3.2

Ensure that the CAA's broad range of operations is governed by appropriate policies, procedures, guidelines and regulations.

### Objective 3.3

Ensure that the CAA's governance, its operational and administrative effectiveness, and its academic decision-making meet the internationally recognized Guidelines for Good Practice of Quality Assurance Agencies

### Objective 3.4

Establish an environment appropriate for an expanding workload.

### Objective 3.5

Ensure that the CAA's human resources are trained to meet the expanding needs of the higher education sector.

### Objective 3.6

Ensure that the CAA's human resources are appropriate in number, background, and expertise to meet the expanding needs of the higher education sector.

### Objective 3.7

Ensure that the purpose of the CAA, its responsibilities, function and services, are well-understood by its stakeholders.

### Objective 3.8

Maintain an appropriate balance between the review of institutions, their component schools, colleges and departments, and their academic programs.

## **Strategic Goal 4**

### **International Profile**

**Play an active, cooperative and influential role in the international community of quality assurance organizations for higher education.**

#### **Objective 4.1**

**Establish a strong presence and role in international quality-assurance activities.**

#### **Objective 4.2**

**Extend cooperation between the CAA and other quality-assurance agencies, regionally and internationally.**