

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES
MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION
& SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH



الإمارات العربية المتحدة
وزارة التعليم العالي
والبحوث العلمي

COMMISSION FOR ACADEMIC ACCREDITATION





PREFACE



With enlightened and visionary leadership in the United Arab Emirates, the long-term strategy has been to develop a knowledge-based economy that is inextricably linked to a high quality tertiary education system. As higher education expands rapidly across the UAE there is a need to regulate the establishment of non-federal colleges and universities, and ensure that rigorous standards are adopted within an 'institutional quality culture' that pervades all activities, including teaching, research, support services and administration.

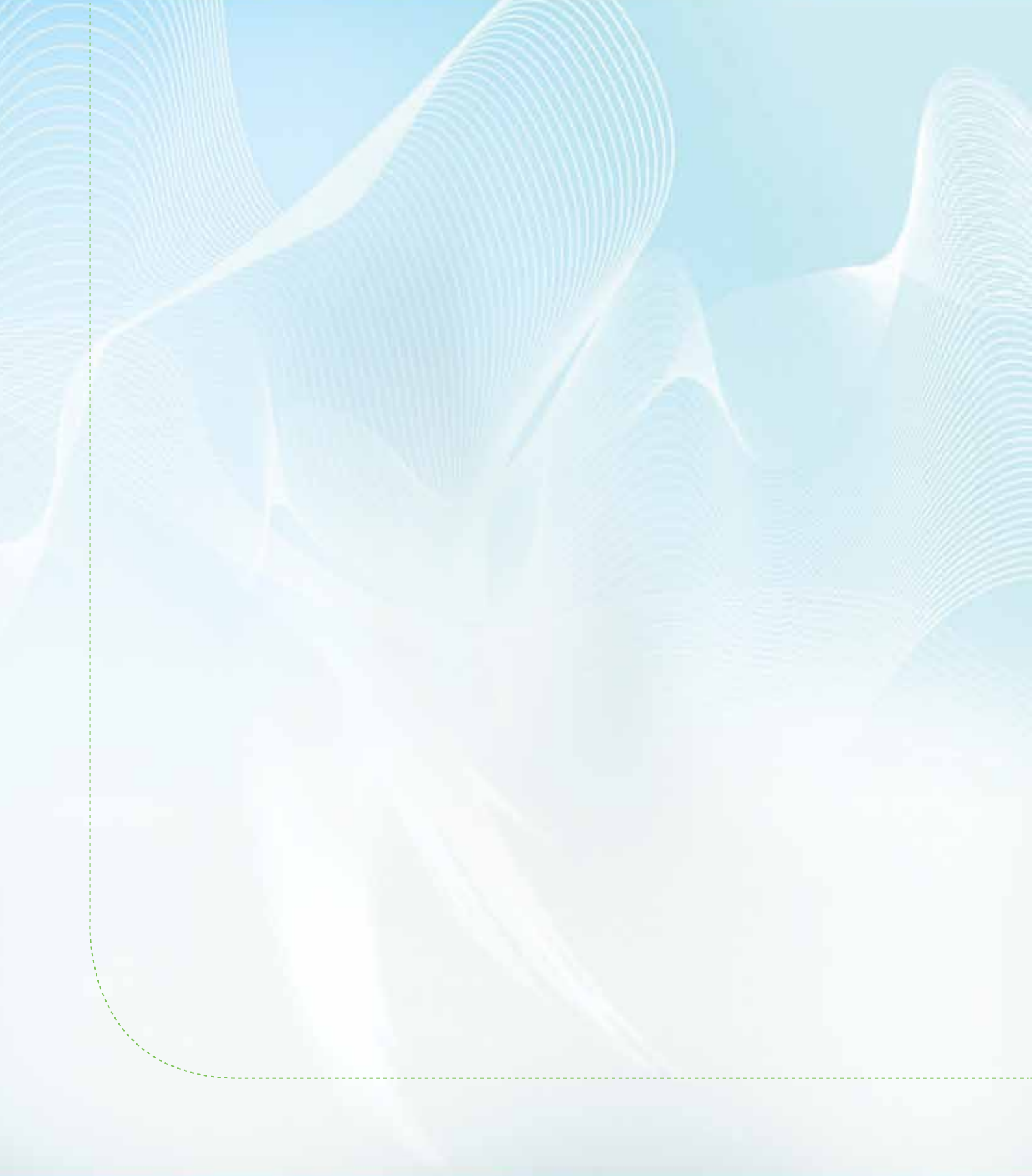
The Commission for Academic Accreditation was established in year 2000 to develop and implement Standards for institutional licensure and program accreditation, based on international best practice, to ensure a worthwhile and rewarding learning experience for all students.

The CAA was the first Accreditation Agency in the region, and it has established and maintained a leading role across higher education in the Middle East, and played an influential part in the wider international sphere of higher education quality assurance. In 2011, having completed its first decade of operation, the Commission has been recognized by the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) as one of few international agencies that have fully adopted their 'Good Practice Guidelines'.

This formal Annual Report from the Commission focuses on the reporting year 2010-2011 but it also highlights some of the history and landmarks in the genesis and early years of the CAA.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to be 'Nahayan Mabarak Al Nahayan'. The signature is fluid and stylized, written in a cursive script.

Nahayan Mabarak Al Nahayan
Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research



FROM THE DIRECTOR



The Commission for Academic Accreditation celebrated its 11th year in 2010-2011. Those eleven years have seen the agency mature such that it is now one among the few agencies recognized by the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) for comprehensively adhering to its guidelines for good practice. The CAA is increasingly taking a lead role within the Middle East and will host the first Arab Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ANQAHE) Conference in Abu Dhabi in December, 2011.

The Commission works with more than 70 institutions of higher education in the UAE and more than 560 programs to ensure adherence to the *Standards for Licensure and Accreditation* (2011). Through that work the CAA contributes significantly to the development of quality assurance and to higher education in the United Arab Emirates. The Commission takes seriously its role as both a federal regulatory agency, and as a proactive advocate for improving the quality of higher education throughout the United Arab Emirates. The work of the Commission is through a small professional and support staff consisting of a Director, four Commissioners with wide ranging experience as faculty, administrators and quality assurance officers and with experience in North American, European, Asian and Australian quality assurance initiatives. The support staff of eight handles financial, logistical and document control for the work of the entire Commission.

This is the first Annual Report of the Commission for Academic Accreditation and, as such, reflects not only on the year just past but also engages in a longer view of the Commission since its inception.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of stylized, overlapping loops and lines, positioned above a horizontal line.

M. Badr Aboul-Ela

Director

Commission for Academic Accreditation

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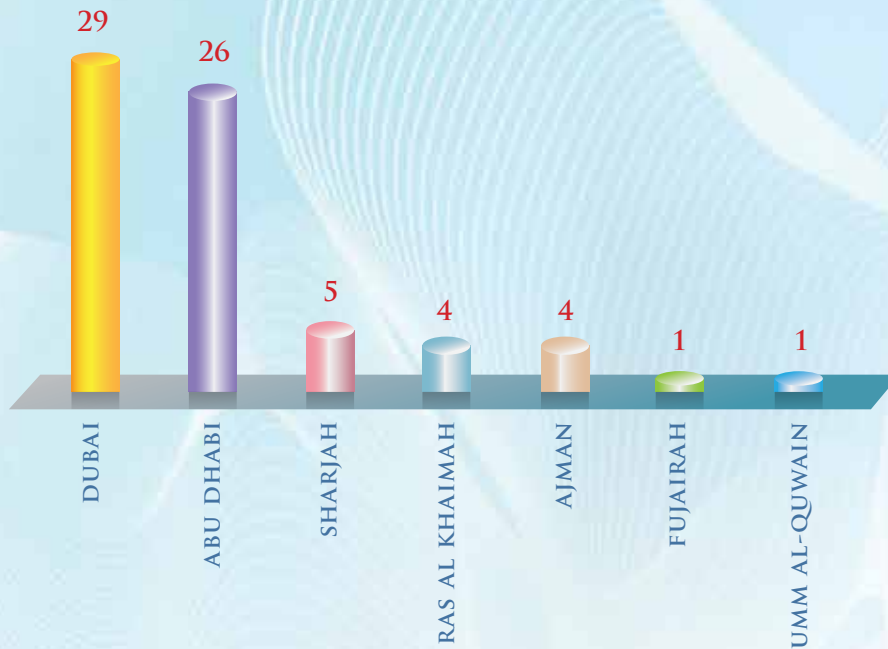
THE INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

As the CAA has developed over the past decade, so, too have the institutions served by the CAA. From under 20 institutions at the outset, the number of institutions licensed by the CAA is now over 70 with more applications for initial licensure under consideration. The distribution of institutions in the UAE reflects the population pattern with Dubai and Abu Dhabi having the vast majority of institutions and with the other Emirates having far fewer. The largest institutions in the Emirates are, however, not in Dubai or Abu Dhabi but rather in Sharjah and Ajman. The figures below show the growth in the number of institutions in the UAE and the distribution of institutions by Emirate.

GROWTH OF LICENSED INSTITUTIONS IN THE UAE (THROUGH JUNE, 2011)



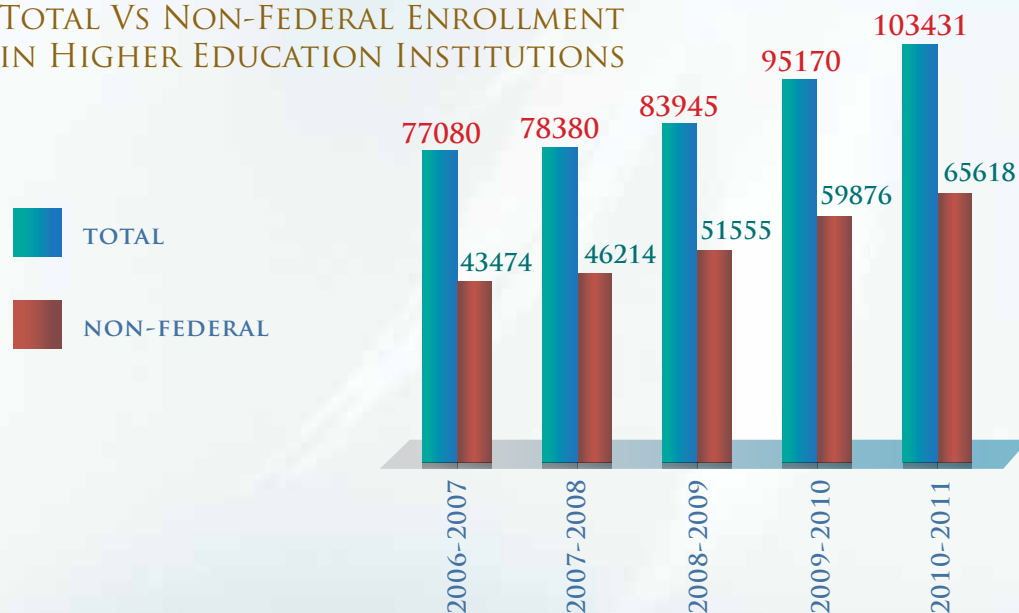
NUMBER OF LICENSED INSTITUTIONS (BY EMIRATE)



HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE YEAR- THE TRENDS

The 2010-11 year saw the number of licensed institutions reach 70, the total number of programs accredited surpass 560 and the number of students served by CAA institutions top 63% of the total number of students in licensed higher education institutions in the UAE. Of the students enrolled in the non-federal and licensed institutions, 44% are Emirati.

TOTAL VS NON-FEDERAL ENROLLMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

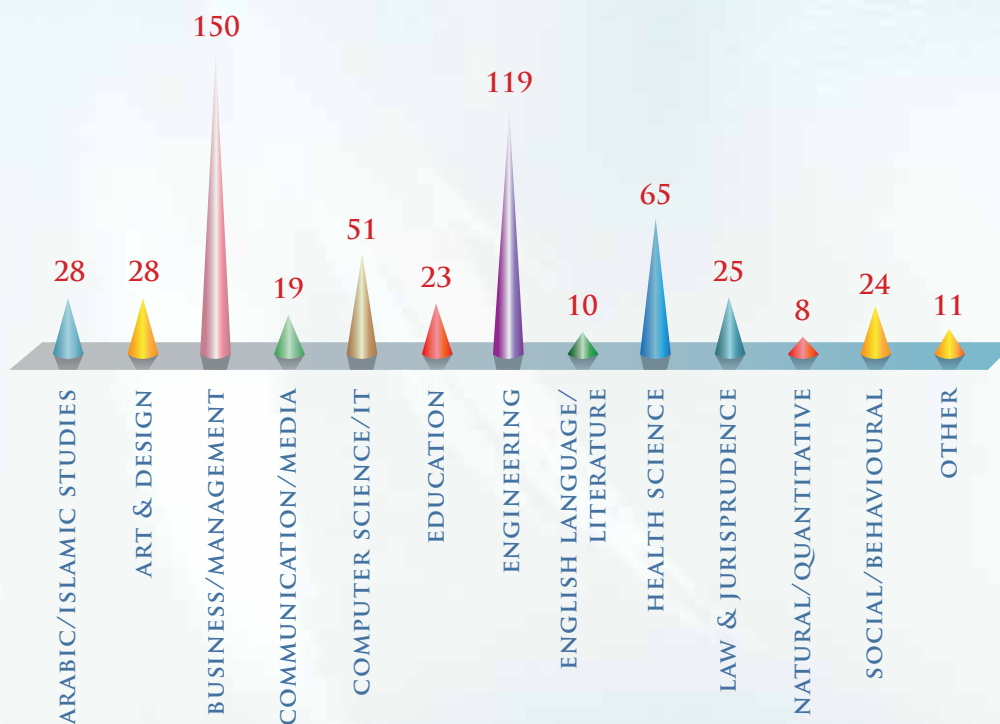


The year was one in which the CAA approved 8 licensures or the renewal of licensures, and undertook 76 program accreditation visits. It did so at a lower cost per program than in either of the previous two years.

NUMBER OF ACCREDITED PROGRAMS



NUMBER OF ACCREDITED PROGRAMS BY SUBJECT



The year also included the completion of a thorough Self-Study for the CAA and an external review of the organization, a major revision of the *Standards*, the development of new *Procedural Guidelines* which will help guide the work of the institutions and the development of a new *Handbook for External Review Team Members*.

The CAA made substantial progress on the implementation of its Strategic Plan including a re-drafting of its mission statement and significant progress on each of the major goals of the plan.

While the CAA's prime responsibility is to the institutions and the people of the UAE, it can only exercise this responsibility appropriately if it is in touch with the worldwide Quality Assurance community in higher education. Through its links with ANQAHE, INQAAHE, and many reviewers from around the world, the CAA, and hence the UAE, both benefits from and contributes to the global developments in quality higher education.

MISSION AND PLANNING

The CAA is committed to ensuring that institutions of the UAE adhere to their missions and that they have a culture of planning which drives their work. Just as there is that expectation for the institutions of the UAE, the CAA has the same expectations for itself. An important activity of the 2010-2011 year was the revision of the mission of the CAA to now read: *"The Commission for Academic Accreditation is the Federal Government's Quality Assurance Agency charged with promoting educational excellence across 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."*

The year included, too, a thorough review and update of the CAA Strategic Plan. With four broad emphases on (1) ensuring quality and academic standards; (2) diversifying services; (3) ensuring effective operations, and (4) elevating the international profile, the plan highlights not only the regulatory work of the CAA, but also its consultative role in quality assurance. Both roles are expressed through the work of the External Review Teams, and the professional development workshops sponsored by the CAA. The plan underscores the commitment of the CAA to expanding its connections to the larger world of international quality assurance. The plan, as well, has specific Key Performance Indicators which allow the CAA to measure its performance against agreed upon benchmarks. The complete strategic plan is on the CAA website.

Because the Strategic Plan of the CAA is a frequent reference point in discussions within the CAA, it has, in language taken from a summary of recent progress on the plan, "served to guide the agenda of CAA activities over the past two years."



HIGH PRAISE FROM THE INSTITUTIONS

As part of recognizing the CAA for its 10 years of service to the UAE, institutional leadership was asked to comment. The comments, reflected in the quotations below, underscore the commitment of the CAA to its mission and its role of serving higher education in the Emirates.

“The CAA’s excellent standards for academic accreditation are very much in line with international standards and these standards have a direct impact on the quality of students, faculty and the academic programs at Abu Dhabi University.” Dr. Nabil Ibrahim, Chancellor, Abu Dhabi University.

“Through its rigorous standards, covering the various dimensions of e-learning ... and its ongoing constructive input and feedback, the CAA has supported HBMeU in every shape and form to become a blue print for the recognition and accreditation of a new form of learning while ensuring that at all times it meets the highest standards of excellence which will enable it to position itself as a leader and pioneer in online education at both regional and international level.” Dr. Mansoor Al Awar, Chancellor, Hamdan Bin Mohammed e-University.

REVISING THE STANDARDS FOR LICENSURE AND ACCREDITATION

A major initiative of this past year was the revision of the *Standards*. The initial *Standards* for the CAA were those of 2000. Subsequent editions appeared in 2003, 2005, and 2007. The revisions of 2010-2011 built on the previous editions, and on the experience of the CAA in working with the institutions of the UAE. The revision process included review and advice from the Higher Education Institutions in the UAE, and a review by External Consultants. The resulting 2011 *Standards* include, in addition to sections on Mission, Governance, Academic Programs, Faculty and Staff, Students, Learning Support, Physical Facilities, Fiscal Matters, Institutional Integrity, and Research, a new section on Community Engagement. The revisions center on broad principles of quality, but also include prescriptive “Stipulations” which define the minimum thresholds for quality in a number of areas. The new edition of the *Standards* also includes an expanded glossary which will help bring greater consistency in the use of key higher education terms. The *Standards* also make a reference to the UAE Qualifications Framework. The new *Standards* are posted to the CAA website and a print edition in both English and Arabic will soon be available for the use of all institutions in the UAE.

COMPANION PIECES TO THE *STANDARDS*

Important to the success of the implementation of the new *Standards* is the development of the *Procedural Guidelines* (one "*Guideline*" for each of the CAA processes of licensure, renewal of licensure, initial accreditation and renewal of accreditation). These "*Guidelines*" provide a "how to do it" blueprint or outline for institutions to follow when submitting materials for any of the processes of the Commission.

EXTERNAL REVIEW TEAMS

During the 2010-2011 year, the CAA relied on the services of 164 reviewers representing North America, Europe, Australia, Asia and areas of the Middle East outside of the UAE. The reviewers are internationally recognized program specialists who bring their program expertise and their understanding of quality assurance to their judgments as to whether a program is in compliance with the *Standards*. With the reviewers, themselves, well versed in international quality assurance, the review teams serve to give an international benchmark for the programs of the UAE compared to those offered elsewhere in the world. The CAA has also used the expertise of External Review Teams for purposes of the renewal of licensure of several UAE institutions. By using review teams for back-to-back visits and by scheduling teams well in advance, the CAA seeks to lower costs to institutions.

HANDBOOK FOR EXTERNAL REVIEW TEAMS

During this past year, the CAA undertook a revision of its *Handbook for External Review Teams* and did so to not only update the guidelines for review teams, but to provide review teams with a context for the rapidly changing higher education environment of the UAE. The revised *Handbook* provides examples of how to do the reports which are an important part of the work of External Review Teams. The examples will lead to greater consistency in the way in which the teams do their work. The contextual material will assist External Review Team members in understanding the rapidly changing and very diverse nature of the Higher Education Institutions in the UAE. The resulting *Handbook* is a much more professional guide to the work of the External Review Teams.

INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

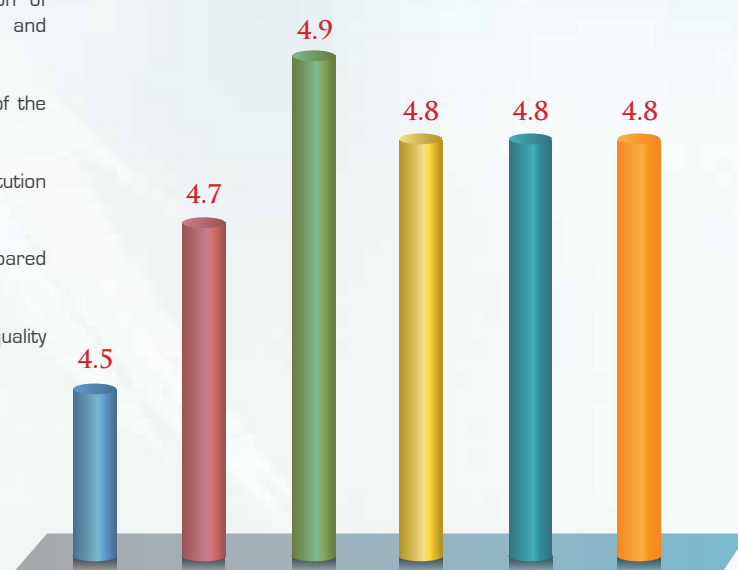
The 2010-2011 Year for the CAA included a major and very important effort by the CAA to reflect on and refine its own work. Building on the practices of other Higher Education Quality Assurance agencies, the CAA undertook a Self-Study in the fall of 2010. The study culminated in a review by a team of International experts (from the US and from Ireland) and a summary report which affirmed that the CAA is operating within the guidelines of good international practice for quality assurance agencies. To quote from the report of the external evaluators: *"The self-study report produced for this review is exemplary in its frankness and in the depth of its self-analysis. The analysis recognizes the strengths and also the weakness of the Commission and outlines remedies and plans to meet these weaknesses."*

Significantly, the self-study led the CAA to undertake revisions of many of its own internal practices including revisions to evaluation forms used for External Review Teams, revisions to the document retrieval system, improvements to the way in which reviews are scheduled and the timeliness with which they are carried out.

The CAA also asks ERT members to evaluate the work of the Commission. The results of those evaluations are summarized in the charts which follow.

SUMMARY OF DATA FROM EVALUATION FORMS – STANDARDS AND THEIR APPLICABILITY

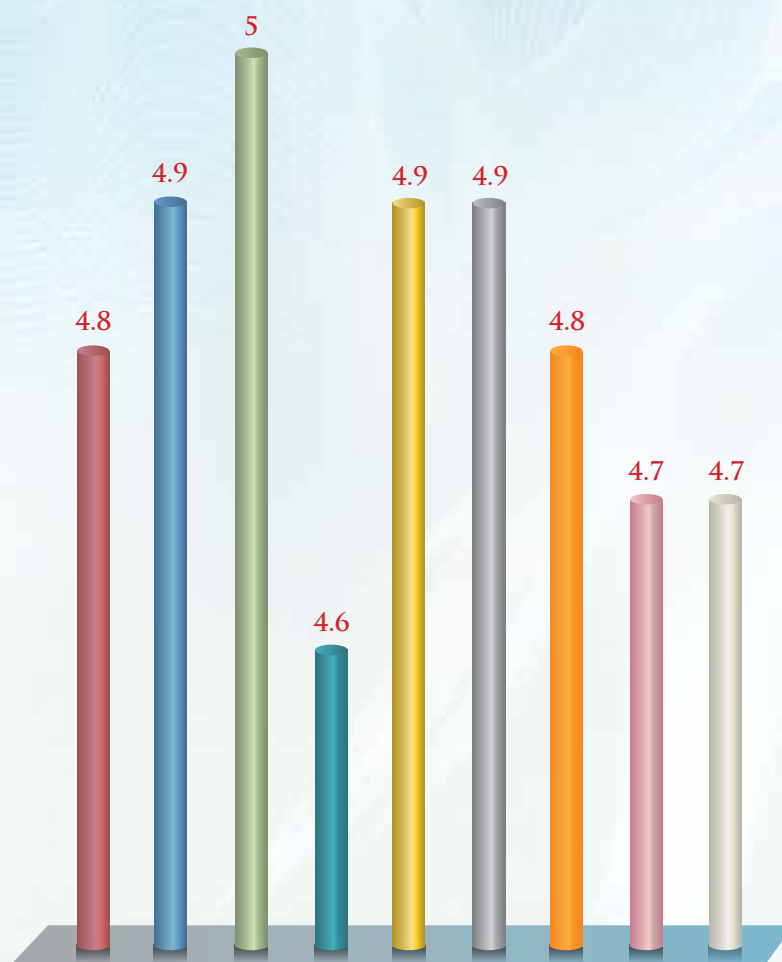
- Clarity of the *Standards* and ease of use
- Depth of the *Standards* to guide institutions in the development and implementation of effective quality assurance systems and process
- Guidance from Commission on writing of the Report
- Inclusivity of the *Standards* to foster institution wide quality assurance
- Overall quality of the *Standards* as compared to internationally recognized standards
- Rigor of the *Standards* to ensure high quality academic programs



AVERAGE SCORE ON A 1-5 SCALE
(1-Poor/ 2-Unsatisfactory/ 3-Satisfactory/ 4-Good/ 5-V.Good)

SUMMARY OF DATA FROM EVALUATION FORMS – VISIT ARRANGEMENTS

- Initial contact and preliminary information on the visit
- Organization of the visit schedule
- Overall guidance from the Commissioner
- Time allotted for overall visit
- Travel arrangements to/from UAE
- Travel arrangements within UAE
- Usefulness of Preparation Day
- Usefulness of Template
- Usefulness of the *Handbook for External Review Teams*



AVERAGE SCORE ON A 1-5 SCALE
 [1-Poor/ 2-Unsatisfactory/ 3-Satisfactory/ 4-Good/ 5-V.Good]

UAE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

CAA has worked very closely with an important new initiative of the UAE, namely the development of a UAE Qualifications Framework. The CAA Director serves as a member of the steering committee for the newly established Qualifications Framework Authority. The Framework promises to help all educational institutions at all levels to better align their curricula and their expected outcomes both within the UAE and in relation to educational systems in other parts of the world. As the National Qualifications Framework is implemented, the CAA will monitor higher education institutions as to their compliance. Adherence to the UAE Qualifications Framework is built into the 2011 *Standards*.



INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

The CAA is committed to helping higher education institutions develop their professional capacity. To that end, the Commission sponsored a number of professional development workshops during the 2010-2011 year. Many of these were co-sponsored by the British Council and hosted by institutions in Abu Dhabi, Dubai, or Ajman. Included in the workshops were topics on Strategic Planning (April, 2010), Assessment (April, 2010), Benchmarking in Higher Education (January, 2011), the UAE Qualifications Framework (April, 2011), and Quality Assurance at the Institutional Level (May, 2011).



GOOD PRACTICE DATABASE

As the institutions of the UAE have matured, they have developed a number of ideas and approaches to serving the students of the Emirates. To both celebrate and disseminate some of the better examples of quality in the delivery of higher education services in the UAE, the CAA is developing a database of “Good Practice” which includes good ideas from throughout the UAE. The “Good Practice” database will, during 2011-12, be posted to the CAA website.

IMPROVING THE CAPACITY FOR QUALITY: BENCHMARKING AND DATA COLLECTION

The CAA has long emphasized the importance of institutional data gathering or institutional research. During the 2010-11 year, this became even more important as the CAA began the practice of evaluating the institutional research and quality assurance operations of a campus each time that an External Review Team visited the campus. The CAA also sent special teams to several campuses with the express task of evaluating the institutional research and quality assurance operations of the campus. And, too, the Commission sponsored a workshop on “benchmarking” which helped institutions to not only better understand the concept of benchmarking, but to think through the issue of selecting the right “peer” institutions against which to compare themselves.



THE DATA WAREHOUSE INITIATIVE

The CAA is very much involved in a Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research initiative to ensure that reliable and comprehensive data is gathered on the institutions of the UAE. There are few more important initiatives that can have the impact on higher education institutions in the UAE. A reliable database of information can provide assistance in benchmarking, strategic planning both on the part of the institutions and on the part of the CAA or the Ministry and much more. Whether the issue is total enrollment, the mix of gender or nationalities or retention and graduation rates, the information will provide helpful context for institutional improvement.

COLLABORATIVE WORK OF THE CAA

The international activities of the CAA are important; so, too, is the collaborative work of the CAA with other quality assurance bodies, including programmatic accreditors (for example, AACSB, NCATE or ABET) or groups, such as the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools or the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, where they are among the six regional accreditors in the United States but are working outside of that country. The work of the CAA has taken the form of proposing Memoranda of Understanding with these other quality assurance bodies and having observers on the review teams which come to the UAE. In some instances, the CAA has had a joint visit with the international accrediting body; such a visit enabled the CAA to undertake its own work, allowed the international accreditor to do what was needed, and saved time and money for the institution and the CAA.

INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION FOR THE CAA

Recognition by other international quality assurance agencies is certainly a mark of significance. During 2011, the CAA received recognition by INQAAHE (International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education) as being one of six institutions in the world to meet their "Guidelines for Good Practice." To meet the "Guidelines," the CAA demonstrated substantial adherence to international best practices in several areas including the way in which the *Standards* stress evidence-based outcomes, the comprehensive nature of the *Standards*, the governance of the CAA, the ways in which the CAA maintains relations with higher education institutions in the UAE, and the collaborative approach with which the CAA operates.



COMMISSIONER ACTIVITIES

The Commission's staff is very active in the international quality assurance effort. The work enhances the professional capacity of the Commissioners, themselves, but also extends the connections of the CAA to the international community. During the 2010-11 year, the Director served on the board and was vice-chair of ANQAHE, was elected to the board of INQAAHE, and made several presentations in Madrid, Beirut and Washington, D.C. The Commission organized a workshop on how to establish quality assurance agencies in other countries of the Middle East and North Africa. Commissioners participated in conferences and made presentations in Madrid, Hong Kong, and Bahrain. The Director and other Commissioners served as chairs or members of external review teams in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Oman.



STAFF HONOURS

Dr. Badr Aboul-Ela was elected Vice President of the Arab Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ANQAHE), and as board member of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) It was a banner year for Mrs. Reena Rajiv who was named Quality Assurance Specialist, and who also received an award for Excellence through the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research.

ANQAHE

In December, 2011, the CAA will host the first conference of the Arab Network of Quality Assurance in Higher Education. The conference will bring together higher education professionals and quality assurance practitioners from throughout the Middle East in a three day conference on best practice in international quality assurance and the lessons learned for the continued development of higher education in the region.

WHAT'S NEXT ?

The current year, 2011-12, promises to be every bit as busy as the preceding one. The CAA will retain its commitment to both regulation and enhancing quality. There are more opportunities for professional development to come including a workshop on the new *Standards* (September 22, 2011), and other professional development workshops all of which will be designed to enhance the work of the institutions.

A long standing initiative of the CAA but one for which the Ministry needs the help of all is the development of professional networks throughout the UAE. There is much to be gained from having annual (if not more frequent) meetings of the Directors of the Libraries, the Institutional Research professionals, the Chief Academic Officers, the Deans of Business or Engineering or the Deans of the various health professions. Such networks can be a powerful voice for higher education.

THE CAA: HISTORICAL HIGHLIGHTS

Founded in August, 2000 through decree, the CAA, unique among units of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, reports directly to the Minister.

2003: Second edition of the *Standards*

2005: Third edition of the *Standards* which included a categorization of *Standards* in broad areas to demonstrate quality.

2007: Fourth edition of the *Standards*

2007: New edition of the e-learning *Standards* published.

2009: Separate *Standards* for vocational and technical institutions.

2009: Host site for the biennial meeting of INQAAHE

2010: Tenth Anniversary of the CAA.

2010: Self-Study and External Review of the CAA in December, 2010.

2011: Recognition by INQAAHE as conforming to its Guidelines of Good Practice; One of only six Quality Assurance agencies in the world to be so recognized.

2011: Host for ANQAHE Conference.

MEET THE CAA

CAA DIRECTORS (PAST AND PRESENT):	CAA COMMISSIONERS (PRESENT):	CAA STAFF (PRESENT):
2000 - 2002 Dr. William Moran	2006 Dr. Ian P. Cumbus	2002 Mrs. Hanan Elmarasy
2002 - 2005 Dr. Michael Smith	2008 Dr. Bruce Taylor	2006 Mrs. Reena Rajiv
2005 - 2006 Dr. Sharon Siverts	2009 Dr. Rolin Sidwell	2007 Mrs. Dalida Cheikh Ali
2006 - Present Dr. Badr Aboul-Ela	2010 Dr. Thomas Armstrong	2009 Mr. Riyaz Chomba Kadath
	2011 Dr. David Woodhouse	2009 Mrs. Asmaa Zrigui
	CAA SUPPORT STAFF (PRESENT):	2011 Mr. Khaled Al Shuaby
	2000 Mr. Abdul Razzaq Lexman	
	2000 Mr. Abdul Manaf Hassan	

STAFFING CHANGES

As the CAA begins its next year (2011-12), it is pleased to announce that two new staff members have joined the organization. Mr. Khaled Al Shuaby has joined the Commission as Administrative Officer. Dr. David Woodhouse joined the CAA as the newest (and 5th) Commissioner on July 1, 2011. Dr. Woodhouse comes to the UAE after serving as Executive Director of the Australian Universities Quality Agency.



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