



Executive Summary

Renewal of Institutional Licensure Sharjah Performing Arts Academy Sharjah

20-23 June 2022

A Renewal of Licensure Review Team (RLRT) visited the Sharjah Performing Arts Academy (SPAA) from 20-23 June 2022 to evaluate the *Application* for the Renewal Institutional Licensure (RIL). The findings of the RLRT reflect its observations at the time of the visit and relate to the *Standards for Licensure and Accreditation 2019* (hereinafter referred to as the *Standards*), and the *Procedural Manual for Renewal of Institutional Licensure 2019 (PMRIL)*. The exit briefing was held on 23 June 2022.

His Highness Sheikh Dr Sultan bin Muhammad Al Qasimi, member of the Supreme Council and Ruler of Sharjah, issued the Amiri Decree that established SPAA. SPAA was granted Initial Institutional Licensure in 2019 and Initial Accreditation for its programs in 2021. SPAA's current offerings include a Bachelor of Arts (BA) Acting, BA Musical Theatre, and BA Production Arts. In academic year 2021-2022, these programs enrolled a total of 91 students, with 36 students in BA Acting, 31 students in BA Production Arts and 24 students in BA Musical Theatre. There is an equal number of male and female students in the programs. SPAA aims to enroll up to 250 students across all programs, current and future, at its current premises due to capacity restrictions, and plans to maintain this level of enrolment in the future unless additional facilities are built.

The RLRT considered SPAA's Self-Study, examined supporting documents and additional documents and materials provided prior to and during the Visit, and interacted with a number of faculty, professional and administrative staff while on campus. There are several key strengths that were identified through this review process, including the following:

- **The vision of His Highness Sheikh Dr Sultan bin Muhammad Al Qasimi which** led to the establishment of SPAA and its aspiration to become a world-class performing arts academy for the MENA region that will not only train and prepare graduates for a professional career, but also enhance the profile of performing arts in the region. This clarity of vision provides a strong sense of purpose and direction, attracts talent and creates a legacy, and SPAA has benefitted, and will continue to benefit from the unreserved support it has received.
- **SPAA's resilience and conviction.** The Academy started at a challenging time just as the global pandemic took hold. Despite the challenges it faced to teach performing arts courses online and promote itself to attract students during a time when travel was limited, SPAA managed to begin delivering its programs and increase its enrolments over the last two years.
- **The interaction between committed and experienced faculty and enthusiastic students**



has created potent synergies which can be harnessed to help SPAA grow its reputation as a hub for the performing arts in the UAE and beyond. This can be extended to include alumni in the future.

- **The Academy's outstanding contemporary facilities and teaching spaces** which have a positive impact on the delivery of its academic programs.
- **Robust fiscal management** which will provide long-term stability.

The RLRT also identified a number of areas which represent opportunities for improvement and SPAA will need to address the following matters to bring itself into full compliance with the *Standards*:

- **The organization structure needs to be enhanced** to ensure that it continues to support the aspirations of the Academy as it grows and facilitates the development of a consultative and collaborative culture. Relevant committees need to be established and used as a means of involving faculty and students in decision-making, promoting better communication and ensuring stakeholders are able to provide inputs and receive feedback about changes and improvements.
- **The quality assurance (QA) system is under-resourced and still in its infancy** even though SPAA has been operational for more than three years. A number of basic QA processes, such as regular stakeholder surveys and the publication of a Fact Book, are not in place yet. The Academy has ambitious QA goals detailed in the QA Manual, however before these can be achieved, the QA system needs to be fully operational and properly resourced with additional staff who have relevant qualifications and experience.
- **A research vocabulary for performing arts needs to be clearly articulated** to ensure there is a shared understanding of what constitutes research. This should be used as a basis for developing a research strategy that includes faculty research expectations. These must be embedded in performance appraisal and promotion processes and championed by a designated research leader.
- **Community engagement activities need to be consolidated under an umbrella strategy** which is aligned with the Academy's mission and long-term goals, built on the current and future program offering, and directed by a single individual. Involving students in community engagement initiatives will also enable them to become co-creators of their learning experience.

The RLRT makes its recommendations in a spirit of constructive engagement, with the aim of ensuring that the *Standards* are met, and to aid SPAA in its desired objective to achieve renewal of institutional licensure.