



Executive Summary

Renewal of Licensure
City University College of Ajman
Ajman, United Arab Emirates

June 2020

A Renewal of Licensure Review Team (RLRT) appointed by the Commission for Academic Accreditation (CAA) of the Ministry of Education (MOE) of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) evaluated, in June 2020, the *Self-Study* for Renewal of Institutional Licensure) submitted by the City University College of Ajman (hereafter CUCA).

CUCA is a private institution of higher education that received Initial Licensure in 2011 and full Licensure in 2015. The College was developed under the patronage of HE Sheikh Humaid Bin Rashid Al Nuaimi, Member of the Supreme Council and Ruler of Ajman, who is a major shareholder and Chair of the Board of Trustees.

CUCA reports a total enrolment of 1,882 students during the spring 2020 semester; of those 57% are UAE nationals, 58% are males and 42% are female. Undergraduate programs enrol 89% of the students; the remaining 11% are enrolled in graduate programs. In Spring 2020, CUCA employs 73 faculty, 22 female and 51 males, of which 64 are PhD holders. The faculty to student ratio is 1:29.

The CUCA campus is located in Ajman in Al Tallah, close to the border between Ajman and Sharjah Emirates, and was inaugurated in April 2018. The University College is aligned with READ – R Education and Academic Development, which operates the College, as well as City School Ajman, which is the education arm of READ Holding. Mr. Imran Khan, who is CUCA's President, is the CEO of READ. The College benefits from a substantial READ initiative to develop a new campus for the College and City School.

Through its consideration of CUCA's *Self-Study* submitted for Renewal of Licensure, and examination of other documentation and additional information provided by CUCA during the review, the RLRT identified several strengths, including the following:

- The well-equipped, state of the art, facilities, and laboratories, which provide an excellent environment for teaching and learning.
- The planned campus expansion which meets future growth needs of the institution.
- The strong financial backing provided to the institution through the support of His Highness Sheikh Rashid bin Humaid Al Nuaimi and R-Holding.

Matters that need addressing to bring the institution into full compliance with the *Standards* are identified; among the critical issues are:

- **Documentation:** Many of the analyses, assessments, and data required by the *PMRIL* are not included in the *Self-Study*. These include: analysis of the effectiveness of CUCA's risk management plan; demonstration that the results of institutional research are used to improve programs and services; demonstration that improvements based on the results of institutional research are monitored and evaluated; results and analyses of all institutional level summaries of completed surveys for programs, as well as administrative and academic support units; an evaluation of the extent to which institutional goals for research are met; evidence that the *Health and Safety Manual* is regularly evaluated; evidence of adequacy, reliability, and regulation of its information systems; demonstration that the IT support provided is adequate; evaluation of the effectiveness of the delegation authority for financial matters; a critical evaluation of the effectiveness of MoU's and demonstration that they are aligned with the mission and objectives of the strategic plan; an assessment of the mutual benefits derived from academic partnerships; and an evaluation of the effectiveness of continuing education and life-long learning policies. All documents required by the *PMRIL* must be submitted to CAA. Additionally, of particular concern to the RLRT is the possibility that some of the material included in the *Self-Study* may have been plagiarized from another institution. CUCA is required to certify that none of the material presented in the *Self-Study* had been plagiarized.
- **Benchmarking:** The benchmarking process described in Section 2.1 of the *Self-Study* and Section 3.8 of the *QA&IE Manual* is fundamentally flawed. It does not meet the intended purpose stated in Annex 8 of the *Standards*, namely, to benchmark the institution's quality and performance "*against best local and international practices.*" The selection of the institutions against which benchmarking is to be performed as described in the *QA&IE Manual* appears to be primarily motivated by the ease by which the performance data can be obtained from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) in the USA. The process for selecting institutions against which benchmarking is to be performed should be revised to meet the intent of the *Standards*. Additionally, the RLRT views the analysis and conclusions derived from the benchmarking exercise presented in the *Self-Study* to be flawed. Of particular concern is the benchmarking analysis conclusion that "*CUCA admission is within benchmarked performance,*" while the data indicate that, counter to all other institutions, CUCA admits all applicants.
- **Budgeting and Planning:** Financial reports presented in the *Self-Study* show large differences between budgeted and actual expenditures. For example, actual expenditures for salaries, wages, and benefits during the first two quarters of the 2019 fiscal year are nearly 35% lower than the budgeted amount for the same period. The discrepancy brings into question the validity of the budgeting process, particularly for a major item such as salaries, wages, and benefits, for which projections are presumably well in hand, since the fiscal year starts on January 1st, i.e. the middle of the Academic year. Additionally, the data included in the *Self-Study* suggests that, in some cases, unit-specific input to the institutional budgeting process is provided after the beginning of the fiscal year for which the budget is to be prepared. Hence, it is unclear how, or if,

budgeting is connected to short and long-term institutional planning, as required by the *Standards*.

- Research Strategy, Policies, and Infrastructure: The RLRT views CUCA's research strategy, policies, and infrastructure as documented in the *Self-Study* to be inadequate and inconsistent with the requirements of the *Standards*. A revised Research Strategy and Operational Plan that is consistent with CUCA's approved Strategic Plan is needed. All research policies need to be reviewed and revised to meet the requirements of Stipulation 4, Annex 3 of the *Standards*. Additionally, research policies and infrastructure need to be correctly and consistently presented in all relevant publications, including the Faculty Handbook.

The RLRT makes its requirements and suggestions in a spirit of constructive engagement, with the aim of ensuring that the *Standards* are met, and to aid CUCA to receive Re-Licensure. The requirements and suggestions can, and should, be viewed as "Opportunities for Improvement" as CUCA progresses towards excellence in education, research, and service.