



International Quality Review of the British University in Dubai

May 2022

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About this review

This is a report of an International Quality Review conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at the British University in Dubai (the University). The review took place from 23 to 26 May 2022 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

- Ms Isabel Lucas
- Professor Stephen Pratt (international reviewer)
- Mr Abraham Baldry (student reviewer)

The QAA Officer for this review was Dr Roshani Swift.

International Quality Review (IQR) offers institutions outside the UK the opportunity to have a review by the UK's Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA). The review benchmarks the institution's quality assurance processes against international quality assurance standards set out in Part 1 of the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)*.¹

In an International Quality Review, the QAA review team:

- reaches conclusions against each of the 10 standards set out in Part 1 of the ESG
- makes recommendations
- identifies features of good practice
- comes to an overall conclusion as to whether the institution meets the standards for International Quality Review.

A summary of the findings can be found in the section starting on page 2. Explanations of the findings are given in numbered paragraphs in the section starting on page 6.

The QAA website gives more information [about QAA](#) and its mission.² A dedicated section explains the method for International Quality Review³ and has links to other informative documents. For an explanation of terms, see the glossary at the end of this report.

¹ www.enqa.eu/esg-standards-and-guidelines-for-quality-assurance-in-the-european-higher-education-area

² www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us

³ www.qaa.ac.uk/en/training-and-services/iqr

Key findings

Executive summary

The British University in Dubai (hereafter the University) was established in 2003 by a grouping of public and private sector bodies, both Emirati and British, under the provisions of Law Number 5 of the Emirate of Dubai. Its mission is to provide 'world class scholarship, education and research that make a distinctive British contribution to support the aspirations of the Dubai Government and the UAE to become a hub for education and research in the region'.

The University comprises three faculties (Business and Law, Engineering and Information Technology, and Education) delivering a portfolio of bachelor's, master's and doctoral programmes accredited by the Commission for Academic Accreditation (CAA). At present, there are five undergraduate degree programmes; 21 master's programmes; and seven doctoral programmes, based in the five subject areas of Business Management; Law; Computer Science; Engineering and Education.

As of November 2021, there are almost 1,200 students registered for study at the University, of which 18% are undergraduate (UG) and 82% postgraduate (PG). The majority of PG students at the University are part-time whereas almost all UG students are studying full-time.

The University's governance structure consists of the Council, the Senate, the Academic Board and a formal committee structure. The University boards and committees are categorised by academic and management domains, and their roles and responsibilities and reporting lines are clearly defined. The University Council usually includes members from the University founding organisations, and both UAE nationals and UK expatriates are represented.

The Senate is the University's senior academic body and reports directly to the University Council. It is in charge of approving academic plans that are in line with its strategic plans, including the University's programmes and academic initiatives. The Academic Board is the University's senior academic committee and has delegated authority from the Senate for monitoring all academic and research business at the University.

The University's strategic goals and priorities are outlined in its Strategic Plan for 2019-2024, and are designed to help the University be agile and capitalise on opportunities while also providing a clear sense of direction and purpose. The University's Strategic Plan is structured around four Strategic Themes covering enrichment of the student experience; excellence-driven research and innovation; expansive University environment; and dynamic academic and societal engagement. Under each Strategic Theme there are explicitly defined Target Strategies, which align with the University's Mission and Vision; the UAE Vision 2021; and the Dubai Plan 2021.

In reaching conclusions about the extent to which the British University in Dubai meets the 10 ESG Standards, the QAA review team followed the evidence-based review procedure as outlined in the handbook for International Quality Review (June 2021). The QAA review team was provided with a self-evaluation and supporting evidence by the University. During the four-day online review visit, which took place from 23 to 26 May 2022, the review team held a total of eight meetings with the Vice-Chancellor; senior management team; the Registrar and Chief Administrative Officer; students; academic staff, professional support staff, stakeholders including alumni; and a final meeting. The review team also had the opportunity to view a video of the University's facilities, and received a live demonstration of the virtual learning environment from a student access perspective.

The review team came to the overall conclusion that the British University in Dubai meets all 10 of the European Standards and Guidelines (2015), Part 1: Internal Quality Assurance. The review team has identified six areas of good practice and four recommendations.

QAA's conclusions about the British University in Dubai

The QAA review team reached the following conclusions about the higher education provision at the British University in Dubai.

European Standards and Guidelines

The British University in Dubai meets all of the 10 ESG Standards and Guidelines.

Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following features of **good practice** at the British University in Dubai.

- The establishment, maintenance and effective operation of a dedicated Office (Office for Quality and Institutional Effectiveness) with responsibility for quality assurance, extended to incorporate managing the quality systems and closing the loop in processes such as the assessment of teaching (ESG Standard 1.1).
- The formation and operation of a stakeholder Advisory Board with a focused strategic, operational and advisory remit (ESG Standard 1.2).
- The establishment and maintenance of a Doctoral Training Centre to further enhance institutional research and scholarship priorities and support all students and staff (ESG Standard 1.3).
- The focus on learner independence, equity and inclusion for 'students of determination' (those with additional needs) (ESG Standard 1.3).
- The submission of model and/or indicative answers for assessment by the external examiner along with assessment briefs and rubrics, as part of the assessment process (ESG Standard 1.3).
- The introduction of a bespoke feature on the student intranet, allowing enquiries and requests to be tracked in real time by both University staff and individual students (ESG Standard 1.7).

Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendations** to the British University in Dubai.

- To further strengthen the existing capacity and resource within the University for subject specialists to develop pedagogically enhanced programmes across a range of modes of delivery (ESG Standard 1.2).
- To further develop and expand careers support and guidance for both existing students and alumni (ESG Standard 1.6).
- To consolidate the University's existing guidance and expertise in addressing diversity and equality, and to extend this expertise more broadly across faculties (ESG Standard 1.6).
- To review in partnership with student representatives the discharge of their role and responsibilities, and the pathways to further enhance student engagement and involvement (ESG Standard 1.7).

Explanation of the findings about the British University in Dubai

This section explains the review findings in more detail.

Terms that may be unfamiliar to some readers have been included in a [brief glossary](#) at the end of this report. A fuller [glossary of terms](#) is available on the QAA website, and formal definitions of certain terms may be found in the operational description and handbook for the [review method](#), also on the QAA website.

Standard 1.1 Policy for quality assurance

Institutions should have a policy for quality assurance that is made public and forms part of their strategic management. Internal stakeholders should develop and implement this policy through appropriate structures and processes, while involving external stakeholders.

Findings

1.1 The University has demonstrated to the review team that it aligns its mission and goals with its intended academic outcomes, in such a way as to meet the expectations of both internal and external stakeholders. The Institutional Effectiveness Manual specifies that the operational responsibility for the creation of an institutional effectiveness model lies with the Office of Quality and Institutional Effectiveness (OQIE), which is tasked with the overall deployment and improvement of the quality assessment system. The University in this context defines institutional effectiveness in terms of the systems and processes which enable the University to form judgements on its effectiveness of meeting or exceeding goals and targets; and OQIE achieves this by ensuring that quality assurance policies have been developed and appropriate and proportionate processes have been outlined.

1.2 Reporting directly to the Vice Chancellor, the OQIE coordinates and oversees the University's oversight and management of Institutional Effectiveness. Over the years, based on feedback from staff and students, together with recommendations from CAA and associate universities, these quality assurance systems have been developed and made more stringent. Part of this process of improvement within the University has been to take deliberate steps to ensure that these feedback and process loops are closed. For these reasons, the establishment and maintenance of this office with a University-wide role and remit is agreed by the team to be an example of **good practice**.

1.3 The operation of the quality systems, and the comprehensiveness and consistency of their co-dependent operation is evidenced in the schematic of academic and administrative units, which demonstrate how continual evaluation and improvement has been conceptualised. This indicates clearly the process flow and laddering between the different University committees involved in the process and their function/responsibility for quality assurance has been mapped. These policies and processes comply with the requirements of the CAA's Standards 2019. Meetings with academic staff and support staff enabled the review team to confirm staff awareness of the commitment to quality assurance and its operation in practice.

1.4 There is evidence that internal stakeholders have been consulted, contribute to and are regularly informed of the quality assurance process. Students are able to provide feedback in several ways, including surveys conducted amongst the student body to capture the overall student experience; and the equivalent analysis of the research supervision experience; along with evidence from programme and course level. Students are represented on quality-oriented committees, including the Academic Staff-Student Liaison Committee (ASSLC), Boards of Studies (BoS), Academic Board and the Senate.

1.5 Staff are engaged in quality assurance through their membership and participation in Programme Boards of Studies, ASSLCs, and Board of Examiners while all Deans and Heads of Programmes are members of, and participate in, the Academic Board and Senate. The governance structure of the institution is reviewed annually, and is based around a delegation and accountability framework down from the Academic Board to committees and subcommittees. Management and staff perceive the structure as working well at present.

1.6 External quality assurance is captured at an operational level through external examiners who are appointed for all taught programmes. They confirm that programmes

delivered are of an appropriate quality and standard when compared to comparable institutions. External quality assurance is also used to provide independent external accreditation for programmes run at the University, and the evidence provided shows that bodies such as the American School for Engineering Management, the Chartered Institute of Building, and the Project Management Institute have undertaken reviews and concluded that the quality assurance arrangements of the University are in place and operating effectively. Further external stakeholder views on quality assurance processes are provided by the meetings of Advisory Boards, and those external members of such boards met by the review team confirmed their role in this regard, and that the University gives due weight to their contributions.

1.7 The University has approved policies and procedures in place to ensure the quality and standards of its programmes and awards, and these are available to all staff and students via the internet and the virtual learning environment (VLE), as well as being made available to the general public on the University website at (<https://www.buid.ac.ae/discover-buid/policies/>). These processes include arrangements to amend, adapt and renew policies themselves, and these are overseen either by the Academic Board and Senate (for academic matters) or by the University Council (for staff related or strategic issues). The team evidenced the effective operation of this policy, and the discharge of the requirement for an annual review of all quality assurance policies, by reference to changes to the Class Size policy and to the Undergraduate Assessment policy. Responsibility for the dissemination and transmission of changes to policies is vested in the OQIE, and the team reviewed evidence which confirmed these arrangements operated effectively in practice.

1.8 Overall, the review team found that the policies and procedures, and underpinning arrangements for quality assurance are robust, and that development and implementation occurs with input from both internal and external stakeholders. On this basis, the review team concludes that Standard 1.1 is **met**.

Standard 1.2 Design and approval of programmes

Institutions should have processes for the design and approval of their programmes. The programmes should be designed so that they meet the objectives set for them, including the intended learning outcomes. The qualification resulting from a programme should be clearly specified and communicated, and refer to the correct level of the national qualifications' framework for higher education and, consequently, to the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area.

Findings

2.1 Processes and policies for the development and approval of programmes are embedded and are aligned to the University's Strategic Plan to focus on an enriched student experience socially and academically. Further, these are aligned to the CAA and the Quality Framework (QF Emirates) ensuring students are registered for programmes which are widely recognised and licensed. There is a detailed and robust eight-step institutional approval process for programme approval and minor/major changes that requires programme teams to collaborate widely, including with students, employers, Advisory Board and, where appropriate, professional bodies and one or more University partners. These examples of wide stakeholder engagement with the design of programmes are augmented by evidence supporting the acquisition of feedback from existing students on proposed changes.

2.2 Senior staff make effective use of the Advisory Board and OQIE to gain market intelligence at strategic and local levels and this input informs the development of new programmes and their content. The Advisory Board comprises external industry and academic partners as well as staff and alumni. Students do not form part of this group but their voice is gathered through surveys which inform the proposal under consideration. New programmes are reviewed quinquennially to ensure market validity and relevance. The Advisory Board takes a central role in this process advising on curriculum content and wider skills and knowledge development from which students will benefit, and the review team confirmed the centrality of this role in discussions with the Vice Chancellor, senior staff and stakeholders. For example, the Advisory Board has helped to develop a view on the potential for dual awards with other organisations of interest as well as offering internships to undergraduate students on the CAA compulsory placement. Alumni in the Advisory Board have also provided valuable input into the skills aspect of the curriculum, advising on what current employers may be seeking in graduates in the medium/long term.

2.3 The CAA requires higher education institutions to use employers to inform the curriculum, and the University has used this requirement as a basis for extending and developing these significant relationships for the benefit of students and the Institution as a whole, and this is supported by stakeholders. The review team agreed that the extensive use of the stakeholder Advisory Board by the University represents **good practice**.

2.4 A key part of the approval process is to ensure that, wherever possible, programmes gain additional validity and relevance through external accreditation. Where multiple bodies are available for accreditation, the one which has the broadest appeal to prospective students and employers is prioritised. Students underscored the value of these arrangements in the meeting with the review team, stating that the level of independent external accreditation is a significant factor in choosing to enrol at the University.

2.5 Staff expertise is a starting point for designing programmes both in terms of generating ideas for portfolio expansion as well as for curriculum content, and significant use is made of benchmarking programmes in development with those that exist in the

international market, including to the level of scrutinising learning outcomes. A whole organisational approach is taken with the creation of new programmes. Professional Services play a vital role in ensuring appropriate marketing and administration is set up as well as ensuring classrooms, IT and specialist equipment and library resources are in place before the new programme commences. The review team considered that these strengths serve the University well in its current form, but that as additional developments occur it is **recommended** that the University strengthens further the existing capacity and resource for subject specialists to develop pedagogically enhanced programmes across a range of modes of delivery.

2.6 Programme specifications are key documents in the approval of new programmes and each of these specifies learning outcomes, credit sizes, and learning hours as well as mapping each module against the knowledge, skills and competencies. All undergraduate programmes include a 16-week, full-time placement for which students gain academic credit. The programme specifications detail the requirements for progression to the next level of study, and those students met by the team confirmed this is clearly explained to them at Induction and that the documents are readily available to them on the VLE.

2.7 The review team concludes that the University has robust processes for the design and approval of its programmes. They are designed to meet the objectives set for them, including the intended learning outcomes, result in qualifications that are clearly specified and communicated, and align with qualifications and credit frameworks. Overall, the team concludes that Standard 1.2 is **met**.

Standard 1.3 Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment

Institutions should ensure that the programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in creating the learning process, and that the assessment of students reflects this approach.

Findings

3.1 The University's focus on student experience and learner independence is clearly articulated in its strategy and supported by staff and students. Students take part in course development and approval through formal and informal feedback mechanisms and are also represented on the full range of deliberative committees from Boards of Study to Academic Board and Senate.

3.2 Each taught module uses a variety of teaching and learning techniques to support a range of learner types and to motivate students in their learning journey. In addition, students have a wide range of formal and informal opportunities to engage with staff and provide feedback on the programme. In the meeting with the Vice Chancellor an example was provided where students suggested that a different title for the existing Professional Doctorate in Project Management degree would allow them to enter a wider field of employment. An additional pathway title was created (Business Management) which later supported the development of the Professional Doctorate in Business Administration (DBA) programme. The review team saw this as a good example of active student engagement. In addition, undergraduate students who met with the team confirmed that they are able to discuss the delivery of their programme in the initial module-level induction and in this way staff and students are reassured that the delivery of the programme is tailored to the needs of the cohort, balanced with the accrediting bodies' needs.

3.3 Delivery of programmes is face-to-face by default and class sizes are capped depending on the level of programme and where specialist rooms are required. Flexible routes to accessing programmes were introduced in response to the global pandemic. Staff and students agreed that this was done well and as a result, in some courses, a degree of flexibility using a hi-flex approach (which gives students the option to attend virtually or in person to the same sessions) remains.

3.4 All students have access to the Doctoral Training Centre (DTC) to develop their academic skills. The DTC was established in 2016, and the CAA identified this as best practice in its 2020 re-licensure report. Sessions range from how to avoid plagiarism to how to defend a thesis, and these are recorded to encourage wider access. This initiative was created by the University initially to support PG students to understand the British approach to education and has since widened its remit as the portfolio has expanded. Tutors from the DTC also go into classes to provide academic support on specific topics such as referencing. The review team concludes that the establishment and maintenance of the Doctoral Training Centre is **good practice** in enabling the University to further enhance educational research and scholarship priorities, and support all students and staff in this.

3.5 Through meetings with senior staff the review team was able to understand the University's approach to supporting the diverse needs of students. Senior staff are clear that the approach from leaders and managers through to teaching and support staff is one of inclusivity and equity, not equality. The institution also benefits from having a global specialist in a senior role to support, develop and evaluate student support.

3.6 Staff are provided with the opportunity to undergo training on supporting students who have disclosed a need for additional support, or who have mitigating circumstances, organised by the Equality and Diversity group. Staff with students who have diverse needs are proactively emailed and provided with access to relevant paperwork and reports to

inform their preparation and support for students. Senior staff also commented that they appreciated, across the University, that not all students disclosed a need and that staff are additionally trained to look out for signs of students requiring additional support from teachers and/or student services.

3.7 Students with diverse needs are supported in different and bespoke ways and are, by law, given 25% additional time to complete assessments. Staff also stated they offer one-to-one sessions to students with additional needs to ensure they are confident with the material. Students confirmed to the team that those who are classified as a 'person of determination' by the Ministry are provided with a shadow teacher/teaching assistant. Differentiation during the global pandemic for students with additional needs included the ability to attend classes flexibly using the VLE and/or recorded sessions. A recent example was shared of a student with severe mobility issues being awarded his MA and subsequently a full scholarship for a DBA. The review team formed the view that the breadth and depth of the University's commitment to supporting students with diverse needs represents **good practice**.

3.8 In terms of assessment, the University demonstratively uses a combination of formative and summative approaches, in line with the Learning and Teaching Strategy, all of which are designed to demonstrate the attainment of one or more learning outcomes. The assessment requirements within programme specifications range widely from essays and written examinations to presentations and quizzes. Assessment type and questions are approved by the relevant external examiners and Dean in line with University policy prior to being sat by students. As part of this process, staff also provide a model answer and/or indicative answer to the external examiner. This supports the rigour and clarity of the full assessment process and is assessed by the review team as representing **good practice**.

3.9 The module descriptors detail how the module learning outcomes relate to programme learning outcomes. Assessment briefs and rubrics are in place for the different levels of study and assessment information is available from the first day of each taught module. The University has noted that this is not necessarily applied consistently across all modules and is proactively addressing it through staff development and policies.

3.10 Feedback to support improvement is provided to learners within 15 working days from submission. Staff are supported to understand what good feedback looks like through a range of activity such as induction, peer review and moderation meetings in which quality of feedback is also scrutinised. Feedback is based on the relevant rubric and supplemented with clear guidance on how to improve to achieve a higher grade. The University was in the process at the time of the review visit of amending policies to clarify that unclear feedback was recognised as a justifiable basis for an academic appeal. This sits within a wider context of established processes and procedures governing academic appeals, which are detailed to students within their student handbooks. The procedure defines when appeals can and cannot be made, and provides for a structured hierarchy, commencing with an appeals committee and escalating if necessary to the Academic Board.

3.11 Based upon the evidence provided, including feedback from staff and students, the review team concludes that the University has developed diversified approaches of learning, teaching and assessment, and that consequently Standard 1.3 is **met**.

Standard 1.4 Student admission, progression, recognition and certification

Institutions should consistently apply pre-defined and published regulations covering all phases of the student 'life cycle', eg student admission, progression, recognition and certification.

Findings

4.1 The University provides 'catalogues' (equivalent to prospectuses) for both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes which outline entry requirements for the institution's programmes of study, and these are available publicly to prospective students and employers. These set out the admission requirements in each case, and for undergraduates, for example, cover both the general principles underpinning recruitment and the specific principles for individual course admission. These general requirements include a statement as to which regulations governing admission are being addressed (UAE Standards), and a clear and unambiguous assurance to applicants confirming a non-discriminatory approach. This is supported by more course-specific requirements, setting out the admissions criteria in terms of qualifications required and English language proficiency level needed. These catalogues reflect the undergraduate and postgraduate admissions policies and procedures, which have themselves been approved by the University Council. The undergraduate policy was approved by the University Council at its most recent revision (September 2019) and reiterates both general and programme-specific admissions requirements. These policies are also publicly available on the University website.

4.2 The University also has a suite of policies and standard documentation which supports individual aspects of the student admission process, and which are also publicly available, including the arrangements for credit transfer. The review team concluded that in theory the design of these policies and associated documents enables the Standard to be met.

4.3 To test how these arrangements work in practice, the team reviewed the policy documents in context by meeting staff involved with admission, progression, recognition and certification, as well as meeting a range of students from undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, covering full and part-time modes of study, and including both those with a representative role and those without.

4.4 Admissions policies are in line with the requirements of the CAA and Ministry of Education. All undergraduate students are required to be interviewed before admission. Shortlisted PhD candidates are also interviewed prior to an offer of study being made. Master's students are interviewed if the admission tutor requests that or on re-admission. The University uses a structured interview process, and also welcomes contact from prospective students prior to interview to have informal discussions with members of the academic team. Applicants are sent a conditional or confirmed offer letter depending on the documents they have submitted. If the applicants have met all the admission requirements including documents, they are sent a confirmed offer letter, and students receive an induction when they join the institution, which covers a range of useful information. Comprehensive details of the respective induction processes are provided to students in the student handbooks, and on the VLE, outlining the breadth and depth of induction, including both academic and pastoral aspects of the University life-cycle. This encompasses support services including library and learning resources, information about expectations and entitlement of students, and the use of a skills audit as a diagnostic assessment tool.

4.5 Students noted that admissions staff were helpful, and that all queries raised during the period up to and including their induction had been answered quickly and

comprehensively. They reported no problems with the operation of their admission processes.

4.6 Data on recruitment and admissions, allowing for year-on-year monitoring including of intake demographics, is produced by the University, and this data is considered at Academic Board and Senate, prior to inclusion in the Vice Chancellor's report to the full Council. The report to the full Council notes discernible signs of recovery in student numbers ascribed to the recovery from the pandemic, and the impact of new programmes including those relating to Artificial Intelligence (AI). Gender distribution is balanced at 50:50 over the long term, although the most recent intake splits 58:42 male to female. The percentage recruitment of Emirati nationals remains at or close to 40%, as it has for the past five academic years.

4.7 Most students progress throughout their programme of studies. This is closely monitored by the University, and the data examined by the team covering the period between 2018 and 2021 showed retention rates of 97% for undergraduate students, 95% for master's degree students, and 98% for doctoral students. The University has policies for students who fail to meet progression requirements, including rules to ensure recognition of studies undertaken by master's students who exit from programmes prematurely. The updated doctoral student progression review details a range of check-in points with doctoral students and consequences for failure to satisfactorily meet these requirements.

4.8 The University has in place credit transfer arrangements towards its undergraduate and postgraduate programme from other recognised higher education institutions under its External Credit Transfer policy, most recently reviewed and updated in August 2021. This provides for accreditation of prior learning to be undertaken at or prior to admission stage, and involves recognition of attainment from programmes approved by the Ministry for Education via accreditation or equivalence processes. A structured approval process is in place in each instance and ends with a recommendation from the Dean of the relevant faculty being considered by the Board of Examiners. The policy itself confirms that APEL (Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning) is not accepted, and in discussions in the final meeting the team confirmed with the Vice Chancellor and the Registrar that such experiential learning is not recognised by the Ministry of Education.

4.9 The review team concludes that the processes for the admission of students, the recognition of prior learning, and the arrangements for graduation and certification align with the requirements outlined in Standard 1.4 and is therefore **met**.

Standard 1.5 Teaching staff

Institutions should assure themselves of the competence of their teachers. They should apply fair and transparent processes for the recruitment and development of the staff.

Findings

5.1 The University has a clear Recruitment Policy and an associated Academic Promotion Policy, both of which were most recently reviewed in February 2021 and both of which were signed off by the Academic Council. Explicit mention in both documents confirms adherence to the laws of the UAE, and there is also a specific commitment to recruit in a non-discriminatory manner. Staff are recruited with qualifications relevant to their grade, for example those with a Professorial title have PhDs and student supervision experience as well as appropriate teaching expertise. On occasion, as part of the recruitment process, applicants are asked to deliver a sample lesson to ensure their teaching skills are to the required standard. The balance between full-time and part-time staff, which is planned to deliver a stable academic presence for students, is part of the licence conditions and monitored by the Ministry of Education.

5.2 The Promotion Policy for Associate/Professor requires those applying to demonstrate excellence in three areas: teaching, research and community engagement. This is in line with the institution's strategic plan and mission to be a research-evidenced teaching institution. Staff were able to articulate the approach to integrating scholarly activity and research into the curriculum and delivery approach. It was noted by students as well as staff that as a result of this integration a number of students have published research papers in collaboration with tutors. Joint publications have also been the topic of the Advisory Board meetings showing widespread support to embed and integrate teaching and research.

5.3 All academic staff have an Induction programme which supports them in understanding the University's approach to teaching and engaging learners. The induction includes development of assessment writing skills. New inexperienced staff are allocated an experienced mentor for their first year and meet with them at least twice during that time. It was also noted in the final meeting that all staff leaving the University have an exit interview with the Vice Chancellor as part of the commitment to learning and quality.

5.4 There are weekly University-wide meetings in which all academic staff discuss teaching, learning and assessment challenges and share good practice. A recent topic was on how to approach the challenge of ghost-writing across the faculties which will inform a future policy that is currently in development. Staff value this forum as a way of sharing challenges and solutions. The University has also recently launched a Centre for Digital Education which encourages research across different providers and also for internal staff. Staff appreciated the work of this new centre in developing resources and skills to enable tutors to transition to online learning as a result of the global pandemic.

5.5 Staff undergo annual reviews during which development opportunities from within the University and externally are discussed as well as individual research plans. In this way, staff are supported to develop their teaching practice including through conferences, workshops, one-to-one meetings with their line managers and peer reviews. This was triangulated with teaching staff during the review process and was regarded as supportive of the development of teaching knowledge and skills.

5.6 Students spoke highly of tutors and the quality of teaching, and the review team was able to confirm there is a robust process in place for matching staff to taught modules based first on expertise and qualifications and secondly on availability. Student feedback on staff is included in the appraisal review meetings and taken into account for the six-month

probation period. There is a strong focus on supporting new staff to understand the British approach and ethos at the University through induction, probation, mentoring, and the appraisal system.

5.7 Staff have access to internal funds to support their research development and are invited to attend the training and events put on by the Doctoral Training Centre. These sessions are recorded and made available on demand for staff and students. A recent development in the allocation of research funds is to include the UK partner universities as collaborative partners in staff research projects as a prerequisite. This new initiative ties in with the current strategic focus on 'Partnership'. The focus has also stimulated the recruitment to two joint academic posts and a proposal for a joint research centre with one of the UK partners. All staff are eligible for funds to support up to three conference events per year which can include an international conference. In line with the institution's ethos, staff are encouraged and incentivised to publish following attendance at a conference.

5.8 Mandatory training took place during the global pandemic to ensure staff were fully supported to deliver using the newly purchased VLE platform. This comprised a comprehensive suite of CPD including workshops, videos, and a helpdesk all supported by the Digital Education Centre. The SED provides examples of training materials in the use of technology to enhance learning and teaching as well as dates those courses ran. Other training to support the development of learning, teaching and assessment is not mandatory or regular. Individuals discuss development needs as part of the appraisal process and a budget is available centrally to support identified needs.

5.9 The University is proactive in measuring and evaluating the outcomes from the professional development policy, and maintains and periodically reviews its schedule of professional activity of the academic staff and list of research publications arising.

5.10 The review team concluded that the University's processes for staff recruitment, professional development and support, and staff performance review align with the requirements outlined in Standard 1.5. Therefore, the review team concludes that Standard 1.5: Teaching staff is **met**.

Standard 1.6 Learning resources and student support

Institutions should have appropriate funding for learning and teaching activities and ensure that adequate and readily accessible learning resources and student support are provided.

Findings

6.1 The principles for the provision of funding for the development and maintenance of learning resources and student support are set out in the Strategic Plan 2019-24. Budgets are allocated in line with the strategy, and monitored and controlled by the Executive Office under delegated powers. Recent reviews of this strategic approach have led to a focus on enhancements to the VLE, including an expansion of internet bandwidth, purchase of additional online licences, and investment in electronic information systems, with an annual cost in the region of 2 million dirhams a year over the past three years (approximately £450,000). Longer term resource plans include the construction of an entirely new campus featuring state of the art and technologically advanced facilities for all learners.

6.2 The University has a policy document which covers academic advice, careers advice and pastoral support, and was most recently approved by the University Council in August 2021. This defines the roles of key staff, including Personal Tutors, Module Tutors and Heads of Programme, and signposts the key role of course handbooks in guiding students to the relevant sources of advice for key specialist areas. The review team was able to follow the evidence trail through from the policy to the postgraduate and undergraduate student handbooks and confirm completeness. Students are made aware of these facilities through an induction programme which covers use of the learning facilities, the doctoral training centre, and a range of programme-specific information.

6.3 The University has one dedicated member of staff who provides careers advice and information. This staff member is supported by other team members in the Marketing, Admissions and Student Services department as needed. Additionally, career guidance and workshops are provided for current students and recent graduates on CV-writing, interview practice and networking skills. The University has historically educated postgraduate students who were concurrently employed. In recent years, it has shifted to educating undergraduates, who have an increased need for employability resources and careers support throughout their time at university. Students raised the need for increased careers support, as did alumni. The team therefore **recommends** that the University further develops and expands careers support and guidance for both existing students and alumni.

6.4 The University has a range of policies for students with disabilities, and also has a draft equality and diversity policy. Nevertheless, staff do not currently receive an induction on supporting students with disabilities, and there is no central repository which brings together policies affecting these students into one place. The review team therefore **recommends** the University consolidates the existing guidance and expertise around diversity and equality, and extends this expertise more broadly across the faculties.

6.5 The team tested how well this works in practice by assessing a range of evidence and meeting students and staff from professional services including the Registrar, academic staff; and those professional services staff directly involved in the provision of support services. The team also viewed a video tour of the facilities; and received a demonstration of the VLE from a student access viewpoint. The video tour encompassed the library, an IT lab, and a range of subscriptions to research databases to provide off-campus access to students and staff. Recognising both the effects of the pandemic, and the fact that that many learners study part time, the University has prioritised online and remote resources including subscriptions to relevant databases and eBooks. The University has high speed Wi-Fi

throughout campus, which was introduced in response to student feedback. During the COVID-19 outbreak, staff and students worked to find solutions to access specialist software at home that would otherwise have been available on campus.

6.6 Students are invited to provide feedback through a range of surveys, and these are disseminated to heads of department for consideration and action. Instances were cited of improvements being made as the result of such surveys, including replacement of engineering packages as more relevant equivalents were available. Performance and student satisfaction levels are also monitored through KPIs outlined in the strategic plan, although these are at a developmental stage at present, and currently monitored on a 'reporting only' basis.

6.7 The review team concludes that the University provides appropriate learning and student support services both online and in person. These services are underpinned by a suitable level of funding and therefore Standard 1.6: Learning resources and student support is **met**.

Standard 1.7 Information management

Institutions should ensure that they collect, analyse and use relevant information for the effective management of their programmes and other activities.

Findings

7.1 The University has systematic and embedded processes in place for data capture, analysis and evaluation, and this is operationalised by the OQIE. OQIE is in charge of coordinating data collection, incorporating student records management, academic committee minutes, and student surveys, and oversees the administration of institutional surveys and assessment methods. These surveys and tools assess the experiences and perspectives of students, alumni, and faculty, providing significant insights into the educational process. For example, in terms of student numbers, data is collected from the student admissions department and fed respectively to Faculties or Academic Board, depending on the locus of responsibility. This process is set out in the Institutional Effectiveness Manual, most recently updated in May 2020, and approved by the Executive Office.

7.2 OQIE is in ongoing communication with the faculties, gathering and disseminating information. An Annual Institutional Effectiveness report is prepared in line with CAA Standards, and this enables University Management to assess progress against KPIs, and to plan for enhancement. Sections include Programme Accreditation Status, Student Profile, Student Admission, Registration, Drop Out, Retention and Completion statistics. Further, data is also provided on staff. Staff Profiles (Gender, Nationality, Faculty), Staff Training Undertaken and Staff Research Output are also displayed. For most statistics, the current year is compared to the previous few years to determine short-term trends. The Strategic Plan is signed off by the Strategic Planning Board and the University Council, who monitor KPIs.

7.3 Data from students is similarly collected and incorporated in deliberations, and this entails outcomes from module and course reviews. There is a process in place for the recruitment and appointment of student representatives for all courses and levels, and these individuals provide the student voice to the deliberations of key committees. Students met by the review team are generally aware that there are student representatives and what their role is, although the level of understanding and engagement does vary from cohort to cohort. It is recognised that the great majority of the student body studies part-time at the University, which can be a reason for the variations in coverage. Nonetheless, there would seem to be an opportunity for the University to review in partnership with student representatives the discharge of their role and responsibilities, and the pathways to further enhance student engagement and involvement, and the review team **recommends** that such an exercise is carried out.

7.4 Information, in particular decisions made in committees, is circulated via the minutes of meetings, first with attendees, then posted on a shared drive. Students met by the review team were able to cite instances, for example a perceived mismatch in assignment workload, which gave them confidence that concerns raised were being discussed and actioned. Students have access to a wide variety of information via the intranet. Students can check their programme requirements, the courses they have undertaken, their grades, policy documents and financial information, such as fees owing and paid, as well as logging enquiries or requests. The progress of these requests and their related relevant policies are tracked through a flow chart so students can monitor their progress. The review team agrees that this bespoke feature of the student intranet is **good practice**.

7.5 The University ensures that relevant data and information are collected, analysed, and used to inform the management and continual improvement of programmes, allowing Standard 1.7 to be **met**.

Standard 1.8 Public information

Institutions should publish information about their activities, including programmes, which is clear, accurate, objective, up-to date and readily accessible.

Findings

8.1 The main sources of publicly available information are the website and the student handbook. Responsibility for information at an institutional level rests with the Registrar and the Chief Administrative Officer. The design in practice allows the standard to be met.

8.2 The review team tested how this works in practice by reviewing the publicly available information and process governing it, and by meeting students, alumni, and senior staff.

8.3 The website is the principal source of information for the general public, prospective and current students, alumni and others with an interest in the University. Information published on the website encompasses the institution's mission, the student handbooks, the academic calendar, admission requirements, information about the facilities, and copies of policies and procedures (www.buid.ac.ae).

8.4 There is also a range of information about programmes, including details about learning outcomes, course catalogues, the programme structure and fees. In addition, the University publishes a newsletter, and a catalogue (prospectus) for both postgraduate and undergraduate programmes. Students met by the review team were satisfied with the information provided to them.

8.5 Information governance around publicly facing information is overseen by the Communications, Marketing and External Relations (CMER) department. Individual department heads are responsible for the content of their information pages, which are then passed to the CMER to ratify, and then to the Registrar and Chief Administrative Officer to approve. Before any such information can be published, it must be approved by the Ministry for Education.

8.6 The University provides information about its activities, programmes and overall direction to both prospective students and the public that is clear, objective and readily accessible. The team concludes that Standard 1.8: Public information is **met**.

Standard 1.9 Ongoing monitoring and periodic review of programmes

Institutions should monitor and periodically review their programmes to ensure that they achieve the objectives set for them and respond to the needs of students and society. These reviews should lead to continuous improvement of the programme. Any action planned or taken as a result should be communicated to all those concerned.

Findings

9.1 The University monitors and systematically reviews its programmes within the overall framework of regulatory requirements in Dubai, where each programme is to be revised, as a minimum, every five years. This is achieved through a comprehensive and structured process involving internal review mechanisms, benchmarking with comparable institutions, and the requirements of partner universities and accrediting bodies. This process has been developed and refined over the last 15 years.

9.2 The main accreditation body in Dubai is the Commission for Academic Accreditation (CAA). CAA programme accreditation status is valid for up to five years, after which reaccreditation is required. All educational programmes at the University must be formally accredited by the UAE Ministry of Education through the CAA. The review team saw evidence of the robustness of this process in the form of renewal of programme accreditation correspondence, including a defined process for ensuring that required actions from the review are undertaken before formal approval or reapproval is granted.

9.3 The University underpins this requirement with a structured process under the programme quality review policy (PQR), which requires all new programmes for the first three years of their operation to have an internal quality review, after which they are reviewed every other year. The PQR process is carried out by a panel of University staff, usually selected from faculties other than the one in which the programme being reviewed is situated. In preparation for the review, the OQIE compiles a standard portfolio of documentation, including the annual programme self-study reports; analysis of questionnaires relevant to the programme; programme handbook; module reviews; external examiner reports (this includes both taught programmes and thesis); copy of the previous review and a report on actions taken on the recommendations; minutes of the Board of Studies; the Professional Advisory Group; and Staff-Student Liaison Committee.

9.4 The panel compiles a report identifying both points of good practice, and areas of concern, along with a series of action points. Actions required are monitored centrally by the OQIE in conjunction with the relevant Dean, and overseen by the Academic Board, who hold the faculty to account for the timely and complete implementation of all actions arising. OQIE maintains a process chart to provide a clear trail of progress at any one time.

9.5 The self-study reports are one of the key documents in the internal review process, and are produced even in the years where a PQR is not being undertaken. They are prepared to a template devised by OQIE, and the accompanying rubric describes them as primarily a reflexive exercise undertaken annually by the Head of Programme or Programme Coordinator for discussion with the Dean of Faculty. They provide an opportunity to look at the areas which need any intervention for performance enhancement, and bring together student feedback, external examiner comments, and detailed course-level data.

9.6 The review team concludes that the University monitors and regularly reviews its academic programmes with the aim to continuously improve the quality of the programmes and modules. The review team concludes that on this basis, Standard 1.9 is **met**.

Standard 1.10 Cyclical external quality assurance

Institutions should undergo external quality assurance in line with the ESG on a cyclical basis.

Findings

10.1 The University has the structures, policies and processes in place to continuously undertake quality assurance. The academic accreditation is undertaken with CAA as a condition of licence to operate, and the University must apply for renewal of licence every five years. The University has gained CAA accreditation on multiple occasions, the latest being November 2020. There is also evidence of accreditation with CAA at an individual course level.

10.2 External examiners are a particularly important source of objective externality in relation to programme review, and this is directed by the University through its policy on the appointment, role and expectations of external examiners. External examiners are provided with guidance on their role, and a standard template report is provided for them to ensure focus on key areas of programme quality. These reports are picked up as part of the programme quality review process, and implementation of actions arising is monitored and overseen by the Academic Board.

10.3 Depending on the programme, accreditation occurs with specific specialist external professional bodies. These include PMI (Project Management Institute) through its Global Accreditation Committee (GAC), ASEM (American Society of Engineering Management), and CloB (Chartered Institute of Building). In deciding which professional body to be accredited by, senior management along with academic staff evaluate the significance of the awarding body and its standing in the marketplace. Academic staff use their professional expertise to identify suitable accrediting organisations, and to recommend them for the benefit of students on the programme. Endorsement from a professional body helps with standing with CAA, and in moving into new curriculum areas. Where individual programmes are accredited by a professional body, they are subject to that body's regulatory processes, and output from their reviews, in the form of required action, are similarly monitored via the OQIE and overseen by the Academic Board. Students also noted the importance of external accreditation with academic and professional bodies. CAA accredited courses are a requirement in some of the students' workplaces. Accreditation by professional bodies was perceived by students to be important, especially in the private sector. External accreditation was seen as a qualification which is more reliable and less susceptible to forgery.

10.4 External assurance is also provided by the English UK partner universities, whose quality review processes were originally undertaken at programme level. Following a discussion at Senate in 2017, a change of focus was agreed such that partner university reviews would now be carried out jointly by more than one university, and would focus on institutional rather than programme-based quality. The programme has been disrupted by the pandemic, but the review team was able to review one such report and confirmed that points arising have been incorporated into the quality review processes.

10.5 Developmental steps have also been taken to benchmark the University against comparative institutions such as Dar Al-Hekma University in Saudi Arabia in the areas of learning and teaching facilities, self-income, IT services and library facilities and equipment. The University have also embarked on a MENA (Middle East and North African countries) Benchmark 2020-21 exercise, encompassing a range of KPIs across the whole ambit of the University, including student data, finance, scholarships and rankings.

10.6 The University's established policies and procedures are effective in ensuring the continuous review of its programmes. External reviews by CAA, external examiners,

professional bodies and partner English universities further support continuous review. Based upon the evidence provided, the review team concludes that there is an effective cyclical quality assurance process in place, and that consequently Standard 1.10 is **met**.

Glossary

Action plan

A plan developed by the institution after the QAA review report has been published, which is signed off by the head of the institution. It responds to the recommendations in the report and gives any plans to capitalise on the identified good practice.

Annual monitoring

Checking a process or activity every year to see whether it meets expectations for standards and quality. Annual reports normally include information about student achievements and may comment on the evaluation of courses and modules.

Collaborative arrangement

A formal arrangement between a degree-awarding body and another higher education provider. These may be degree-awarding bodies with which the institution collaborates to deliver higher education qualifications on behalf of the degree-awarding bodies. Alternatively, they may be other delivery organisations who deliver part or all of the institution's higher education programmes.

Degree-awarding body

Institutions that have authority - for example, from a national agency - to issue their own awards. Institutions applying to IQR may be degree-awarding bodies themselves, or may collaborate to deliver higher education qualifications on behalf of degree-awarding bodies.

Desk-based analysis

An analysis by the review team of evidence, submitted by the institution, that enables the review team to identify its initial findings and subsequently supports the review team as it develops its review findings.

Enhancement

See **quality enhancement**

European Standards and Guidelines

For details, including the full text on each standard, see www.enqa.eu/esg-standards-and-guidelines-for-quality-assurance-in-the-european-higher-education-area

Examples of practice

A list of policies and practices that a review team may use when considering the extent to which an institution meets the standards for review. The examples should be considered as a guide only, in acknowledgment that not all of them will be appropriate for all institutions.

Externality

The use of experts from outside a higher education provider, such as external examiners or external advisers, to assist in quality assurance procedures.

Facilitator

The member of staff identified by the institution to act as the principal point of contact for the QAA officer and who will be available during the review visit to assist with any questions or requests for additional documentation.

Good practice

A feature of good practice is a process or way of working that, in the view of a QAA review team, makes a particularly positive contribution to the institution's higher education provision.

Lead student representative

An optional voluntary role that is designed to allow students at the institution applying for IQR to play a central part in the organisation of the review.

Oversight

Objective scrutiny, monitoring and quality assurance of educational provision.

Peer reviewers

Members of the review team who make the decisions in relation to the review of the institution. Peer reviewers have experience of managing quality and academic standards in higher education or have recent experience of being a student in higher education.

Periodic review

An internal review of one or more programmes of study, undertaken by institutions periodically (typically once every five years), using nationally agreed reference points, to confirm that the programmes are of an appropriate academic standard and quality. The process typically involves experts from other higher education providers. It covers areas such as the continuing relevance of the programme, the currency of the curriculum and reference materials, the employability of graduates and the overall performance of students. Periodic review is one of the main processes whereby institutions can continue to assure themselves about the academic quality and standards of their awards.

Programme of study

An approved course of study that provides a coherent learning experience and normally leads to a qualification. UK higher education programmes must be approved and validated by UK degree-awarding bodies.

Quality enhancement

The process by which higher education providers systematically improve the quality of provision and the ways in which students' learning is supported.

QAA officer

The person appointed by QAA to manage the review programme and to act as the liaison between the review team and the institution.

Quality assurance

The systematic monitoring and evaluation of learning and teaching, and the processes that support them, to make sure that the standards of academic awards meet the necessary standards, and that the quality of the student learning experience is being safeguarded and improved.

Recognition of prior learning

Assessing previous learning that has occurred in any of a range of contexts including school, college and university, and/or through life and work experiences.

Recommendation

Review teams make recommendations where they agree that an institution should consider developing or changing a process or a procedure in order to improve the institution's higher education provision.

Reference points

Statements and other publications that establish criteria against which performance can be measured.

Self-evaluation document

A self-evaluation report by an institution. The submission should include information about the institution as well as an assessment of the effectiveness of its quality systems.

Student submission

A document representing student views that describes what it is like to be a student at the institution, and how students' views are considered in the institution's decision-making and quality assurance processes.

Validation

The process by which an institution ensures that its academic programmes meet expected academic standards and that students will be provided with appropriate learning opportunities. It may also be applied to circumstances where a degree-awarding institution gives approval for its awards to be offered by a partner institution or organisation.

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