International Quality Review of The Higher Colleges of Technology, United Arab Emirates

January 2020

Contents

About this review

This is a report of an International Quality Review conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at the Higher Colleges of Technology. The review took place from 26 to 30 January 2020 and was conducted by a team of four reviewers, as follows:

- Professor Jeremy Bradshaw
- Professor Mark Davies
- Dr Roy Ferguson
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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 institutions' 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 International Quality Review, the QAA review team:

- makes conclusion 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 Review[3] and has links to other informative documents. For an explanation of terms see the glossary at the end of this report.

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[1] www.enqa.eu/index.php/home/esg
[2] www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us
[3] www.qaa.ac.uk/en/training-and-services/iqr

Key findings

Executive summary

The Higher Colleges of Technology (HCT) is a federally funded institution established in 1988. It has 16 campuses spread across five Emirates of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), which include Abu Dhabi, Al Ain, Dubai, Fujairah, Madinat Zayed, Ras Al Khaimah, Ruwais and Sharjah. Each location has separate men's and women's colleges, totalling over 23,000 students and 2,000 staff spread across the campuses.

HCT offers 71 programmes with approximately 100 specialisations, which are aligned with the National Qualifications Framework of the Emirates (NQFE) and are accredited by the Commission for Academic Accreditation (CAA). Prior to 2013, federally funded institutions were not required to go through an accreditation process; however, the situation has changed since and HCT has received both programme-level and institutional accreditation (licensure) from CAA following a quality review in 2014 for a five-year period. In addition, a number of programmes have been accredited by international professional bodies. HCT therefore undergoes various review processes to maintain both its national and international accreditation.

HCT's primary focus is to deliver applied education in line with its mission to 'provide applied higher education to equip generations with knowledge, skills and competencies that meet international standards and the future needs of the UAE industry and society.' The institution recently launched Strategic Plan HCT 4.0 (2019-2024), which has an emphasis on three areas - Graduating Companies, No Emirati Left Behind and Technical Leaders. HCT's focus, 'Employability and Beyond', seeks to move the institution from beyond employment for students by also providing opportunities beyond graduation, such as support for new start-ups, foster applied research in collaboration with industry and to offer programmes to mid-career professionals.

HCT has five strategic goals:

- empowering students with 21st century skills in a vibrant campus environment engaged with their local communities
- continuous improvement of academic programmes, faculty and scholarship activities to meet high quality standards and industry requirements
- engagement of strategic partnerships to foster strong connections with industry, higher education institutions, alumni and high schools
- provision of quality and efficient administrative services with effective governance
- embedding an innovation culture in the institutional environment.

HCT has undergone a major institutional review of the organisational structure, governance and operating framework. This has resulted in a more business-orientated governance structure, governed by a Board of Trustees that is led by the Chancellor, with the day-to-day operations led by the President and CEO. The academic and administrative functions fall under the aegis of five Vice Presidents who support 'the productization approach to HCT's programs and services'. This is underpinned by policies and procedures that support the quality assurance practices at HCT.

A critical challenge HCT notes in its self-evaluation is the pace of change in the country and the institution's position in implementing the national agenda, which requires it to be able to adapt what it does to meet national priorities. Given HCT's geographical spread, it further adds to the challenges to meet the specific demands of each Emirate.

In reaching conclusions about the extent to which HCT meets the 10 ESG standards, the review team followed the handbook for International Quality Review (April 2019). The review process is evidence-based, and the review team was provided with a self-evaluation and supporting evidence by HCT. During the five-day visit, which took place from 26 to 30 January 2020, a total of 22 meetings were held comprising the President, his senior management team, quality assurance teams, committee and academic leads involved in the management of programmes, teaching faculty, support services staff, students, employers and alumni. The review team visited five campuses: Dubai Men's College, Abu Dhabi Women's College, Al Ain Women's College, Ras Al Khaimah Men's College, and Sharjah Men's College. The first two days were spent at the base campus in Dubai, with the review team splitting up to visit two campuses each on days three and four, returning together as a team in Dubai for the final day. The team toured the key teaching and learning facilities at each campus and met with students, faculty and staff at each campus. In addition, the team was given a quick 'walk-through' of MyHCT, an online portal used by students, faculty and staff.

The review team concludes that HCT **meets** the 10 ESG standards and has identified three areas of **good practice** and five **recommendations**.

The instances of good practice relate to three main standards: Standard 1.6, Learning resources and student support; Standard 1.9, On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes; and Standard 1.10, Cyclical external quality assurance.

Of the five recommendations made, three relate to Standard 1.3, Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment; with one each for Standards 1.5, Teaching staff; and Standard 1.7, Information management.

The recommendations made under Standard 1.3, Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment include firstly, that 'HCT should develop and implement a system to ensure that it analyses and learns from complaints by students with the aim of reducing the number of future complaints.' While HCT has a process for receiving and responding to complaints, the review team found that there is no identification of trends or analysis of the complaints to enable the institution to improve its operations. Secondly, the team recommends that 'HCT should ensure that the consideration of students presenting with mitigating circumstances is undertaken using a single consistent process, thereby facilitating the equitable treatment of students.' While HCT has a robust formal process for dealing with mitigating circumstances, the team found that there was inconsistency in how decisions were reached and, in the main, informal mechanisms are used by students and faculty. In a large multi-campus organisation such as HCT, the team considered the importance of a single consistent process that ensures all students are treated equitably. The third recommendation relating to this Standard is that 'HCT should consistently implement a robust scheme for the moderation of students' work that includes scrutiny of a significant proportion of the assessments that contribute to students' final GPA.' Current practices at HCT include a sound process for the moderation of student work; however, the team found that this was only used for a small proportion of the assessments and faculty accepted variability. To strengthen the practices that currently exist, the team recommend moderation should be used across a significant proportion of assessments to ensure that standards of marking are consistently applied.

The fourth recommendation, 'HCT should implement a faculty observation scheme that is deployed consistently across the institution, allowing for frequent enough observations such that staff who wish to be recognised as FHEA have sufficient timely opportunity to have their practice observed.' relates to Standard 1.5, Teaching staff. The review team concluded that the provision and purpose of observation of teaching differs markedly throughout HCT and makes this recommendation to ensure that faculty have an equal opportunity to be able to

meet the elements needed to be recognised as a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (UK).

The final recommendation, 'HCT should, when a new system is implemented, keep faculty and staff informed about the reason for the change, and undertake an evaluation concerning the effectiveness of the changes after an appropriate period, ensuring that the evaluation takes account of end-user feedback' relates to Standard 1.7, Information management. The review team formed the view that there was a communication gap concerning the implementation of a new system upgrade which adversely impacts the efficiency with which faculty, as end-users, are able to operate on a day-to-day basis. The team therefore concluded the importance of keeping faculty and staff informed and the need for evaluation taking on board feedback from the end-user. This is important in the context of both the implementation of a new system, but also with any upgrades to systems.

Good practice was evident in three areas, the first of which relates to Standard 1.6, Learning resources and student support. The review team concluded that students are well supported throughout their journey with HCT from the point of registration to graduation. Students are allocated to an Academic Advisor and have various other support staff and services available such as the Academic Success Centers. This comprehensive student support available throughout the student journey was considered by the team to align strongly with the HCT ethos.

Secondly, under Standard 1.9, On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes, the review team considered the engagement of employers and industry partners in the creation and development of its academic programmes to be effective. The team noted the significant external input into programme monitoring and review processes from Industry Advisory Committees, professional bodies and other external stakeholders, supporting HCT's programmes to retain currency.

The final area of good practice relates to Standard 1.10, Cyclical external quality assurance and the extent to which HCT's academic programmes are externally accredited by international bodies. This was considered by the review team to be commendable, bringing another significant layer of external quality review to bear. The review team noted that there were three levels of external cyclical quality review, namely: government; national and international professional accrediting bodies; and industry certification. The team was able to confirm that HCT undergoes an extensive range of external cyclical quality review processes at institutional and programme levels, with the institution engaging positively with the processes and being responsive to recommendations.

The review team came to the overall conclusion that HCT meets the 10 standards set out in Part 1 of the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area.*

QAA's conclusions about The Higher Colleges of Technology

The QAA review team reached the following conclusions about the higher education provision at The Higher Colleges of Technology.

European Standards and Guidelines

The Higher Colleges of Technology **meets** 10 of the 10 ESG Standards and Guidelines.

Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following features of **good practice** at The Higher Colleges of Technology.

- The comprehensive student support available throughout the student journey that aligns strongly with the HCT ethos (ESG Standard 1.6).
- The effectiveness of HCT's engagement of employers and other industry partners in the creation and development of its academic programmes (ESG Standard 1.9, ESG Standard 1.2).
- The extent to which HCT's academic programmes are externally accredited by international bodies is commendable and brings another significant layer of external quality review to bear (ESG Standard 1.10).

Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendations** to The Higher Colleges of Technology.

- HCT should consistently implement a robust scheme for the moderation of students' work that includes scrutiny of a significant proportion of the assessments that contribute to students' final GPA (ESG Standard 1.3).
- HCT should develop and implement a system to ensure that it analyses and learns from complaints by students with the aim of reducing the number of future complaints (ESG Standard 1.3).
- HCT should ensure that the consideration of students presenting with mitigating circumstances is undertaken using a single consistent process, thereby facilitating the equitable treatment of students (ESG Standard 1.3).
- HCT should implement a faculty observation scheme that is deployed consistently across the institution allowing for frequent enough observations such that staff who wish to be recognised as FHEA have sufficient timely opportunity to have their practice observed (ESG Standard 1.5).
- HCT should, when a new system (or update) is implemented, keep faculty and staff informed about the reason for the change, and undertake an evaluation concerning the effectiveness of the changes after an appropriate period, ensuring that the evaluation takes account of end-user feedback (ESG Standard 1.7).

Explanation of the findings about The Higher Colleges of Technology

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.

Explanation of the findings about The Higher Colleges of Technology

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 Higher Colleges of Technology (HCT) is a federally funded institution in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Historically, as a Federal Higher Education Institution, HCT was not required to seek national accreditation in the initial scope of the UAE's Commission for Academic Accreditation (CAA), as this was limited to private institutions. HCT programmes automatically held national accreditation status by virtue of being a Federal institution. This position changed in 2013, when all federally funded institutions, including HCT, were required to apply for institutional accreditation (licensure) as well as programme accreditation from the CAA. Following a quality review by CAA in 2014, HCT was awarded institutional licensure for a five-year period.

1.2   HCT's approach to quality assurance is articulated in its Quality Policy. The scope of the Policy includes educational programmes, academic and support units and services and associated processes. HCT's Strategy and Future Division oversees the institutional compliance with quality and standards, in conjunction with the Institutional and Programme Accreditation Department, reporting to the Vice President of Academic Affairs.

1.3   The Institutional and Program Accreditation Department focuses on all quality assurance processes relating to academic quality and standards. HCT's Quality Manual provides information and guidance on programme development, monitoring and review. The manual also provides information on the cyclical external quality review process undertaken by CAA at institutional level; and at programme level by appropriate international accreditation agencies, such as the Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs and the ABET- Engineering Technology Accreditation Commission.

1.4   Periodically, The UAE Ministry of Education also undertakes compliance inspection audits to ensure that the quality processes are effective in assuring the quality and standards of academic and administrative functions across higher education institutions. These audits are undertaken by CAA, which is responsible for Institutional Licensure and Program Standards.

1.5   Internally, academic quality assurance is overseen by HCT's Curriculum Quality Assurance Committee (CQAC), chaired by the Dean of Institutional and Program Accreditation. CQAC reports to Academic Council. Each faculty has a Quality Assurance Manager who is responsible for the implementation of all quality assurance processes across the faculty at each campus. A Program Academic Committee (PAC) oversees the quality of programmes and reports to the Faculty Academic Committee (FAC). Students have representation on PAC. Each faculty has a Quality Assurance Resource Manager/Assistant Manager who is a member of FAC. FAC membership also includes programme chairs.

1.6   HCT has a policy management framework to ensure that policies and procedures are subject to periodic review and to record and track changes to these documents. The CQAC is responsible for conducting Internal Program Quality Audits (IPQA), the implementation of consistent quality processes across all faculties and all campuses.

1.7   The review team evaluated the effectiveness of HCT's approach to quality assurance through discussions with faculty, staff and students and by studying relevant institutional policy and procedure documents, reading reports and records of meetings. HCT has a clearly documented procedural framework underpinning its approach to quality assurance. This internal quality assurance framework is further strengthened by the considerable external scrutiny that HCT and its academic programmes are subject to, including international professional accreditation of programmes; cyclical licensure review of the institution by CAA and the UAE Ministry of Education audits.

1.8   HCT's performance management framework supports the institution's strategic goals. Underpinning each goal is a set of objectives, each of which has a number of associated key performance indicators (KPIs). All KPIs and related data are managed on an institution-wide performance management system that is accessible to Performance Contract Owners. The Institutional Performance team validates uploaded data onto the system which is used to generate institution-wide performance reports for review and analysis. These reports are considered by the HCT leadership team and, where required, Performance Contract Owners are required to develop improvement action plans for the next institutional performance review meeting.

1.9   In meetings with faculty, staff and students there was good awareness of the core elements that formed the quality assurance framework at HCT, and evidence was made available to the team that confirmed that a consistent and rigorous approach to the implementation of the quality assurance mechanisms was maintained across the multiple campuses.

1.10   In summary, HCT has an embedded policy for quality assurance, which is underpinned by a formal policy management framework which governs policy development, and which facilitates document control, monitoring and updating. The UAE Ministry of Education maintains a comprehensive oversight and periodic evaluation of the quality of educational provision and the review team found clear evidence that feedback from external industry and other stakeholders was both valued and acted upon as part of the quality assurance framework. The review team concludes that Standard 1.1 Policy for Quality Assurance 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   The Program Quality Manual describes the principles underlying the generation of new programmes and the New Program Procedure details the process.

2.2   Requests for new programmes may arise from different sources, including internal staff members and external bodies such as industry or government mandate. This request is submitted to the Faculty Academic Committee, which may then commission the preparation of a detailed New Program Proposal, which is prepared by PAC, in consultation with relevant stakeholders.

2.3   FAC will then consider the proposal, in consultation with an external reviewer. Once the proposal has been endorsed by FAC, a process which may include referral back to PAC for further refinement, the proposal progresses through a number of additional stages, including quality audit and evaluation by a System-Wide Curriculum Committee and, if it passes these stages, is endorsed by the Academic Council and submitted to the Board of Trustees for final approval.

2.4   Following approval by the Board of Trustees, the curriculum documents and the CAA New Program Application are prepared and submitted to CAA.

2.5   Once CAA has approved initial accreditation of the programme, FAC oversees its implementation, including design and development of teaching and learning resources.

2.6   A list of all programmes is published annually in the HCT catalogue and is available on the institution's website.

2.7   HCT is dedicated to providing applied higher education to equip its graduates with knowledge, skills and competencies that meet international professional standards and the future needs of the UAE industry and society. One of objectives of HCT 4.0 is 100% employment. This defines the nature of the courses and programmes the institution delivers, which are all closely aligned with the requirements of employers, and many of them have professional accreditation.

2.8   Programme design is often bottom up, with each idea tested as it progresses through the approval mechanisms. Requests for new programmes must provide evidence to justify the potential demand for the programme, including identification of the employment opportunities within the Emirate and the UAE for which the programme will prepare students.

2.9   New Program Proposals include a feasibility study, a financial analysis and a timed action plan, as well as details of the types of employment for which the programme will prepare students, a market survey of students who are likely to enrol in the programme and a list of all competing programmes offered by institutions in the UAE. The proposal also details any additional professional certification that graduates would need to obtain relevant employment in the UAE.

2.10   The submission to CAA for approval of a new programme comprises the curriculum documents and the CAA New Program Application. Together, these documents show how the programme and its learning outcomes map onto the institutional mission, strategy and goals.

2.11   Programme learning outcomes are required for the New Program Approval form and for any subsequent course modifications. Students were aware of the learning outcomes for their programmes and knew where to find them.

2.12   Each PAC has a student member who is able to contribute to the development of new programmes. External input to programme design comes from the Industry Advisory Committees (IAC) who ensures that the needs of employers are considered and that, where appropriate, curricula are mapped to industry certification. For example, all the courses in the Business School are designed to align with professional certification. There is a requirement that at least one assessment per year is aligned with industry. HCT and employer engagement is an effective aspect of the institution's operation from programme design through to review and is considered in Section 1.9 as good practice. External review teams are involved in the preparation of submissions to CAA, to maximise the success rate.

2.13   The provision at HCT aligns closely with the four purposes of higher education as defined by the Council of Europe. The first three, preparation for sustainable employment, personal development, and preparing students, fit closely with the applied and industry-focused character of all the programmes delivered by the institution. Alignment with the fourth is best illustrated by the nurturing of research and innovation skills through the InnCuVation centres, described in Section 1.6, Learning resources and student support.

2.14   Credits are assigned to each course at HCT. In order to graduate, bachelor's students must complete a minimum of 132 credits, comprising core courses and general studies.

2.15   Most of the programmes offered by HCT include a work-placement course, taking the form of either a practicum or internship. In the two academic years immediately prior to this report, 97% of HCT students were placed in a relevant industrial experience. An appendix to the Program Quality Manual covers the required procedures for approval and execution of the placements.

2.16   While on work placements, students are mentored by designated employer staff and are visited regularly by HCT staff. Feedback is sought from students returning from placements so that the quality of the experience may be monitored and enhanced. Students reported that they valued the practical experience provided by the placements and felt well prepared for work.

2.17   The requirement for each programme to be approved by CAA ensures that each one meets its expectations for quality and standards.

2.18   The process for development of new programmes is regularly reviewed by CQAC.

2.19   The review team concludes that HCT has in place appropriate procedures for the design and approval of programmes, courses, and curriculum. Programme objectives are in line with institutional strategy and are closely aligned with the requirements of employers, and professional accreditation bodies where relevant. Therefore, Standard 1.2 the Design and Approval of Programmes 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   In its self-evaluation document, HCT notes that its 'main focus is on delivering Applied Education which is "fit for purpose" in the post-oil economic climate', and thus its programmes, in line with its vision and mission, show clear vocational emphasis. Course descriptions make frequent explicit links to career development. HCT has pioneered a hybrid education model that brings together elements of subject specificity, skills development and experienced-based learning with a strong emphasis on preparing for work, including through work experience and embedded career preparation sessions.

3.2   Teaching and learning play a central role in HCT's Hypothesis Operating Model, occupying one of six guiding principles, specifically, 'strengthening our teaching, learning and employability outcomes'. The Operating Model sets out key features to be considered in the design and execution of teaching delivery, specifying 'blended and experiential learning modules including aspects of research, partnerships, and community engagement'. It further specifies that the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process must be assessed. Because the same programmes and courses are delivered at different campuses, HCT has developed a sophisticated scheme, as outlined below, to ensure equivalence of delivery and assessment.

3.3   As part of its performance management framework, HCT has established a strategic objective to 'Embed intelligent and innovative teaching and learning methods' and has plans to manage performance against this by measuring the proportions of courses offered via distance learning, digital badges issued, courses converted to competency-based education, and faculty-awarded eTeacher certification. In keeping with the framework, HCT deploys a wide variety of teaching methods.

3.4   Each course has a System Course Team Leader (SCTL) who manages a small team of experts who devise course content for standardised delivery across HCT's campuses, including interaction with the virtual learning environment, though with some contextualisation where necessary. The SCTL works with a divisional quality manager to ensure quality processes are followed. The SCTL effectively coordinates those who teach the course, working in conjunction with PAC. Course delivery is evaluated via, among other mechanisms, annual faculty appraisals, and a record of changes made is kept in course files, each of which consists of multiple documents. Course files also provide evidence that the course is delivered according to its design and consistently across campuses. Much of the material is delivered as blended learning; in some courses a faculty member delivers a session at one campus and the session is simultaneously transmitted to other campuses. There is a focus on practical work and application with supporting theory, where relevant. In some cases, external teachers, including alumni, give one-off expert sessions, for example in blockchain technology and artificial intelligence, to enrich the curriculum and show relevance to industry.

3.5   All students must complete a programme in General Studies. For bachelor's students this programme comprises a minimum of 33 credits as part of an overall study plan of 120 credits. The programme has its own clearly-defined learning outcomes and emphasis is on 'learning by doing' to enhance students' global perspective, critical thinking, problem-solving and information synthesis. The individual courses range from Emirati Studies, through language studies and study skill development, to Innovation and Entrepreneurship,

and Computational Thinking and Coding. Each academic programme has its own mandatory and elective suite of General Studies courses, though Innovation and Entrepreneurship is mandatory for all students and has led to some students accessing InnCuVation spaces to pursue business developments.

3.6   Student assessment is governed by an Assessment Policy, which provides a high-level overview of the principles of assessment employed at HCT and aims to ensure that assessments are conducted fairly, equitably and consistently across HCT. The policy is supplemented by a directive from the Vice-Chancellor that sets out the assessment and grading procedures that faculty must follow. This directive effectively legislates for 'timely and appropriate feedback', but HCT has not further codified this and there is at present no specific expectations concerning the quality of feedback or how quickly it should be issued to students. However, under the auspices of the Vice-President for Academic Affairs, draft course assessment procedures have been drawn up that stipulate that coursework assessments should be returned to students within a maximum of 10 days of the assessment submission with constructive feedback. These procedures are likely to be in place by summer 2020.

3.7   In creating assessment instruments, faculty are provided with comprehensive Course Assessment Development Guidelines that give a strong steer to creating reliable, effective, inclusive and diverse assessments using sound pedagogic principles. Recognising that faculty teaching the same course at different HCT campuses do not necessarily teach in the same way, the Course Assessment Development Guidelines provide for a mandatory Course Assessment Plan that aims to ensure that learning outcomes are assessed consistently and gives guidance on each instrument of assessment. Further, each instrument must have an Assessment Specifications Document that further specifies the nature of the instrument and how it is to be used. The Course Assessment Development Guidelines also detail how moderation of assessment instruments is to be carried out. Some summative assessments are faculty-wide; that is, are the same at each campus, their design is coordinated by SCTL, and ultimate approval for deployment is given by the Divisional Committee for Assessments. These assessments, as issued to teaching staff, include marking criteria.

3.8   Full-time, part-time and adjunct faculty members receive training in assessment, but that does not extend to employers who assess students during placement learning. Though some receive some training as they assess, this is not universal and HCT will want to ensure that all those who assess its students receive training in assessment.

3.9   Moderation of assessed student work is undertaken to ensure 'that evidence of students achievement of one or more course learning outcomes is consistent, transparent and fair', and is coordinated by the establishment of an Ad-Hoc Grade Review and Verification Committee for each faculty-wide assessment. This Committee scrutinises papers awarded A and F grades and there are rules specifying when the Committee should recommend complete regrading of student work. However, some divisions exceed these requirements, scrutinising all grades in faculty-wide assessments and moderating other assessments.

3.10   Feedback from students, including complaints, is welcomed, and the service is advertised to students. There is a Student Complaints Policy, but it fails to specify what the procedure is. Nonetheless, students can register a complaint online via the My HCT - Feedback System, which the self-evaluation document claimed updated the complainant every two days until resolution. HCT aims for swift resolution of complaints: those not resolved after 48 hours are handled personally by the Executive Dean of Students' Services, and there is a clear process to follow.

3.11   Mitigating circumstances in assessment are dealt with through a process overseen by the Chief Academic Officer and implemented by the appropriate Student Life section at each campus. Decisions are taken by the Campus Council, or for serious cases referred to the Student Excuses Central Committee for decision.

3.12   In evaluating the effectiveness of HCT's approach to student-centred learning, teaching and assessment, the review team scrutinised a wide range of policies, procedures and reports, and discussed matters with students, faculty, senior staff and support staff. HCT has a clear regulatory framework that governs matters related to this standard.

3.13   In most programmes across all divisions, the career preparation sessions embody professional development units that in some cases are requirements for specific career paths. In this way, students are introduced to professional development and professional body requirements while still studying. Indeed, some elements of their HCT courses carry forward into professional qualifications, giving students awareness of industry standards in professional development and starting a professional development momentum. The review team considered that this positive feature contributes to the good practice identified in Standard 1.6 concerning the support of students. Students were of the opinion that they were being prepared well for employment, and alumni confirmed that they had been well prepared, especially in IT skills development. Employers confirmed to the team that graduates excelled in creativity and independence.

3.14   HCT is aware that the hybrid model can only be assessed in hindsight, by analysing the employability of graduates and feedback from employers, and also recognises that this is an iterative process that will show greater alignment between industry needs and curricula over time. Nonetheless, students whom the review team met indicated that main drivers for studying at HCT were the practical nature of the programmes and strong employment prospects.

3.15   Course files examined by the review team effectively presented a history of the course, and in particular document how it is currently delivered and assessed. Through the course files the review team was able to sample some course materials and confirmed, where an opinion could be made, that these were fit for purpose.

3.16   Faculty whom the review team met confirmed the arrangements for consistent delivery across campuses, and the review team viewed the arrangements as adequately ensuring consistency while offering a small degree of flexibility in contextualising to location and the specific interests of individual teachers. Faculty members frequently use their own research and scholarship to inform their teaching activities, where they are able to do so, given the overriding concern to standardise the delivery across campuses. Students have multiple opportunities, as part of their studies, to choose learning activities to suit their interests, within the overall framework of the programmes.

3.17   Students met by the review team were supportive of the General Studies courses, noting in particularly positive terms the development of generic skills and enhanced employability. The review team concurred with this view and additionally noted the complementarity of General Studies courses to subject-specific learning, and their strong alignment with HCT's vision and mission.

3.18   The review team also heard about activities students undertake that supplement their learning journey, such as field trips, locally and internationality; working in the community, through volunteering activities; participating in student clubs and associations, and so on. The team was given examples of field trips taken; competitions students had won at campus, local, national and international levels; shown different clubs that students managed with guidance of faculty members; innovations; working in collaboration with the

community and case studies that students had undertaken. The team agreed this approach provided the opportunity for a holistic development of students.

3.19   Although in its self-evaluation document HCT noted that it placed the learner at the centre of the teaching-learning process, faculty and more senior staff showed great variation in their understanding of this concept and in their ability to articulate the implications of this approach to classroom practice. Likewise, students reported that the degree to which they are encouraged to become autonomous learners vary from faculty member to faculty member.

3.20   An examination of programme learning outcomes revealed that these were appropriate to each programme and set at the correct levels for achievement at bachelor's and Higher Diploma levels. Course learning outcomes were similarly appropriate and course syllabuses showed explicit linkage between both content and course learning outcomes, and programme learning outcomes. However, despite the strong emphasis placed on learning outcomes, they are not threshold concepts such that there is not a requirement for all learning outcomes associated with a course or programme to be met before students can pass the course or programme. Rather, programme learning outcomes are deemed to be met if at least 86% of students score above 66% in the final examinations. This itself is not problematic in relation to the European Standards and Guidelines but does not align with standard European practice. Further, students, faculty and more senior staff whom the team met were unsure of the nature of learning outcomes and their requirement to be met or otherwise. Indeed, when asked about how they knew the level to teach at, some faculty referred to gauging student ability through an iterative process in class and to the likely needs of industry, rather than referring to an absolute standard, as expressed, for example, by learning outcomes. Consequently, HCT will wish to ensure that how it uses learning outcomes is clearly communicated to all relevant employees and to students. Moreover, some faculty were unable to cite any definitive reference points that governed the academic standard to which they taught, instead relying on their understanding of students' academic experience and building on that.

3.21   The importance of academic integrity, examples of breaches of it, and an outline of procedures to be followed in case of its detection are clearly communicated to students in HCT's Catalog, and in its Student Code of Conduct. In general, students reported a sound understanding of plagiarism and wider academic integrity, aided by a relevant General Studies course.

3.22   The review team saw some sound examples of written feedback to students on their assessed work and was informed that second language learners' feedback to students is often delivered verbally for greater effect. Further, students reported to the team that the feedback they receive is overwhelmingly of good quality and is timely and in accordance with assessment criteria that are used universally by faculty members.

3.23   While the review team regarded all the processes for setting assessments as fit for purpose, and noted reported compliance by faculty and senior staff, some faculty the review team met reported that outside the faculty-wide assessments, standards are set by individual faculty according to their experience and understanding of learner ability, and conceded that variability in standards was inevitable. This finding contributes to the recommendation concerning extending moderation practices.

3.24   While the procedure for moderating the assessed work of students is sound, its use is typically, but not always, restricted to a specific subset of HCT's assessments that only accounts for 30% of students' assessment tariff, and there is the potential for standards to vary greatly outside this moderated sample. The review team **recommends** that HCT should consistently implement a robust scheme for the moderation of students' work that includes

scrutiny of a significant proportion of the assessments that contribute to students' final grade-point average (GPA).

3.25   The Central Assessment Unit oversees all processes related to the faculty-wide assessments, and conducts an annual audit of them through a sampling procedure. Despite the sound framework concerning processes and procedures to be followed regarding student assessment, mostly codified in the Course Assessment Development Guidelines, compliance has not been strong. The most recent report of July 2019 is critical of many of the assessments sampled, with various instances of assessments lacking in validity or reliability, or having formatting issues, and made recommendations to divisions to develop remedial action plans, including relating to further staff development. Though the number of detected infringements is reducing over time, HCT has recognised the need to remain vigilant and is following up these issues appropriately at division and programme levels through both deliberative and executive structures. The review team viewed this self-criticality in a positive light. Senior staff suggested to the review team that the high degree of criticality might stem from the sampling being non-random and instead targeted towards those programmes where problems were known to exist, but the team was unable to verify this.

3.26   The grounds on which students may appeal their grades are clearly set out in HCT's Catalog and comprise procedural irregularity, marking bias, deviation from marking schemes, and assessment not linked to taught material. Students reported awareness of the system.

3.27   Most complaints by students are resolved within a week, but some have taken considerably longer. In an 11-month period there were 694 complaints by students, a significant proportion of which covered academic matters, though many concerns trivial or insoluble matters, and the review team considered that this number of complaints was not excessive. By far the majority of complaints are resolved to the satisfaction of the student or are mutually closed. Only a very small proportion is rejected by HCT. Complaints are distributed by the Department for Student Life to the various campuses, then to the relevant body for response, but there is no overall analysis of the complaints and thus no institutional learning of trends in complaints that might increase efficiency and prevent complaints from reoccurring. The review team therefore **recommends** that HCT should develop and implement a system to ensure that it analyses and learns from complaints by students with the aim of reducing the number of future complaints.

3.28   Despite a robust formal process for dealing with mitigating circumstances, more informal mechanisms exist where students make representation to the relevant faculty member, and outcomes can be inconsistent. Further, some students who used the informal mechanisms were unaware of the formal mechanism. The review team **recommends** that HCT should ensure that the consideration of students presenting with mitigating circumstances is undertaken using a single consistent process, thereby facilitating the equitable treatment of students

3.29   In general, courses show a broad range of delivery and assessment methods, supported by a virtual learning environment, providing opportunity for learners who prefer one style over another. In general, surveys of students report high levels of satisfaction with academic programmes and courses across all campuses, with very little difference between males and females. Though there is some work to be done concerning elements of consistency and completeness of deployment in assessment, the review team concludes that Standard 1.3, relating to Student Centred Learning, Teaching and Assessment, 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", e.g. student admission, progression, recognition and certification.

Findings

4.1   Education is free in the UAE for students entering university. Criteria for admission are outlined on the government website with HCT's admissions processes coordinated with the Ministry's National Admissions and Placement Office (NAPO). Potential applicants are classified in a two-tier system of 'current student' (priority 1) - those who left high school in the current year and have applied via NAPO; and 'non-current students' (priority 2 and 3) - those who left high school more than two years ago or have discontinued their studies at HCT for more than one year. As this follows a quota system, all priority 2 and priority 3 students must be approved by the President and CEO once funding is confirmed. HCT also admits sponsored students and provides some grants to 'non-current' students and will not readmit students who have been previously dismissed from HCT or who already have a higher qualification from HCT as they will not be considered for an undergraduate programme.

4.2   The government sets enrolment targets with HCT taking on 40% of high school graduates in UAE due to its capacity across 16 campuses. As HCT is dependent on a per-student grant from the government, HCT undertakes audits to check actual versus reported headcounts to ensure appropriate allocation of funding; however, further grants may be available for 'non-current students'.

4.3   Since November 2018, HCT has been focusing its attention on widening the group of students accessing higher education, which includes mid-career learners who are upskilling to fill a skills gap while addressing the professional and entrepreneurial needs of the sector; these new programmes will have funding from government. HCT has recently introduced a new programme to cater for the sector skills academies, which gives students multiple entry and exit points and provides an alternative career path and supports continuing education and industry needs.

4.4   HCT's admissions policies and procedures are set and overseen by the Board of Trustees and are underpinned by the overall mission and goals which are published in the Catalog and on the institution website. The admissions criteria are informed by the nation-wide criteria for admission of UAE nationals to colleges and universities as outlined on the government website, which mandate that admissions processes and procedures are coordinated with NAPO of the higher education sector of the Ministry of Education. The admissions and registration processes at HCT are overseen by the System Registrar while the policies that determine admission and placement criteria for all HCT credit programmes are administered and coordinated by the Student Engagement and Success Division. The team was informed that the Vice President Employability oversees all aspects of student life and has a central focus of aligning with the UAE strategy.

4.5   Potential applicants access information via the HCT website and attend open days. Local students attending government and private schools apply via their school to NAPO while all other applicants apply directly to the admissions department of the specific HCT campus. HCT also has an Inter-Institution Student Transfers Policy that allows students to transfer between other federal institutions with appropriate credit applied to the courses they have undertaken, which cannot exceed 50% of the programme as defined within the policy; the overall decision on this rests with HCT. HCT also recognises prior learning via the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) policy and procedure, where the applicant is granted

credit based on the matrix of course learning outcomes with the final decision resting with the Program Curriculum Executive Dean.

4.6 If students are not satisfied with the recruitment process, they are encouraged to make a complaint as per the complaints policy which is available in the Student Handbook. Complaints arising through the NAPO application process are handled centrally via the NAPO placement office.

4.7 For current students, once they are allocated a college via NAPO, they can then contact the Student Services Department of that college, either face to face, by telephone or email as each campus has a dedicated student services staff member trained to respond to student queries.

4.8 Students receive an acceptance letter welcoming them to HCT, after which they undergo an orientation week where they are provided with a welcome kit that has four key components: a student handbook, Methaq - the student Code of Conduct, an Academic Advising handbook and an introduction to voluntary work where they are required to complete a minimum of 25 hours each year as a graduation requirement. Students are also made aware of support services for 'people of determination' and are encouraged to visit a counsellor if they have a special need. Orientation days are run at the start of each academic semester and organised at campus level with the Al-Moltaqa guidelines for student orientation forming a basis for a comprehensive and standardised induction process across the campuses.

4.9 Students are introduced to the HCT's policies and procedures via the Student Handbook that is available online where all policies that govern the student life are housed. Students are allocated an academic adviser who is their first point of contact and provides guidance. The academic adviser is the person who will advise the student on any programme changes within the first week of enrolment.

4.10 All student records are held by the Campus Academic Services Department. This includes information on admissions, registration, official transcripts, course and examination schedules, student timetables and verification of graduation eligibility up to final credential award. Once a student has completed their study and has met all the required criteria, the credentials are awarded by the System Registrar. Students are issued a letter of completion (LOC) that acts as a valid award until the date of the Graduation Credential at which point the LOC is superseded. The Graduation Credential and official transcripts are sent to the campus where the graduate completed their studies for distribution by the College. The graduation credentials are issued in Arabic and the transcript copies are issued in English with all relevant grades and courses undertaken, including dates of attendance. Alumni whom the team met confirmed that they received their official transcript within a week of completion, LOC within one month and their actual certificate within six months.

4.11 The review team tested and confirmed the effectiveness of the recruitment and admissions process through meetings with students and staff, and by consulting relevant policy and procedural documents. These revealed that HCT is operating within its set regulatory framework for admission of students and certification of awards which aligns with the UAE's regulatory requirements.

4.12 Senior staff were articulate about the student recruitment strategy, which they further clarified was based on UEA's strategy of Emiratisation and which informs HCT's 4.0 strategy of 'No Emirati left behind'. They commented on the shift HCT is taking into a new market segment and the implications for the current admission process, which is geared towards traditional learners vying for work in the public sector. The change will involve a move towards a marketing and recruitment process for non-traditional learners in the private and professional sector; HCT is currently piloting recruitment and admission of industry and

mid-career learners on the Logistics and Retail programmes. The team was further informed that HCT aims to expand its student body, with plans to upskill 1,500 job seekers and recruit 15% self-funded international students. Students whom the team met welcomed the multiple exit options with professional certification and the HCT guarantee that allows them to return and upgrade within their field at no extra cost within five years of completion, thus allowing them to have a career and upgrade their leaning at the same.

4.13   The staff and students the team met concurred that the admissions process is clear and straightforward with all priority 1, 2 and 3 students applying through NAPO, and self-funding students applying directly to HCT. With the newly commenced retail and logistics programmes, the students had applied directly to HCT, receiving support for recognition of prior learning (RPL) taking consideration of industry experience and/or previous qualifications. The team was provided with evidence of the RPL process, which adheres to UAE National Qualifications Authority; this was further supported by students utilising the RPL process during admissions. Transfer students whom the team met talked of HCT confirming and validating their certificates, with credits apportioned to their programmes; they also undertook tests as part of their admission process. Overall, the students felt the process to be easy and comprehensive. Students and staff confirmed different formats of funding for programmes with a large majority of students being funded by government and others funded by employers via grants and scholarships.

4.14   The team was informed by staff and students they met that orientation was between two days and one week; students are informed of relevant policies and procedures, provided with the Student Handbook, introduced to the services available by the departments and allocated an academic adviser; the team was further informed that the academic adviser is central in supporting the student's academic journey (see Section 1.6 for further information on role of the adviser).

4.15   The team saw documentation and confirmed at meetings that students are supported throughout their learner journey by the campus-based Academic Services Department and central System Registrar who maintain all records related to student progression (admissions, registration, graduation), and the Student Life department, which is responsible for all non-academic aspects of the student life. Both departments work closely with Central Student Affairs. The Student Support Services Policy further ensures fair and equitable opportunities are available to students to access support services and participate in activities. The team learnt that students are provided with different levels of support academically, financially and personally by academic staff, support staff and fellow students (see Section 1.6 for further information on student support).

4.16   Several policies are in place to ensure students are able to progress effectively: Assessment Policy, Grading System Policy, Academic Advising Policy, Academic Standing Policy, and Student Workload Policy. HCT has introduced an Academic Success Program to help identify 'at risk' students earlier. The team was given evidence of a rigorous process that identifies and supports students who are at risk (see Section 1.6 for support of 'at risk' students).

4.17   HCT's processes from admissions through the student life cycle to graduation are clear, with students supported in their learner journey in various ways to ensure their academic progression. The review team concludes these arrangements are aligned with the requirements of Standard 1.4, Student Admission, Progression, Recognition and Certification and that the Standard is **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 journey that teaching staff take, including their appointment, development, management and reward, is detailed in the Operational Plan. This information is, in the main, reflected in the Employee Handbook. Job descriptions for teaching staff reflect the 'learning by doing' approach and stipulate a student-centric learning environment. The description effectively encompasses the role of higher education teacher.

5.2   Recruitment follows the in-house developed HireInSight e-procedures, which provide for all administrative aspects of the hiring process, including determining salary by algorithm based on experience, and employment contract generation. A particular feature is that all interviews are recorded, and the video file is entered into the system for senior management to review during appointment sign-off. Shortlisted applicants are interviewed, and each interviewer provides feedback on suitability via the HireInSight system, including addressing a broad range of criteria that collectively assess a candidate for a teaching role in higher education. The chair of the interview panel makes the initial selection of successful candidate before confirmation by more senior staff. Employment contracts cover all appropriate terms, and qualifications are checked by the Ministry of Education. In accordance with HCT's vision and mission, there is a focus on hiring faculty with industrial experience.

5.3   There is an orientation programme for new teaching staff that covers human resources matters.

5.4   As part of its performance management framework, HCT has established a strategic objective to 'Attract, develop and retain high quality faculty and staff', and manages performance against this by measuring, among other things, the proportions of employee happiness, employee loyalty, employee job harmony, employee positivity, and employee productivity. Data presented to the review team for 2018 generally show high values for these measures with positive temporal trends. Stretching targets have been set for future years.

5.5   Teaching staff are supported through a broad staff development offer in relation to learning and teaching, largely coordinated by the Professional Development - Instruction department and delivered variously by e-learning and palpable instruction across all the campuses. Some sessions are specific to academic faculties. Staff development in relation to the virtual learning environment and other technologies is coordinated by the Teaching with Technology team in the Education Technology department, which also runs a blog of its activities. Attendance at these courses is naturally variable, but a large number show a low number of completions, given the size of the institution. Professional development activities are most frequent during two weeks per year, one in each semester, largely dedicated to this purpose. Sample schedules of activity for these weeks showed a broad spectrum of appropriate developmental sessions. HCT also offers an Annual Conference, covering significant themes in modern learning and teaching, that can be accessed from all campuses via electronic means or a subconference. Classroom observations of teaching practice supplement the professional development offer.

5.6   HCT is accredited by AdvanceHE (UK) to award Associate Fellowships and Fellowships of the Higher Education Academy (UK). Associate Fellowship can be gained by

completing the Teaching Skills Enhancement Certificate programme and is aimed at staff who are new to teaching in higher education. Fellowship can be gained by completing the Teaching Excellence Certificate programme and is aimed at experienced faculty.

5.7   Teaching staff are incentivised through promotion opportunities that take into account performance in pedagogic practice and innovation, including as determined by student evaluations. Promotion is only available to those whose practice has been recognised by a Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy (FHEA) award.

5.8   There is a biannual, semester-based appraisal system for faculty, contributing to an annual performance evaluation that includes objective setting, reflection on performance, and identification of areas for development. The process is managed using an in-house developed e-system, where evidence in the form of, for example, student evaluations and observation reports of teaching can be uploaded prior to the appraisee and appraiser adding evaluative comments before the appraisal is finalised. Performance factors are rated by the appraiser to give a numerical score.

5.9   To expose students to industrial practices, practical knowledge and broad experiences, teaching staff are recruited on a temporary basis; these are part-time faculty, and, for more experienced persons, adjunct faculty. Though they typically each operate at a single campus, they are managed through the divisional structure.

5.10   In evaluating the effectiveness of HCT's approach to managing its teaching staff, the review team examined a range of policies, procedures and reports, and discussed matters with students, faculty, and senior staff. In general, the overarching framework gives a good basis from which to manage and develop academic faculty and other teaching staff.

5.11   The review team considered that the procedures for appointing faculty and their orientation were fit for purpose, with a particular feature of emphasising vocational relevance.

5.12   In general, faculty are well-qualified, over 90% hold higher degrees and approximately 50% hold doctoral degrees. Many faculty have industrial experience, in accordance with the mission of HCT.

5.13   Although, in general, students report a high level of satisfaction with the performance of their teachers, in some cases students reported a less than satisfactory performance and, on occasion, their feedback not having effect. Nonetheless, the review team noted that students were able to cite cases where they reported by survey dissatisfaction with the teaching ability of faculty members, remedial action was taken by HCT, and teaching ability improved to an acceptable level. Survey data are largely considered at faculty individual performance appraisals. Though some divisions have developed overview data, HCT has questioned the usefulness of these aggregate data, especially since they rarely identify deficiencies that can be acted upon. The review team was sympathetic to this approach but suggests that HCT may wish to continue with overview reporting, extending to all divisions, such that, were an issue to be identified HCT would have the levers to address it.

5.14   The review team heard that the staff development offer arises from the professional opinion of members of the Professional Development - Instruction department and the Teaching with Technology team but can also arise from requests from divisions and from individual faculty members. Although HCT compiles a list of professional development activity, known as the PD Report, the report is not utilised except to act as a record of individual activity that can be used at appraisal, and the review team considered that an opportunity to use the report to understand, analyse and perhaps plan staff development provision participation was being missed.

5.15   All faculty are required to complete the in-house Essentials of Instruction Certificate, a series of five short courses offered by the Professional Development - Instruction department, within a year of appointment, or by June 2020 for those appointed before August 2019. This programme is delivered by webinar and gives a solid foundation for understanding pedagogic practice in higher education in the context of HCT and its strategic drivers, though not all faculty the review team met considered the Certificate relevant to their development. Although the fifth course in the series is yet to be released, at the time of the visit only a very small proportion of faculty had completed courses one to four, and the review team considered HCT's requirement as stretching in the least.

5.16   Faculty are required to complete a minimum of 20 training hours per semester, that is, 40 hours per year. Although the Professional Development - Instruction department and the Teaching with Technology team made available more professional development hours to faculty than HCT requires, no division achieved the 40 hours target for its staff, with compliance rates for 2018 ranging from 20% to 90%; there is similar significant variation across campuses. Overall, only 50% of staff completed the minimum requirement. The Chancellor's performance report attributed this to lengthy procurement processes in relation to providers external to HCT. Nonetheless, the review team heard from faculty members that the minimum period that could be recorded was two hours, thus any development shorter than this was not counted, and that not all faculty record their own training in the online reporting system and thus for many the hours recorded are an underestimate. This analysis was not presented in any documentary evidence and the review team concludes that either faculty are not being developed to the extent that HCT requires, or there is a flaw in the reporting mechanism. Either way, there is work to be done to remedy the situation.

5.17   One of the functions of classroom observations is a check on the quality of delivery staff, but it also serves as scholarship for those involved through opening dialogue about teaching practice. The form used employs slightly modified versions of the dimensions of practice contained in the UK Professional Standards Framework for teaching and supporting learning in higher education, and the review team viewed this as appropriate, in particular focusing on elements needed to be recognised as a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (UK). The observation practice varies according to division, and in some cases, observations are unannounced, but there is no consistent pattern. For example, at one campus faculty were of the opinion that unannounced observations only occur where students have complained about classroom performance. Observations may be by peers or managers and both may contribute to performance evaluation. In some cases, faculty members reported that they had not been observed for a matter of years and this has implications for the award of Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy (UK) since classroom observation is a requirement of the award. In general, but not always, observers are trained for the role. The review team concluded that the provision and purpose of observation of teaching differs markedly throughout HCT. Accordingly, the review team **recommends** that HCT should implement a faculty observation scheme that is deployed consistently across the institution, allowing for frequent enough observations such that staff who wish to be recognised as FHEA have sufficient timely opportunity to have their practice observed.

5.18   Approximately 10% of eligible staff are recognised with some category of Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy (UK), many of which completed the in-house accredited programmes. While this proportion may seem small, it is nevertheless laudable since the option to be recognised has not been available outside the UK for an extended period. Seventeen staff from across the institution have been awarded Senior Fellow status, reflecting a commitment to learning and teaching, in particular supporting colleagues.

5.19   In accordance with HCT policy, academic staff have a responsibility to engage in scholarly and professional activities and HCT encourages this by offering substantial grants

for research, particularly in collaboration with industry, reflecting HCT's applied approach. HCT also supports conference attendance and the review team saw evidence of healthy participation by faculty in local and international conferences, both subject-specific and in learning and teaching. Further, research-active staff may have reduced teaching loads.

5.20   Though faculty members are in general supportive of the appraisal process, some considered the criteria for attributing numerical scores for performance were arbitrary, especially where performance pay was involved.

5.21   Part-time and adjunct faculty should constitute a maximum of 25% of total faculty per programme, and each should not teach more than six credit hours per semester. Adjunct faculty are few and constitute only about 2% of total faculty but are recruited according to sound practices and have appropriate professional and academic qualifications. The experience these staff bring to curriculum delivery is highly valued such that there is an aspiration in some faculties, for example Health Sciences, to have 25% of each programme delivered by part-time and adjunct faculty.

5.22   Although the review team noted some areas for further development, particularly in standardising classroom observation, based on the evidence provided, the review team concludes that HCT has fair and transparent processes for the recruitment, competence and development of faculty, and that Standard 1.5 relating to 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   HCT's annual budget forms the basis of acquisition of learning resources. Budget holders liaise with their staff and their local campus unit to present a feasible budget to the Board of Trustees who approve the budget through the Budget Planning System. The finance department supports budget holders by providing training and giving them access to online utilisation reports. The finance department liaises with budget holders on a quarterly basis. Faculty feed into the resource budget of their respective divisions with oversight of the physical resource budget maintained by the department and the Vice President Education Technologies who also has responsibility for internal evaluations.

6.2   HCT has in place a Library Collection Development and Maintenance Policy that is overseen by the Vice President Academic Affairs; the policy provides guidance for HCT library managers and their staff across all campuses to provide adequate learning resources for staff and students. Libraries are open for a minimum of 35 hours a week and provide both physical and e-resources, including a remote-access library that is available 24/7. Students are also able to access books from other campuses if they are not readily available on their own campus. The team was informed by the President that HCT aims to be a digital campus with a learning management system and artificial intelligence to fulfil the digital student persona identified within its overall strategy.

6.3   In order to support the advancement of the UAE's national agenda, and HCT's commitment to innovation and entrepreneurship, InnCuVation spaces have been created on three of the campuses. This provides graduates with opportunities to work in partnership, including areas such as fabrication, business design and media, programming and robotics, and computing zones and future incubators.

6.4   HCT has a developed IT infrastructure that supports staff and students on all campuses. Services include educational technologies and learning management systems to support students' learning. Students are required to have access to a computer and are encouraged to bring in their own devices as part of HCT's Bring Your Own Device policy; they are supported with free configuration and installation of software that enables them to have access to the e-platforms required to support their learning; this initiative is underpinned by the IT Security Policy.

6.5   To ensure that physical spaces used by students and staff are safe, HCT has an Environment Health and Safety Management System in place that ensures the institution is compliant and meets external regulations, with site inspections carried out by Civil Defence. HCT has attained ISO14001 and OHSAS 18001 for health and safety.

6.6   The Vice President Strategy and Future overseas all aspects of student life, including student support. Centrally, the Student Engagement and Success department manages the overall student support across campuses, with each campus supporting its students through the Academic Services and Student Life departments who work closely with Central Student Affairs. Students are made aware of support services available during the admissions process with the department presenting their services at orientation and outlining them in the Student Handbook and on the student-facing platform of MyHCT. Students are able to contact the central call centre for queries and/or complaints.

6.7   Each student is allocated an academic adviser once they start their programme; this adviser is a member of faculty; a role that is standard for all faculty members except new employees who are on probation. Academic advisers are trained to support students through their academic development and provide advice on timetables, choice of programmes, transcripts and refer students to other support services if they are not academically related. They communicate with students via scheduled face-to-face meetings and emails and meet them during the semester.

6.8   Campus-based Academic Success Centers have recently been introduced and allow for one-to-one interactions with faculty or student peer tutors. The centres are permanently staffed by Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) specialist faculty with additional specialist subject faculty available as advertised throughout the week. Senior students also utilise the centres for peer tutoring. Centres are open during normal working hours and accessible on a drop-in or appointment basis.

6.9   All campuses have a Student Life department who is responsible for all non-academic aspects of student life, starting with new students' recruitment and orientation through to registration as an alumnus on graduation. The department also includes counselling services, which are available on an appointment or a drop-in basis. Students can self-refer or can be refereed by their adviser to see a student counsellor. Counsellors support students in areas of health, finance and psychological issues; they also provide generic health workshops that are particular to the needs of the student body of that campus; an example is anxiety and stress management workshops during exam time.

6.10   HCT has a well-appointed careers service with coordinated branches at each campus serviced by a full complement of professionally accredited staff. The service brings employers to the campuses for recruitment and to showcase student activities, with a heavy emphasis on support to students to enter private-sector employment. The service also provides support to students preparing for and during internships, and alumni may access the service. Various workshops are run across campuses, including in CV production and interview techniques. Students spoke in appreciation of the services offered. In maintaining curricular currency, and ensuring that graduates are ready for the workplace, HCT is reliant on a strong network of employers, including via Industry Advisory Committees, and may move to a more competency-based educational model.

6.11   Within work placements, students are mentored on the job by employers and supported by HCT's Career Center with staff visiting them when on placement and students feeding back to the department as part of their placement evaluation. Students are also supported by the department in preparing for employment via CV clinics, mock interviews and employability factory events with industry. Students are given the opportunity to access support from any of the campuses, if practical.

6.12   The central Knowledge Management department that is recently established allows for data mining from different systems to provide meaningful information that is distributed to the appropriate department, such as the Registry. Students' academic standing is centrally monitored by the System Registrar who sends information to the appropriate campus senior staff for dissemination to faculty to aid identifying at-risk students; they then work closely with the Academic Success Center to manage and support the students.

6.13   At-risk students are those who have a 2.0 GPA; students with a GPA of 2.2 are considered approaching 'at risk', who HCT plans to monitor as well. The team was informed that HCT is currently looking at a predictive model that is able to identify a student who might fall below this criteria to provide early support. This includes identifying students before they commence the programme by their high school grades; looking at their levels of absenteeism with academic advisers identifying and referring students who have more than

a 5% absenteeism to counsellors; student interaction with the Blackboard learning management system, which would give an overview on how engaged a student is with the programme.

6.14   Once a student has been deemed 'at risk', they are immediately advised by their academic adviser and contacted by the programme coordinator who refers them to the Academic Success Program unit in the library. An agreement is made with faculty on when the student can recoup their grade. The Academic Success Center puts a plan in place to support the student and monitor the students' progress with feedback collated from peer tutoring sessions, academic advisers and the counsellor. A student plan puts the student on either probation 1 or 2 and the student is required to attend meetings with the division and support services on how they can overcome their probation. With the current strategy of 'No Emirate left behind', at-risk students who have exhausted probation 2 protocols are no longer dismissed, rather, they exit the programme with a lower qualification that takes into account their accomplishments thus far.

6.15   HCT refers to students with special needs as The Determined Ones (TDOs). Students can self-refer or are referred by their adviser or NAPO; they then register as TDOs via the MyHCT portal in order to access support that is governed by the Student Support Services Policy and the Students of Determination Policy. TDOs are further identified at orientation where a student can self-declare or can be referred by faculty, academic advisers, the counsellor or through classroom visits that support services undertake when informing students of their services. In line with federal law, HCT ensures that students with special needs are treated equitably and, therefore, appropriate support, including special accommodation to facilitate physical access to classrooms and campus facilities, additional time during assessments, technological aids and note takers, are provided to TDOs. Facilities have a specific budget to assist in physical modifications of classrooms, bathrooms, technology-based support, sign language, and so on.

6.16   The Student Council is another method of student support that champions the student voice and is also a go-between for students and services across the campus. Each campus has student council members who should have a GPA of 3.0 or above and are elected by their peers; they have an induction and/or training to support their role, with the Student Council President providing feedback to the campus management. Students also sit on key committees such as PAC, where they are given the terms of reference and supported by faculty to ensure they undertake their roles effectively.

6.17   HCT also has a peer support system which includes peer tutors, peer mentors and peer trainers. To be considered for these roles a student must have a GPA of 3.0 and be a senior student. Peer tutors are students who occupy a formal role; some faculty found this role valuable and commented that students respond better when tutored by a peer. They are trained and supported by the Academic Success Centers, with tutoring sessions taking place within the Center. The tutoring process is transparent and anonymous feedback is collated from the tutees. Peer tutors can rise in their ranks of silver, gold and platinum based on the hours worked. Monetary rewards are attached to the levels and tutors can claim volunteering hours for their work and are also rewarded with a certificate of recognition for their work.

6.18   Peer mentors occupy an informal role where more senior students look after students who are struggling. The team was informed by staff that the CEO has approved the peer mentoring scheme and HCT aims to formalise the role across the campuses where students can mentor one another. It is currently varied across sites and is dependent on the course and teacher's approach at campus level, with some sites not utilising peer mentors at all. Peer trainers, on the other hand, are a new form of peer support that has only recently been introduced. Their role is to support lab technicians primarily.

6.19   Students undertake 100 volunteer hours in their student journey (25 hours each year). A volunteer officer is available on each campus to guide the students; this is further supplemented by a database on MyHCT where students are able to choose and apply online for voluntary work. Students also receive emails with options available to undertake voluntary work within government departments, charities, industry, community and within HCT departments. Some students, the team learnt, go over the prescribed 100 hours as they enjoy helping through their voluntary work and are able to gain awards and certificates for their participation. Students, alumni and employees the team met commented on the positive impact volunteering has on the students' own personal growth, in building their self-esteem, preparing them for employment and in building corporately social responsible citizens who continue giving back to their society even when they commence work. Employers regard this as a positive and distinct attribute of HCT graduates. The team heard that some peers act as volunteer leaders and support students to complete their forms for voluntary work; the voluntary leads meet periodically to share experiences and plan events.

6.20   In evaluating learning and support resources, feedback is obtained from both students and staff via surveys, suggestions and comments on the MyHCT portal. Feedback regarding facilities is overseen by the Student Life department who share the information with appropriate campuses and departments to inform decision-making. Student feedback and comments are addressed within 48 hours. Other forms of feedback include campus based Hayakum (welcome) and Shorek (your opinion) where students can feed back to senior management in face-to-face café-style sessions. An analysis is carried out to show progress on satisfaction with learning resources and support services.

6.21   In gauging the effectiveness of HCT's approach to student support and learning resources, the review team considered a range of documents, including handbooks, policies and procedures. Tours of the campuses visited confirmed the set-up and operation to be similar generally and discussion with senior management, faculty, staff and students further supported the comprehensive support HCT provides to its students.

6.22   The team had an opportunity to visit two of the InnCuVation spaces which are complimentary to students learning; these are modern and positive learning and innovation spaces. The team saw examples of student innovations with some resulting in collaborations and funding from industry and other projects being sold to market. As there are only three InnCuVation spaces, students from other campuses are able to access these resources if required. However, the team noted a discrepancy in the understanding of the InnCuVation spaces from students who did not have the physical structure on their campus.

6.23   Overall, students were overwhelming in their positive response regarding physical resources which they felt were current, relevant, up to date and adequate; they also commented on the responsiveness of HCT to requests for specific learning resources for different programmes. The team was given tours of the campuses they visited which were comparative and consistent across sites, with variations dependant on the programmes being offered on the campus.

6.24   The team noted the particular pride HCT staff and students had with regards to their high levels of health and safety measures in place, which they stated contributed to a safe learning environment; this included the clinics on campus manned by registered nurses catering for both staff and student's physical health. Students also commented that students with special needs are supported well, with evident physical changes to accommodate them.

6.25   Students were generally aware of where and who they could go to for support. All students confirmed they had access to an academic adviser and met with them. Faculty informed the team that they have on average 20-25 students, with peak times being the first two weeks of a new semester where they meet students more frequently. There was a

variation in how frequently faculty met students, with some noting they met at least three-four times per semester and others stating they may meet students three-four times a year. Advisers have office hours scheduled for their meetings, but faculty felt at times these are not enough, especially during the peak times.

6.26   Some faculty who met with the review team expressed concerns about a perceived increase in the workload associated with administrative tasks relating to teaching and advising students, compounded with a seemingly disproportionate (required) focus on institutional processes. These developments, they argued, were to the detriment of the primary tasks of teaching, learning and research and direct student support. A minority of faculty also expressed some disappointment with the new system that recorded students at risk, indicating that it was not as intuitive as the system it replaced, citing, for example, that teachers with students at risk in their classes had to drill further into the student record to obtain information that would have, under the previous system, been more easily accessed. The review team, while noting these views, had no opportunity to test the veracity of these observations. Nevertheless, the review team noted that these views were held by faculty, who represented a number of divisions, who met with the team.

6.27   There were differing views from student meetings at the various campuses on whether they were able to change their academic adviser; some of the students commented that they would welcome rotating advisers to enhance their experience, with others not sure if they were able to change advisers as they are given the same adviser throughout their learning journey; while on other campuses students claimed they can change advisers every semester or as they need to. The relationship with the academic adviser continues even when students graduate, as noted by the alumni the team met; they commented that advisers can change a student's life; they motivate and give them a sense of belonging.

6.28   Students wom the team met were aware of the Student Council, and in meetings where student council members were in attendance some noted that they are trained formally and informally; this varied across campuses with a general consensus that some form of induction and/or training is given. Student Council members at campus level hold two meetings with students each semester, the President then gives feedback to campus management with examples given of action taken by HCT as a result of Student Council feedback.

6.29   Students showed varied experience in how they received responses on their feedback, with some stating they get no feedback at all, others say they see the results of their feedback without formal communication, while others felt they were communicated to effectively on the next steps taken regarding their feedback. In general, students felt their voice was being heard and actioned.

6.30   In discussing the peer support systems, students commented that peer tutoring motivates them to learn more plus it has an added benefit of including their role on their CVs and tutees commented positively on how the sessions impacted their overall learning. Tutees can book a session online via My HCT where they are linked and matched with a peer tutor. Peer trainers whom the team met were students in engineering and had been trained to help support lab technicians; they stated that the role is allowing them to build skills and giving them the opportunity of taking on leadership roles where they can support and monitor other students. Employers whom the team met further commented on how skills gained by students through such roles, including voluntary work, are invaluable and HCT students are industry-ready due to exposure and support in their training.

6.31   The team was provided with evidence of the varied support systems in place for the students from peers and staff, thus acknowledging the comprehensive student support

available throughout the student journey that aligns strongly with the HCT ethos as **good practice**.

6.32 Staff working in support service departments are appropriately qualified and must undertake 40 hours of professional development a year to ensure they remain current in their fields. This forms part of their appraisal, which was noted as being helpful in formulating career plans. They also meet regularly across campuses to share good practice and updated information to ensure consistency of resources across campuses.

6.33 HCT has adequate learning resources across its campuses and accessible student support where students can access both resources and support from across different campuses to enhance their learning. The team noted that resources are fit for purpose, accessible, and that students are informed about the services available to them. The team therefore concludes that Standard 1.6 on 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 HCT uses a variety of data gathering systems to inform decision-making. These include the Institutional Effectiveness Management System (IEMS); the Curriculum Management System (CMS); Banner, Blackboard; and the Institutional Performance Management System (IPMS). The Education Technology department within HCT has responsibility for the core IT Infrastructure, application services and knowledge management systems across HCT campuses, which support teaching and learning, academic research and administrative services.

7.2 IEMS is a web-based application managed by the Institutional Research (IR) Unit. The IR Unit supports ongoing improvement plans in academic and administrative service areas and acts as a single access point for a range of data relating to institutional effectiveness, including performance against KPIs.

7.3 CMS is managed by the Programs and Curriculum division. It maintains and facilitates access to programme information and courses. Student assessment grades, assignment feedback and other course-related information are maintained on Blackboard, one of HCT's operating platforms. Students who met with the review team, confirmed that feedback from faculty on assessed work is accessible, timely and useful in helping them to prepare for the next assessment. The IPMS application is used to document, monitor and manage KPIs and is accessible to all Performance Contract Owners and their teams across all campuses, academic divisions and central service departments. Some faculty who met with the review team expressed reservations about the utility of a recently introduced system upgrade, which included the identification of students at risk; however, the review team did not have an opportunity to evaluate this system to assess the veracity of this comment. What was evident to the team who met with faculty representatives, however, was a communication gap concerning the implementation and evaluation of the operational utility of system changes, that engaged end-users effectively. The review team therefore **recommends** HCT should, when a new system is implemented, keep faculty and staff informed about the reason for the change, and undertake an evaluation concerning the effectiveness of the changes after an appropriate period, ensuring that the evaluation takes account of end-user feedback.

7.4 The Banner system has various functional models that holds information and generates reports relating to student registration data, human resources, finance and procurement. Access to these various IT systems and the data held is via the intranet portal MyHCT.

7.5 HCT has recently introduced more opportunities for students to be represented in campus administration bodies, such as Campus Councils, as well as academic programme enhancements.

7.6 HCT elicits stakeholder feedback through a range of survey instruments from students, faculty, staff, industry and business stakeholders. The student faculty evaluation collects students' perceptions of teaching and learning, which are made available to faculty and division management who analyse the results as part of the faculty performance evaluation. The student course evaluations allow students to feed back on the coverage of course learning outcomes (CLOs); alignment of assessments to CLOs; level of academic

challenge; course textbooks; educational resources; facilities; and their overall student experience. These reports are considered by faculty and PACs. Teaching faculty have an opportunity to provide feedback on course content, teaching and learning resources, assessments, and other related issues via the Faculty Course Evaluation that is administered twice per year. The feedback is considered by PACs and FACs for institution-wide and campus enhancements. Other monitoring instruments include student satisfaction with services; an exit survey to evaluate graduate satisfaction; a graduate employment survey; and an employer/industry survey. The latter survey seeks employer perceptions of the preparedness of HCT graduates for the workplace.

7.7   HCT produces an institutional Fact Book which summarises key reports and data tables across a range of topics, including enrolment and completion data; profile of students; and graduate employment. Campus management and academic divisions use the Fact Book as a contributing source of information to evaluate student progress and assist with the identification of enhancement opportunities.

7.8   Faculties, campuses and support units use a wide range of information to facilitate teaching, learning, research and related activities and to inform decision-making. Student profile data that is held on Banner is maintained by Central Registry. This unit provides an analysis of the data and produces a range of reports to support course and programme logistics, which include reports on admissions and registration, student attendance grades, students at risk, and teaching schedules.

7.9   In meetings with senior HCT faculty and staff, the review team confirmed that each Executive Dean has a performance contract that includes the academic division KPIs. The KPIs, which are managed through the IPMS, are used for reporting divisional performance and to contribute to the continuous enhancement of programmes. Reporting is undertaken mid-year and at the end of the academic year. Once data has been validated, it is analysed by the relevant division to report on performance and target achievement, and to identify improvement actions which are incorporated into a formal action plan.

7.10   The Institutional Research department produces an annual Institutional Effectiveness Report, which includes KPI performance for divisions and campuses and trend analysis of institutional effectiveness. Included in these reports are the campus response to issues raised, as well as proposed action plans to address relevant issues. These reports are used by Executive Deans of the Academic divisions, Campus Directors and the wider HCT community to inform planning, review targets, and, where relevant, develop appropriate institution-level action plans. Information is also compiled for external stakeholders, including the Center for Higher Education Data and Statistics; Abu Dhabi Department of Education and Knowledge; the Prime Minister's Office; and the UAE Ministry of Education. HCT relies on performance-based funding from the Ministry of Education and must meet performance criteria relating to, for example, graduation rates and employment and employer satisfaction feedback.

7.11   The review team had a 'walk-through' of the MyHCT system, that records data and presents analysis reports for use by HCT senior management, faculty and staff to inform decision-making. Students confirmed that they had access to relevant information to support their studies and general student experience. Students are given the opportunity to provide feedback on the quality of academic and support provision through online surveys. HCT is required to provide an annual statistical digest, as part of the monitoring process undertaken by the UAE Ministry of Education.

7.12   HCT uses a comprehensive set of data to inform decision-making and other quality-related processes, including student and external stakeholder feedback. Based on the range

of information that is used to enhance HCT provision and to inform planning and decision-making, the review team concluded that Standard 1.7 Information Management is **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 Communication department, who reports to the President's Office, has oversight in the governance, gathering, disseminating and managing public information for internal and external HCT stakeholders. The Communications department approves all internal and external published information, with all external public and social media requiring the President's approval. The Social Media Communication Policy and Procedure covers how the dissemination of public information to HCT's stakeholders are governed via its website, social media channels, newspapers/press releases, and so on, to communicate with its stakeholders.

8.2   On a periodic basis, the Communications department works hand in hand with individual departments and divisions who are the content owners of their respective information pages on the HCT website and portal; content owners are responsible for verifying that their material is accurate via appropriate committees such as FAC. Campus-specific information is overseen by Campus Directors who work hand in hand with their Executive Deans; they pass this information to the central communications team who have final sign-off, while social media that is campus-specific is signed off by the Campus Directors.

8.3   In order to maintain a consistent message across all the campuses, HCT has a central Brand Manager who liaises with Communications Points of Contacts (POCs) who are campus based; this process and relationship was shortlisted as a finalist for the Government Excellence awards with regards to the positive role the Communications department had created. POCs are also known as brand ambassadors as they are responsible for the HCT brand on their respective campuses. HCT has also launched a one-stop-shop where internal and external stakeholders can interact with HCT.

8.4   The public-facing website targets the general public, prospective students, students, alumni and other stakeholders and provides comprehensive information on HCT's vision, mission, strategy, admissions, policies and procedures, detailed programme and course information, campus-specific information and contact information for all 16 campuses as well as news updates that outline what is happening in HCT. Programme and course information are also published in the Catalog that is accessible as a hard copy and online.

8.5   The website is the key point of information for both prospective and current students and allows them access to the academic calendar, the student handbook, volunteering programmes, the Methaq student Code of Conduct, the Academic Advising handbook and all related admissions information. The team learnt that alumni continue to have access to the library after they have left and have an HCT email address for life. The website is reviewed every six months to ensure information is current and up to date and the Communications department liaise with divisions on an annual basis in updating their pages.

8.6   Current students have access to the student life section on the website, that covers academic, personal and career information that help them navigate their day-to-day lives as HCT students. Students can publish social media content with hashtags that have to be approved by a task force centrally at the Communications department before publication. HCT has made guidelines available to both staff and students on usage of social media to ensure they adhere to the HCT communications ethos.

8.7   Public information is regularly evaluated to gauge its usage via interactions; this information is collated from the MyHCT website as well as the public-facing website to help inform decision-making.

8.8   HCT publishes information about the full range of its activities that includes its vision, mission, programmes and relevant media updates. The information is found to be tightly controlled centrally with information disseminated to the communications POCs on campuses to ensure a consistent message is maintained. The team found public information to be fit for purpose for staff, students and the public and therefore conclude that Standard 1.8 on 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 Academic programmes are reviewed in three different processes: an Annual Program Continuous Improvement, a Three-Year Cyclical Review, and five-yearly CAA Self-Study. These three processes build upon each other, with each report feeding into the next type of review.

9.2 Programme quality is the responsibility of PAC, which reports to the relevant FAC. The System-Wide Curriculum Committee is responsible for reviewing proposed changes to programmes. The Quality Resource Manager, who sits on FAC, is responsible for ensuring CAA compliance of each programme.

9.3 The Program Quality Manual describes the process of annual review, which results in the production of an Annual Programs Continuous Improvement Report (APCIR) that brings together student feedback, student performance, external feedback from the Industry Advisory Committee and other sources.

9.4 Each semester, course evaluation surveys are used to evaluate the teaching provision and analysed on a faculty basis. These data feed into the APCIR. Students are also surveyed toward the end of their studies for their opinion on how closely their learning aligns to the course outcomes.

9.5 The APCIR are considered, and formally approved, by FACs and then go to CQAC.

9.6 Programmes are reviewed on a three-year cycle, as also described in the Program Quality Manual. This process coincided with a national programme accreditation between 2013 and 2019. The process is designed to review APCIRs, determine the extent to which the programme goals and learning outcomes have been achieved and examine the resources and facilities supporting the delivery.

9.7 The five-yearly CAA self-study is the process that determines whether a programme of study can be reaccredited. It comprises a critical review of the programme based on the reports from the annual programme review and the three-year cyclical review and includes broader aspects of the programme delivery such as quality assurance, other educational programmes, research and scholarly activities, staffing, students, and learning resources.

9.8 Programme action plans are used to identify actions from the three types of review and monitor their completion. The Programs and Curriculum division monitor completion of the action plans.

9.9 All programmes delivered by HCT are subject to reaccreditation by CAA on a five-year cycle. The three-year review, therefore, functions as a mid-term appraisal of each programme and builds on the annual monitoring processes.

9.10 There is a significant amount of external input into each of the programme monitoring and review processes. This is driven by HCT's ethos of providing industry-relevant education and reinforced by the high proportion of professionally accredited programmes and the explicit requirement for constant revision of programmes to remain

current. External input takes the form of consultation with employers and other stakeholders and the external reviewer. Each programme has an Industry Advisory Committee that meets twice per year. Student input is provided by the feedback they supply, and by the student member of PAC.

9.11   For each programme, including those without professional certificates and qualifications, final assurance of quality and standards is provided by the five-yearly CAA accreditation.

9.12   Programme development and enhancement at HCT is based on a process of continual improvement. Each course has a Course File that is a live document containing information on course delivery and student performance. The FAC minutes supplied provide evidence of a large number of decisions resulting in changes to programmes.

9.13   Departmental KPIs include metrics designed to report on the continuous improvement of academic programmes, including data on student retention, attendance, admissions, performance, employment and others.

9.14   In recognition that feedback from staff and students is essential for the continual development of its provision, the institution has introduced MyHCT, an online portal for feedback and complaints. Feedback is closely monitored and, where appropriate, contributes to course and programme development.

9.15   There is an evaluation system whereby every course has a student survey covering curriculum design and content, teaching, learning and assessment, and learning resources. There are also opportunities to flag up issues for the attention of the campus programme chair or FAC. Staff and students reported that the surveys had resulted in improvements by the following semester including, for example, changes to the type and balance of assessments and the introduction of role play into a business negotiating course.

9.16   Staff are able to provide input to the enhancement of the courses and programmes they deliver to FAC, via the Course Management team.

9.17   Industry involvement in programme design and development takes many forms. These include contributions from staff who have worked in industry and are therefore able to bring their experience and working knowledge of the theory and practice into classrooms. In a similar way, adjunct faculty are able to contribute their experience of industry and current professional knowledge. The Industry Advisory Committees provides advice on required skills and competences, research projects and placement opportunities, all of which help to shape the provision of HCT.

9.18   PACs play a central role in managing the continual improvement process, and in coordinating the provision of each course and programme across the different campuses on which it is delivered.

9.19   PACs meet every month to review the curriculum. Their remit explicitly includes continuous programme improvement, including enhancement of the programme-level competencies, learning outcomes and sequencing of courses to optimise learning pathways, and oversight of cross-campus consistency. Where appropriate, PACs also arrange accreditation or professional certification.

9.20   To ensure that consistency is maintained for courses taught across different campuses, each campus delivering a particular programme will be represented on PAC. In addition to managing the continual improvement of the programme, PAC oversees material uploads to the virtual learning environment and ensures that any practical classes are the same.

9.21   Each PAC includes a student member. Student members of PACs reported that their opinion is valued.

9.22   Each campus has a System Course Team Leader for each course it delivers. Their role is to maintain contact between the different campuses, to contribute to its development and to ensure that any changes imposed by PACs are communicated to ensure a consistent approach to the learning and teaching and an equivalent student experience. They are involved in the selection of course resources, coordination of examinations, support consistent delivery of course material and provide input on the development and revisions to the curriculum, as required.

9.23   HCTs approach to programme design and development embeds employability through professional certification, accreditation and extensive input from employers and other industry partners. There is clear evidence of the impact of this approach, including the rewriting of entire courses to improve the alignment with international professional standards.

9.24   This approach is clearly welcomed by students who recognise that the courses are preparing them for work, by alumni who reported an easy transition into employment, and by employers who found HCT graduates to be well prepared for professional practice.

9.25   In alignment with its mission and strategy, the institution consults with and acts on a wide range of stakeholder feedback, including that from industry partners, students, parents, faculty staff and alumni. The review panel, therefore, identified as **good practice** the effectiveness of HCT's engagement of employers and other industry partners in the creation and development of its academic programmes.

9.26   Based on the evidence, the review team concludes that HCT has processes in place to monitor and regularly review its programmes with the aim of continuously improve them. Therefore, Standard 1.9, On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes 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   HCT is subject to three levels of external cyclical quality review, namely, government; national and international professional accrediting bodies; and industry certification.

10.2   The Inspection Directorate (Higher Education), under the Ministry of Education (MOE) conducts compliance inspection audits on all UAE higher education institutions. The audit process involves site visits to institutions lasting typically a week. Institutions are evaluated on a cyclical basis, against the CAA's 11 Standards for Institutional Licensure and Accreditation. In May 2019, two of HCT's campuses were audited. Reports are prepared by the visiting teams and an action plan is prepared by the institution to address any recommendations. HCT prepared a progress report for the MOE in July 2019 and a follow-up visit to evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation of the action plan is anticipated in 202021.

10.3   As a federal higher education institution, HCT must participate in the Sheikh Khalifa Government Excellence Program (Award Model), managed by the UAE Prime Minister's Office (PMO). This involves an assessment of compliance of its functions and performance using the Award Model criteria which is validated every two years. The PMO is also responsible for the oversight of institutional performance frameworks. HCT prepares an annual status report on KPI achievement, which is followed up by a PMO annual audit visit to evaluate HCT's performance in the context of the government performance framework, which aims to contribute to the quality enhancement of provision.

10.4   HCT undergoes institutional and programme-level accreditation by national and international accrediting agencies. As referenced in Section 1 above, HCT gained licensure status by the CAA of the Ministry of Education for a five-year period to 2019. At the time of the review team visit, HCT was in the process of renewal of the Institutional Licensure for a further five years to 2024. All of HCT's academic programmes received CAA national accreditation. A key element of gaining national accreditation is that all programmes must be aligned with the UAE's National Qualifications Framework of the Emirates, which is also aligned with the European Qualification Framework. Before the expiry of the Institutional Licensure, an institution must apply to CAA to renew its licensure. An analytical self-study must be prepared. The subsequent review for the renewal of institutional licensure by an external team will evaluate the institution's performance in meeting the Standards for Institutional Licensure during the preceding period. A renewal of licensure may be granted for a period of three, five or seven years.

10.5   In 2016, HCT asked a team of external consultants to review all HCT programmes to assure academic quality and standards, prior to submitting the programmes for national accreditation.

10.6   Prior to 2013, when mandatory national institutional and programme accreditation were not in place, HCT sought international accreditation of its programmes, as an additional measure to benchmark eligible academic programmes against international quality standards. These included business programmes by the US Accreditation Council of Business Schools and Programmes; engineering programmes by the US Engineering Technology Accreditation Commission; computer information programmes by the Information Systems Technology Accreditation Commission under the auspices of the

Canadian IT Professional Society; and the health information programme was accredited by the Health Information Management Association of Australia.

10.7   HCT also seeks to assure the quality of its systems and processes through regular professional audits by key ISO-certified agencies across eligible domains, such as occupational health and safety and organisational management systems.

10.8   The review team confirmed that in May 2019, two of HCT's campuses were reviewed by the Inspection Directorate (Higher Education) under the auspices of the UAE Ministry of Education. This involved two separate week-long site visits involving meetings with faculty, staff, students and alumni. These external inspection visits are in addition to the periodic application process and external review that HCT is subject to as part of its application to renew its licensure status with the UAE Ministry of Education.

10.9   In meetings with senior HCT faculty, students and external industry representatives, and in conjunction with supporting evidence, the review team confirmed that HCT undergoes an extensive range of external cyclical quality review processes at institutional and programme levels. The review team also confirmed that HCT engages positively with these processes and is responsive to recommendations to enhance its provision.

10.10   In meetings with external stakeholders and HCT faculty, the review team confirmed that a range of HCT's academic programmes are subject to cyclical external accreditation by national and international professional, statutory and regulatory bodies. The extent to which HCT's academic programmes are externally accredited by international bodies is commendable, brings another significant layer of external quality review to bear and is **good practice**.

10.11   External certification by relevant industry-standard operating platforms undertaken by faculty and students is another dimension to the externality that HCT subjects itself to. This contributes to the currency of the curriculum and the employability of HCT students.

10.12   Based on the evidence provided, including the MOE licensure application process and follow-up action plans, professional body accreditation, and external industry representation, the review team concluded that HCT is subject to a range of effective external cyclical quality assurance processes and that, consequently, Standard 1.10 Cyclical external quality assurance 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 a proportion 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/index.php/home/esg

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.

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.