



This review method  
is ESG-compliant

# International Quality Review

Ajman University

**Review Report**

June 2025

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## About this review

This is a report of an International Quality Review conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Ajman University. The review took place from 23 June 2025 to 8 July 2025 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

- Professor Youhansen Eid
- Mr Mark Cooper
- Mr Jack Medlin (student reviewer)

The QAA Officer for this review was Mr Alan Weale.

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 \(ESG\)](#).

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 conditions (if relevant)
- 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: [Key findings](#). The section [Explanations of the findings](#) provides the detailed commentary.

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

# Key findings

## Executive summary

Ajman University (AU) is a private institution situated in the Emirate of Ajman in the United Arab Emirates. It was founded in 1988 and obtained its license by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research in 1994 under its previous name of Ajman University of Science and Technology. In October 2016, the University's name was changed to Ajman University to reflect its education provision. AU operates from a single campus.

The University's head is the Chancellor who reports to the Board of Trustees (BOT). The Chancellor heads the University Cabinet which comprises of the Vice-Chancellor for Academic Affairs, the Vice-Chancellor for Communication and Community Affairs, the Chief Operating Officer, and the Executive Director for Institutional Planning and Effectiveness. The Cabinet is mandated to provide strategic advice on matters crucial to AU's mission, strategies, and operations.

The University's mission states that it is '*... an independent, comprehensive, non-profit, multicultural academic institution that offers a broad range of high-quality and relevant undergraduate and graduate academic programme. The University strives to fulfill the needs of students, alumni, employers, and society through a learner-centric development journey, quality education, hands-on experience, research, and community engagement. AU develops well-rounded, career-ready graduates who are professionally competent, socially responsible, innovative, and active contributors to the sustainable development of the UAE and beyond.*'

AU's 2022-2027 Strategic Plan has a student-centric focus aimed at making a meaningful impact on students' lives by fostering both personal and professional success. The six strategic goals of this plan are as follows:

- Strategic Goal 1: Strengthen academic excellence in line with international standards and market requirements.
- Strategic Goal 2: Enhance research quality and impact.
- Strategic Goal 3: Build a career-making, student-centric development journey.
- Strategic Goal 4: Strengthen meaningful relationships with external communities.
- Strategic Goal 5: Recruit and retain diverse and brilliant students.
- Strategic Goal 6: Enhance institution sustainability.

AU comprises nine colleges with 24 undergraduate and 15 graduate programmes, all accredited by the Commission for Academic Accreditation (CAA) of the UAE Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MoHESR). Nineteen of these programmes hold international accreditations from a range of external accrediting bodies.

The total number of enrolled students for 2023/24 was 6132, consisting of 2697 (44%) males and 3435 (56%) females. Undergraduate students account for 93% of the total and postgraduate 7%. There are 264 full-time equivalent faculty employed by AU resulting in a Student to Faculty Ratio (SFR) of 20.6. There are 245 full-time faculty and 57 part-time (headcount). Administrative staff number 542 (headcount).

Achievements since the QAA 2022 Mid-Cycle Review include continuing to achieve programme-level accreditations, strengthening global standing through improved rankings, the launch of a Centre for Inclusive Learning and increasing and developing its community engagement and sustainability. Key challenges for AU include diversifying revenue by decreasing dependence on tuition revenue, increasing external research funding, providing consultancy services and executive education programme.

In reaching conclusions about the extent to which Ajman University meets the 10 ESG Standards, the QAA review team followed the evidence-based review procedure as outlined in the handbook for International Quality Review (October 2023). The University provided the review team with a self-evaluation and supporting evidence. The on-site review was interrupted by temporary hostilities in the region and was therefore conducted through a combination of on-site visit and on-line meetings held between 23 June 2025 to 8 July 2025. The review team held a total of seven meetings: these were held with the Chancellor, senior management team, academic staff, professional support staff, students, alumni and external stakeholders. The review team also had the opportunity to observe the University's facilities and learning resources. Due to the disruption to the review visit referred to above, the facilities and resources were observed primarily through video tours supplied by the University.

In summary, the team found one example of good practice and made no recommendations for improvement/enhancement. The team did not set any conditions.

Overall, the team concluded that Ajman University **meets** all standards for International Quality Review.

## QAA's conclusions about Ajman University

The QAA review team reached the following conclusions about the higher education provision at Ajman University.

### European Standards and Guidelines

Ajman University meets all 10 ESG Standards and Guidelines.

### Conditions

The team did not set any conditions.

### Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following feature of **good practice** at Ajman University.

- The structured feedback mechanisms, which enable systematic assessment and continuous improvement of academic programmes that ensure both current market requirements and graduate employment outcomes inform programme development and enhancement decisions (ESG Standard 1.9)

### Recommendations

The QAA review team did not make any **recommendations** to Ajman University.

## Explanation of the findings about Ajman University

This section explains the review findings in more detail.

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

## Standard 1.1 Policy for quality assurance

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

### Findings

1.1 Ajman University (AU) has established a detailed and robust Quality Assurance Policy that is published in their Policies and Procedures Manual and available on their website. This policy articulates AU's commitment to excellence through continuous self-assessment, critical evaluation, and improvement across all academic and non-academic units. AU has created the Office of Institutional Planning and Effectiveness (OIPE), led by a senior official who reports directly to the Chancellor, to oversee quality assurance processes.

1.2 The quality assurance framework is built around the 'Plan-Do-Assess-Improve' (PDAI) cycle, modelled after Deming's PDCA cycle<sup>1</sup>, which forms the foundation of AU's Institutional Effectiveness Model as noted in the Quality Assurance Manual (QAM). The QAM provides detailed guidance on implementing these processes across both academic and non-academic units. In the case of academic programmes, effectiveness involves evaluating Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs) and Programme Learning Outcomes (PLOs). Evaluation of non-academic units involves structured evaluation against Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). The comprehensive governance structure includes several committees: the Strategic Plan Monitoring Committee (SPMC), Assessment Planning Committee (APC), and Institutional Effectiveness Committee (IEC) at the institutional level, with College Effectiveness Committees (CECs) and Assessment and Continuous Improvement Committees (ACICs) at departmental levels. These provide effective oversight of quality assurance and enhancement processes at the University.

1.3 The Quality Assurance Policy references involvement of both internal stakeholders (students, faculty, staff) and external stakeholders (alumni, employers, training/internship supervisors, advisory boards) in quality assurance processes. Student feedback is collected through various surveys on courses, academic advisors, and support services. The quality assurance system also aligns with external reference points such as the UAE Qualification Framework (QFEmirates) and standards from accreditation bodies including the UAE Commission for Academic Accreditation (CAA), QAA, and Western Association of Schools and Colleges University Commission (WSCUC). The alignment with external reference points and accreditation standards provides additional assurance that the quality processes meet recognised benchmarks. The University demonstrates robust mechanisms for external stakeholder involvement in policy development through several concrete examples. External regulatory bodies systematically influence policy development, as evidenced by AU's response to WSCUC recommendations which led to comprehensive revision of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Policy through a consultative process including external benchmarking. External Review Teams (ERTs) appointed by the CAA also systematically contribute to policy development, with recommendations leading to revisions of the Academic Advising

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<sup>1</sup> Deming's PDCA cycle - Plan, Do, Check, Act - is an iterative, four-step management method used for the continuous improvement of processes, products, or services



Policy following benchmarking exercises and development of enhanced policies for external examiners and reviewers.

1.4 The evidence confirms that AU's quality assurance policy is effectively operationalised through well-defined processes. The institution appears to have developed a mature quality assurance system that is systematically implemented across both academic and non-academic units. The clear delineation of responsibilities, from senior management down to departmental committees, creates a comprehensive structure that fosters a quality culture.

1.5 The Self Evaluation Document (SED) provides examples demonstrating the effectiveness of these processes in practice. For academic programme, the institution conducts regular assessment cycles through CLOs and PLOs evaluation, with documented evidence of the process. Similarly, for non-academic units, the regular evaluation against KPIs results in documented action plans for improvement. This systematic approach to 'closing the loop' in the quality cycle demonstrates that the policy is actively used to drive continuous improvement rather than being a compliance exercise.

1.6 The multiple committees established at various levels ensure broad participation of internal stakeholders in quality assurance processes. The regular collection of student feedback through various surveys demonstrates commitment to incorporating student perspectives. The samples of Instructor Course Assessment Reports (ICARs) show how faculty engage with student feedback and assessment results to enhance teaching and learning.

1.7 The alignment with external reference points and accreditation standards provides additional assurance that the quality processes meet recognised benchmarks. The University demonstrates robust mechanisms for external stakeholder involvement in policy development through several concrete examples. External regulatory bodies systematically influence policy development, as evidenced by AU's response to WSCUC recommendations which led to comprehensive revision of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Policy through a consultative process including external benchmarking. ERTs appointed by the CAA also systematically contribute to policy development, with recommendations leading to revisions of the Academic Advising Policy following benchmarking exercises and development of enhanced policies for external examiners and reviewers.

1.8 The SED, and staff met by the team at the review, report successful achievement of strategic goals, noting 'the cumulative score for all six strategic goals has exceeded the specified threshold of 90%', suggesting that the quality assurance mechanisms are effectively supporting strategic priorities. The institution provides compelling evidence to support this, showing how feedback leads to significant policy changes and strategic adjustments. Survey results and unachieved KPIs have informed substantial strategic modifications, including comprehensive restructuring of career development services. Further evidence is the expansion of the Co-operative Education Programme to additional colleges following student feedback on industry engagement opportunities, which required development of new institutional policy and cross-departmental coordination. The Advisory Board Policy establishes clear frameworks through which external stakeholders contribute to quality assurance and institutional effectiveness, ensuring that Board recommendations are systematically documented and integrated into decision-making processes to drive meaningful improvements to quality and strategic direction.

1.9 Overall, the evidence presented indicates a robust quality assurance system that is actively implemented and monitored, with clear processes for addressing areas requiring enhancement. The comprehensive nature of the system, involving both academic and non-academic units, and the systematic documentation of assessment and improvement actions, demonstrate the institution's commitment to effective quality assurance in practice. The review team therefore conclude 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 programme. The programme 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 AU is committed to offering quality academic programmes that fulfil the needs of students, alumni, employers and society. This commitment lies at the core of AU's mission, which states that: 'Ajman University (AU) ... offers a broad range of high-quality and relevant undergraduate and graduate academic programme. The University strives to fulfil the needs of students, alumni, employers, and society through a learner-centric development journey, quality education, hands-on experience, research, and community engagement...'.

2.2 The University offers 24 programmes across nine colleges. Each programme is designed with clear objectives aligned to the University's Mission, Strategic Goals, and Teaching and Learning Strategy. PLOs are clearly defined and aligned with the QFEmirates ensuring alignment with job market needs and preparing graduates for employment and lifelong learning. This alignment is embedded into the structure of programmes and is outlined in the Programme Specifications Policy, as follows: AU Mission – Educational Objectives – Graduate Profile (reflecting a set of attributes to be attained by AU graduates) – Institutional Learning outcomes (converting attributes into measurable outcomes) – Programme Learning outcomes – Course Learning outcomes – Direct and indirect assessment of Learning Outcomes.

2.3 The OIPE oversees the process of review and approval of programmes and ensures that it is conducted periodically for all programmes not just new proposals. In addition, OIPE offers training programmes on aligning PLOs with the QFEmirates. All department heads and staff members are fully aware of and follow this process. CLOs are mapped against PLOs and are further mapped to assessments to ensure that programmes meet the desired objectives and are aligned with AU's strategic intent. Feedback from employer surveys, exit surveys and alumni surveys are used to inform the design of programmes.

2.4 AU maintains a rigorous process for the design and approval of programmes. Any proposal for a new programme starts with the submission of a completed 'Template for proposing a New Academic Programme.' This template includes a summary of the programme, feasibility study, expected revenue and the extent to which the new programme will affect existing programme offered by the University. The template is submitted by the relevant dean to the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs (VCAA). The VCAA sends the proposal to the Curriculum and Study Plans Committee (CSPC). CSPC sends any revisions and recommendations to the VCAA who in turn sends them to the proposing dean for revision. The revised proposal is then submitted to the Council for Academic Affairs (CfAA). Upon approval, the VCAA submits the proposal to the University Cabinet for final approval. Upon receiving the Cabinet's approval, the dean prepares a Self-Study Report (SSR) in collaboration with the OIPE. This SSR is then submitted to the CAA of the MoHESR. By complying with this process, AU guarantees that programme design and

approval are subjected to internal and external scrutiny and are subjected a layer of external approval by the ministry and CAA.

2.5 All programmes are aligned with QFEmirates level 7-8 which are equivalent to level 6 in the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (FQHEA). AU submitted evidence showing the alignment of PLOs to the level descriptors of the QFEmirates and the contribution of each PLO to the descriptor. In addition, each CLO is mapped against the PLOs and the Level descriptors. Faculty members met by the review team were aware of this alignment and confirmed that there is a mapping of CLOs to the PLOs which are also mapped to the University strategy and mission.

2.6 Additionally, all programmes are developed in adherence to the Standards of the CAA of the MoHESR and QFEmirates. The Academic Programme Development and Revision Policy defines the standards by which the programmes are designed.

2.7 AU strives to ensure that all programmes are attractive, competitive and updated by the involvement of internal and external stakeholders, students, alumni, employers and Advisory Board members in the process of development or revision of academic programmes. During the visit, the review team learnt about the strong relationships between the different colleges and industry and their involvement in the learning experience of the students. The annual meetings of the Advisory Board are an opportunity to solicit feedback on the programme. Alumni are also requested to give feedback on their experience. As a result of this consultation, three new programmes in the College of Dentistry were launched and new minor pathways were introduced. Additionally, the review team learnt that there are monthly events, and a two-day retreat where all stakeholders can attend and give their feedback on matters related to market demands and updates.

2.8 To strengthen student engagement in curriculum review and development, AU requires colleges and departments to hold regular meetings with representative student groups from each programme. These sessions gather feedback on PLOs and CLOs, content, teaching methods, assessments, and support services. Student representatives are also encouraged to attend relevant College or Department Council meetings. During these sessions, students can also contribute to both the initial design of the programme and course proposals. Students who attended the meeting with the review team indicated several instances where their feedback was incorporated in the study plan such as practical training opportunities and the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI).

2.9 One of the requirements of the programme approval set by the CAA of the MoHESR is external review of the programmes. AU is committed to the external review of all its programmes and benefits from feedback and recommendations provided by the CAA appointed ERTs during the initial accreditation process and renewal of accreditation of programme. ERTs review the programme and ensure compliance with the CAA Standards and QFEmirates.

2.10 AU engages in benchmarking of its programmes against internal and external UAE institutions. This commitment by AU to benchmarking was originally adopted because AU recognised the benefit of doing so as a means of assuring itself that its academic standards and quality were comparable in an international setting. It also, subsequently became a requirement of the WSCUC, one of AU's accrediting bodies. The review team also learnt that AU was one of the first universities to join the Higher Education Benchmarking Consortium (HEBC), a voluntary initiative that later expanded beyond the UAE.

2.11 AU has a systemic approach to the documentation of its course and programme specifications. This is evident in the documents that were presented for the review which demonstrated consistency in the information provided. The University deploys scrutiny in each step of the process for producing specifications to guarantee that all courses comply with the following: course syllabi, teaching materials, copies of assessments, instructors worked answers and marking scheme, samples from across the range of student performance, student attendance data, student feedback and the instructor's proposals for any improvement. The review team considered that the documentation produced by the different colleges and the programme at AU are comprehensive and sufficient to assure students and stakeholders, of the objectives, structure and assessment of a given course, and the qualification that would result from it.

2.12 To demonstrate alignment of its programmes with the QFEmirates, the EQF, the European Bologna Framework, and European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), AU supplied evidence of the workload and levels assigned to a range of programmes and mapped their equivalence to the ECTS. The review team was satisfied that the programmes offered by AU are aligned with both the QFEmirates, the EQF and Bologna Framework

2.13 In summary, the review team found that AU has effective arrangements in place to manage the design and approval of their programme. These arrangements are underpinned by the Academic Programme Development and Revision Policy and by robust and well-established internal and external policies and procedures and are subjected to a layer of external approval by CAA and the MoHESR. AU produces systematic documentation at the programme and course-level which clearly articulates the intended learning outcomes, and how these are to be assessed. In addition, AU ensures the periodic alignment of its qualifications to the QFEmirates. Throughout the process, the review team noted that appropriate use was made of external reference points and student and staff views, all of which influence and enhance the overall performance of the different colleges. Overall, the review team therefore conclude that Standard 1.2, Design and approval of programmes, **is met.**

## Standard 1.3 Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment

**Institutions should ensure that the programme 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 AU adopts a student-centred approach, making clear that the students are at the heart of the educational process and ensuring student involvement in the education process. This is also apparent in the Teaching and Learning Strategy that the University has developed and in the variety of teaching techniques that professors are encouraged to maintain. This strategy is aligned with the strategic plan and is translated into KPIs. Every dean, cabinet member and head of department has KPIs that are used to measure progress. To ensure the success of the process and close the loop, there are assessment committees at each college and department to guarantee periodic monitoring and evaluation.

3.2 To enhance its learner-centred philosophy, AU revised its 2019 Teaching and Learning Strategy in alignment with its mission to produce 'well-rounded and career-ready graduates'. This effort led to the launch of the 'Revitalizing Instruction, Skills & Education' (AU RISE) Strategy in March 2025. The AU RISE Strategy outlines nine strategic aims, including: fostering well-rounded intellectual development, offering diverse and comprehensive academic programme, promoting undergraduate research, investing in infrastructure and learning environments, emphasising hands-on and innovative learning, prioritising student employability, ensuring continuous improvement through effective assessment, and strengthening university-industry collaboration to enhance students' professional readiness.

3.3 This strategy provides a cohesive, university-wide framework for delivering a student-centred and distinctive educational experience. It defines AU's teaching and learning model, guides strategic resource allocation, and identifies the key skills and systems needed to reinforce AU's performance. The strength of AU's learning philosophy lies in its diverse and flexible teaching and learning approaches, as outlined in the Teaching and Learning Strategy. In addition to traditional and face-to-face classroom instruction, AU employs a variety of delivery modes including team-based learning, problem-solving exercises, supervised credit-earning projects, independent study, and the use of an online learning platform to support learner autonomy and self-directed learning.

3.4 Faculty members at AU are expected to embrace this philosophy and employ a range of pedagogical methods that promote classroom interaction and actively engage students in the learning process. During meetings with academic staff, the review team learnt that programmes (such as Medicine and Architecture) are moving to an outcome-based approach-programme. To align with this concept, teaching methods have been evolving, with the use of problem-based learning, simulation activity and other similar student-centred learning approaches. Professors also outlined the use of work-based placement assessment, inquiry-based learning and the use of case studies. In addition, students who met the review team highlighted the use of real case discussions and team-based learning, such as that utilised in the Dentistry programme, and seminar-style presentations as valuable components that enhance their educational experience.

3.5 The Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC) plays a leading role in enhancing faculty teaching effectiveness by providing training in student-centred instructional strategies.

Meetings held during the visit confirmed that the TLC fosters excellence and innovation in teaching through ongoing professional development, supports faculty research in pedagogy, and encourages faculty-student research collaborations and mentorship. The Centre's Continuous Professional Development Plan (CDP) for 2025 is well-articulated, and its recent activities are detailed in the TLC Progress Report.

3.6 To encourage a student-centred learning and teaching process, faculty evaluation takes into consideration students' feedback on both courses and instructors. Furthermore, the annual evaluation of faculty considers, among other things, the role of faculty in course design and delivery, the appropriateness of teaching techniques and methodologies, and their consistency with course and programme learning outcomes.

3.7 The implementation of the student-centred strategy at AU has been notably successful. This was evident from meetings held with students, where participants demonstrated a clear understanding of the University's student-centred approach and its overarching teaching and learning philosophy. Faculty members and supporting staff, actively support this strategy by encouraging student engagement beyond the classroom, including facilitating participation in academic competitions and providing guidance and resources for research projects, such as covering project-related and travel expenses. These efforts reflect AU's commitment to fostering an enriching, student-focused educational environment that resulted in the recognition of AU's excellence by being awarded a 5-Star rating by the QS Stars<sup>2</sup> (a widely recognized ranking system for universities worldwide).

3.8 In the attempt to offer students continuous support, AU established the Student Success Centre (SSC) in 2019. The centre offers a wide range of activities and support services to meet students' on-going learning needs, including free tutoring, one-on-one tutoring, instruction, workshops, study skills and seminars. The analysis report of the Impact of Academic Intervention on Students at risk demonstrates significant improvement in the Grade Point Average (GPA) of the students at risk. In addition, the Centre offers a peer tutoring programme where students support their fellow students who may be having difficulties. The results of the students' satisfaction survey reflect the progressive improvement of students at risk and the overall satisfaction with the process. Students, faculty members and supporting staff confirmed this during meetings with the review team and commended the student-at-risk and the peer tutoring procedure.

3.9 In alignment with UAE Federal Law No. 2 of 2015 against Discrimination, and in accordance with its institutional non-discrimination policy, AU is firmly committed to promoting a safe, inclusive, and equitable educational environment that embraces diversity and fosters equal opportunities for all students. To support this commitment, AU has established the Centre for Inclusive Education, which plays a vital role in assisting students of determination<sup>3</sup> by providing the necessary tools and accommodations to ensure equitable access to learning experiences. Faculty members are informed by the Centre of any specific needs individual students may have, allowing for appropriate instructional adjustments. The

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<sup>2</sup> Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) is a higher education analytics firm that compiles and publishes universities, ranking based on various performance indicators. It is a widely recognized and respected ranking system for universities worldwide.

<sup>3</sup> Individuals with a 'temporary or permanent, full, or partial deficiency or infirmity in their physical, sensory, mental, communicational, educational, or psychological abilities to an extent that limits their possibility of performing ordinary requirements' (UAE Federal Law No. 29 of 2006). The term 'student of determination' is used for those in education.

Centre also offers a dedicated space for students of determination to undertake examinations with the required adaptations.

3.10 While the review team did not have the opportunity to meet directly with students of determination, the evidence and testimonies presented provide strong assurance that AU is fully committed to supporting these students and maintaining an inclusive and welcoming academic environment, by training support staff to deal with students of determination.

3.11 AU regards assessment as a vital component of the teaching and learning process, serving as a tool to measure student learning, inform instructional practices, and ensure that learning outcomes are being achieved. The University utilises a range of formative and summative assessment methodologies to assess the performance of its students, as well as their attainment of the relevant course and programme-level learning outcomes. AU has established a comprehensive University-wide assessment policy which outlines the examination process, grading process, grading scale, and the submission of final grades final grades.

3.12 The overall grade is usually distributed as: 50% for semester tests and activities, 20% for the Mid-Semester Examination, and 30% for the Final Examination. The grading scale is made available to students during the first week of classes. Full details are provided in the Policies and Procedures Manual. The review team noted that this distribution may vary in some programmes due to the specific nature of the discipline. This applies for disciplines such as Architecture, Medicine and Dentistry, where a sizeable proportion of the assessment is of a practical nature.

3.13 Students are provided with transparency on how they will be assessed from the information provided in the syllabus. Course files include course syllabus, teaching material, assessment instruments, worked answers and marking scheme, graded performance of students which includes the best, average, and worst samples of students' assessment, student attendance and comprehensive instructor review. Course syllabi include the mapping of assessment instruments against the CLOs, to ensure the proper alignment between the assessment used and the level, knowledge and skills appropriate to each outcome. In addition, professors are required to provide model answers and samples of solved examples.

3.14 Feedback on graded material is part of the learning process, to improve a student's understanding of the subject matter. Students are given feedback on the assignments, projects, lab reports, and written exams. Feedback varies according to the type of assessment; it is either provided in hard copy or online via the virtual learning platform. Each professor uses more than one method of feedback. For practical or clinical assessments there is verbal feedback given at the time. Students who met with the review team confirmed that the professors are very supportive and give individual feedback. They added that they were clear about the assessment methodologies employed and feedback given on assessed work. The review team learnt of one example where the student received an unexpected low grade and how the professor was very empathetic and encouraging in giving the feedback.

3.15 The student handbook outlines processes for dealing with mitigation in assessment. Students who are absent from an exam with a valid excuse are allowed to take an incomplete grade and sit for the exam two weeks from the beginning of the following semester. Reasons must be validated by authorised bodies in the University, otherwise the student will fail the course. Students who attended the meetings confirmed this policy and voiced their satisfaction. When asked about the petition, complaints and grievance policy



their responses indicated that they were aware of it but had never had cause to use it. Additionally, and based on the recommendation of the initial QAA accreditation visit, AU developed a moderation and double marking policy for all summative assessment to ensure fairness, accuracy and consistency of student assessment. Additional evidence supplied at the request of the review team, included a range of moderation reports which demonstrated that moderation was being consistently implemented in accordance with the policy. The review team is of the opinion that there is a robust moderation and double marking policy that is conducted in a consistent manner by internal and external evaluators.

3.16 In summary, the review team found that the University has effectively implemented a student-centred approach in the delivery of its programme and courses. This is supported by a well-defined Teaching and Learning Strategy that identifies the scope of student-centred learning and accommodates the diverse needs of its student body. The University has established robust mechanisms to ensure fair and transparent assessment of student learning, with clear procedures governing the design, approval, and moderation of assessments. Additionally, the University has effective systems in place for collecting and acting upon student feedback, fostering student engagement in shaping and enhancing their educational journey. The review team therefore conclude that Standard 1.3, 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 AU provides information relating to its admission processes for its range of degree programmes through its website. Prospective students can download degree-specific documentation through this online platform. There are a range of 'fast facts' which provide high level information which would be useful for prospective students. There are also clear and robust policies in place for course transfer, as well as for credit transfer for both home students and international students from accredited institutions.

4.2 The Office of International Academic Affairs (OIAA) is responsible for international student admission, the experience of international students studying at AU and the conduct of recruitment agents. AU has an International Student Policy which outlines processes regarding recruitment, the use of agents, and robust appeals and complaints routes, and the OIAA supports students with a range of issues such as visa and accommodation both prior and after arrival at AU.

4.3 AU has a clear policy and procedure for the Recognition of Prior Learning. The Advance Standing and Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) Policy determines a prospective students' eligibility for course exemptions based on certified prior learning. A maximum of 30 credit hours can be granted through PLAR, with total credits from prior learning and formal credit transfer not exceeding 50% of undergraduate programme requirements and 25% of graduate programme. The PLAR is updated as and when required in accordance with the CAA. When speaking with academic members of staff, the review team identified clear examples of when these policies had been applied and the evidence pack contained exemplar applications and PLAR meeting minutes.

4.4 The University maintains a comprehensive induction process in accordance with the Student Orientation Policy. AU provides formal induction to students and information on the various aspects covered is made available to enrolled students. Students are also signposted to various services such as health and counselling services. Induction is overseen by the Deanship of Student Services (DSS) during which various offices introduce students to their services, peers and team. They are also introduced to Peer Leaders who support their transition to university life and are given a tour of the campus and facilities. Students spoke to the review team about the smooth process from recruitment to enrolment and that they felt supported and had access to necessary and relevant information throughout.

4.5 AU has clear mechanisms and policies in place to ensure that students are supported to achieve throughout the student life cycle. The Academic Advising Policy ensures that each student is assigned a lead academic advisor and co-advisor within a week from full admission to develop, maintain, and support close contact with students throughout their time at AU. Academic advisors are trained and supported by their department, colleges, and central student services. There is a 'Plan Ahead' module on the Banner information system that ensures students register for the appropriate courses. Support for using this system is provided by the Information Technology Office (IT). Students provide feedback on

their experiences with advisors. Feedback from these students provided by the documentation, alongside the review team's discussion with students, show that this system is effective in supporting students.

4.6 Each student has a structured study plan that outlines the sequence of courses and learning outcomes that the student must complete to fulfil the academic requirements of their specific programme. This study plan is mapped with the appropriate level of the QFEmirates to ensure alignment with national education standards and qualification levels. When exploring this with academic staff, the review team identified that employability is embedded systematically throughout the academic journey in line with learning outcomes which are effective in supporting students in life after AU.

4.7 AU has Undergraduate and Graduate Completion policies that detail the implementation of graduation requirements as approved by the CAA accreditation of each programme and describe the process for assessing the completion of degree requirements. Graduating students are processed and determined by the Office of Registration (OR) in collaboration with the colleges. Certificates are awarded upon fulfilling requirements stated in the policy documents and in accordance with the CAA Standards.

4.8 The University requires that graduating students must create an alumni profile with the Office of Alumni before obtaining clearance from various departments as part of the clearance process. Graduates are actively encouraged to join the Alumni Mentorship Programme, which offers services such as resume reviews, interview skills development, career guidance, industry insights, and job shadowing. AU also engages alumni in various university activities, including coaching, fundraising, and voluntary initiatives. The review team heard from meeting with alumni and external stakeholders that this is an effective method of both supporting and utilising alumni.

4.9 Overall, AU has well established and effective procedures and policies to support recruitment, progression, and completion of study. The review team therefore conclude that Standard 1.4, Student admission, progression, recognition and certification, 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 AU recognises that its faculty members are its most valuable resource and hence it is committed to recruiting and maintaining high quality, well qualified and competent faculty members. This is reflected as one of the key initiatives of the 2022-2027 strategic plan: 'recruit faculty with proven track record in research/ research ambition/ existing research projects'. The University embraces non-discriminatory measures in alignment with the UAE Federal Law No. 2 of 2015 against Discrimination, and in accordance with its institutional non-discrimination policy, ensuring that there is no discrimination for sex, age, race, nationality or religion.

5.2 AU is committed to employing diverse faculty members from a variety of educational and cultural backgrounds who have obtained their degrees from internationally recognised universities and have proven track-records in quality teaching, research and community engagement. AU has developed a model to determine the need for hiring new faculty in different colleges. In testing the effectiveness of this model, the review team discussed recruitment process with the Chancellor and senior management team. They all confirmed that this model has worked well over many years for determining the hiring needs of all colleges and adhering to the specific requirements of different programmes and CAA regulations. The review team further tested this efficiency during the meeting with the academic teaching staff who confirmed that AU adopts a systematic process starting from advertising, screening, short-listing, interviewing, selecting, and appointing. The review team is of opinion that the evidence submitted, and the discussions during the visit indicate an effective recruitment and hiring process.

5.3 The Employment Policy stipulates and formalises recruitment and hiring requirements. All candidates are evaluated against a set of criteria that include research record (publications, citation record, external funds, international collaboration); teaching record (teaching philosophy, course diversity, student evaluation, novel teaching pedagogies) and services (administrative and professional). AU provides several clear and accessible documents regarding the policies and procedures for the recruitment, hiring and retention of the teaching staff. In addition to the Employment Policy, the Faculty Manual provides the details all the needed details. To ensure transparency and fairness, the review team scrutinized the documents and discussed the process extensively with senior staff and the academic teaching staff. They all confirmed the process and indicated its robustness and rigour.

5.4 The recruitment process starts by determining the needs at the level of the department. The relevant dean submits a clear faculty-hiring plan to Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs (VCAA) on academic year ahead. The approval is granted based on budget availability and how it fits within AU's strategic plan. The representative from the office of the VCAA will handle the advertising of the needed positions. A 'Search Committee', headed by the dean or head of department, screens all applications. The Committee then interviews all short-listed candidates, according to a set of rubrics, and will make hiring recommendations to the VCAA. Final approval lies with the Chancellor. This process is

transparent, fair and objective. The faculty members who met with the review team confirmed this process and noted its transparency and fairness.

5.5 The University supports newly hired faculty by providing the necessary orientation and assistance. The new faculty orientation programme is a full day programme that provides a briefing about the University philosophy, policies and work ethics regarding their job at AU. Information about academic programme, established assessment processes, the role of faculty members in continuous improvement, and rights and responsibilities are provided. All relevant information about registration as well as the advising systems, information on relevant support and Human Resources (HR) services available for faculty, campus life and student activities, IT and Learning Management System, TLC and SSC, and research and graduate studies is also explained. The review team learnt that each new member is appointed a mentor from the existing senior staff whose role is not academic but rather to acclimatise newly hired faculty to AU's culture (and that of UAE when needed).

5.6 Other forms of support targeting faculty members at large are outlined in the Continuous Professional Development Plan for faculty. The aim of this plan is to train and motivate faculty members to perform at the highest possible levels, to enhance faculty's teaching and pedagogical skills, to support excellence in academic practices, and to encourage faculty to reach their potential. The plan provides appropriate development and training and offers many opportunities for faculty to improve, instructional effectiveness. AU is committed to providing ongoing support by encouraging participation in academic conferences, technology training sessions, professional meetings, and collaborative research activities with scholars inside and outside the UAE.

5.7 This plan is accentuated by the Professional Development Policy that outlines the Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programme to train and motivate faculty members to perform at the highest possible levels. The CPD policy of AU ensures that each faculty is provided with constant updates on advancements and innovations in pedagogical and instructional design has functional access to, and proper training to utilise, modern technology. Regulations and guidelines for attending academic conferences are outlined in this policy.

5.8 The TLC provides on-going support to faculty members and is responsible for the implementation of the CPD plan through the regular training sessions and workshops that are conducted. The Centre offers a variety of training programmes, some of which are delivered on-line and holds multiple iterations for popular programmes. Faculty members who met with the review team acknowledged that TLC provides them with effective support. They confirmed that in addition to the regular training sessions, TLC provides bespoke training related to a particular college's needs, as well as support for online teaching. The TLC provides annual progress reports that guide the development of further training and enhancement programme.

5.9 In addition to the scholastic development of faculty members, AU recognises the importance of research in driving innovation, knowledge creation, and addressing pressing challenges. AU has outlined research as one of its strategic goals. The research strategy of AU identifies the Deanship for Research and Graduate Studies (DRGS) as the entity responsible for the implementation of the research plan. The University provided ample proof of its research output and continuous improvement and adopts a policy for encouraging and incentivising faculty members to conduct impactful research and to publish. The review team learnt that, although there was no minimum requirement set for faculty members, the

average SCOPUS<sup>4</sup> publications was six publications per year. The review team found that the different means by which AU supports and encourages their research activity such as incentives, research budget and grant scheme, conference travel support and financial reward for citations, has resulted in a significant increase in staff research activity, as witnessed by the increase in the number SCOPUS publications from 208 in 2019 to 1416 in 2024.

5.10 At the end of each academic year, all faculty members are evaluated. This evaluation is linked to the research impact, student and stakeholder feedback, and engaging in research and CPD activities. To encourage faculty members to engage in the different activities, AU awards points to each activity. Faculty members collect points for all activities. Different CPD offerings offer a different number of points towards a faculty member's performance. Student and stakeholder feedback is counted as one of the most relevant criteria related to faculty evaluation. Students who met with the review team commented that they give feedback on each course and on each professor each semester and that their comments are considered seriously; examples given included a teaching method being changed or an instance of an instructor being changed if a solution cannot be reached. Teaching assistants reported that they were involved with laboratories and tutorials. Weekly meetings with faculty are conducted to look at any issues that may be arising and subsequent changes made promptly. Other stakeholders commented that they had regular meetings with the programme director to give their opinions about the quality of the faculty, including visiting faculty, and that they had a concluding meeting at the end of each year to discuss the performance of students and faculty.

5.11 In summary, the review team found AU to have effective arrangements in place to manage the recruitment, selection and development of competent staff members. This includes operating a fair, transparent and merit-based approach to recruitment. Once a candidate has been selected, AU has appropriate induction arrangements in place to ensure a smooth transition into AU culture and their role as faculty member. The University has developed a comprehensive CPD plan that targets all faculty members. There is a research strategy and incentives for faculty to engage in research and world-class publications. A robust faculty evaluation plan is in place and faculty members acknowledge the fairness and transparency of all processes. The review team therefore conclude that Standard 1.5, Teaching staff, is **met**.

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<sup>4</sup> SCOPUS is an abstract and citation database of peer-reviewed literature including scientific journals, books, and conference proceedings. Scopus provides a comprehensive overview of worldwide research output in the fields of science, technology, medicine, social sciences, and arts and humanities.

## 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 Budgeting for teaching activities is conducted through an annual budget setting process which involves academic staff working with senior leaders within relevant departments, using data on student recruitment and growth to ensure needs are met. Documentation provided showed a clear budget for resources such as the Library. As a result of meetings held with senior staff, the review team were assured that processes for resource financing were clearly understood by all involved. Student feedback is considered in this process, with students identifying that when they requested specific resources be acquired, that budget resources would be put forward for these within a reasonable time.

6.2 AU has a well-established IT infrastructure and a wide range of learning and teaching resources that support its teaching environment, as well as its administrative operations and support services. IT learning resources are available for all students, and classrooms, libraries, studios, laboratories, and other subject specific resources (i.e. clinics for clinical course) help support a high-quality learning environment. Students identified within their SWS that there are high levels of satisfaction with both IT infrastructure and the IT systems it supports.

6.3 The Office of IT ensures optimum functionality of all IT learning resources, with the aim that all students have no difficulty in accessing and utilising IT resources. There are comprehensive policies in place regarding computer usage and licensure for all software applications. These services have been highly rated by students in formal feedback surveys. and this was reinforced when speaking with students during the review.

6.4 The University Library supports the delivery of teaching and learning through providing students and academic staff with access to physical and online resources. The library collection includes copies of core and recommended texts. Students rate the library provision highly and when the review team discussed this with students it was clear that they felt well supported in accessing literature, and that there were clear procedures in place for the procurement of any additional resources.

6.5 There is a dedicated Student Hub which provides a one-stop shop of all relevant services for students, this space was seen by the review team and in speaking with students it was clear that it provided a good place for collaboration, as well as an effective way of accessing relevant services.

6.6 The University established the Centre for Inclusive Learning for Students of Determination in 2024. This centre ensures compliance with UAE building regulations and facilities for people with disabilities to ensure full access to the academic environment and accommodation. Students who require extended time or specialized tools are supported with a fair and conducive testing environment, as well as specialised equipment. Automatic door openers are provided at the main entrances. Ramps, interior layout, circulations, lifts, classrooms, restrooms and disabled parking spaces are designed to allow use by people with disabilities.

6.7 The Team conducted a virtual tour of the facilities and saw that there was a broad range of high-quality resources. These are modern and fit for purpose. The OPIE regularly conducts satisfaction surveys for students and staff. The results of these surveys are analysed, and remedial and improvement actions are taken accordingly. When discussing these resources with students, it became clear that due to growth in student numbers there are strains on some of the more specialised spaces i.e. dentistry clinics. When discussing this with management, there was a clear acknowledgement and understanding of the issue and assurance was given that regular space mapping and management analysis was done to proactively identify these issues.

6.8 Overall, the review team concluded that there is appropriate funding for planned learning and teaching activities. The facilities and resources are of a good quality and are contemporary and accessible. The review team therefore conclude that Standard 1.6, Learning resources and student support, is **met**.



## Standard 1.7 Information management

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

### Findings

7.1 AU has established comprehensive processes for collecting, analysing, and using information for effective management of programme and activities. OIPE, particularly its Institutional Research Unit, plays a significant role in this process by systematically collecting, analysing, and interpreting data to improve academic programme and enhance performance across various units.

7.2 The Institutional Research Unit provides analytical and technical support to AU management, produces the Annual Fact Book, supplies data to the Centre for Higher Education Data and Statistics (CHEDS), maintains databases of student information, and produces annual University reports. The Annual Fact Book, available online, contains comprehensive data about student acceptance, enrolment, gender, region, schooling system, and admission scores, as well as information about faculty and staff.

7.3 AU meticulously tracks KPIs including student-to-faculty ratios, retention rates, continuation rates, completion rates, progression rates, success rates, attendance rates, graduation rates, and graduate employment rates. The Undergraduate Student Catalogue provides information about career opportunities for various programme, serving as an effective information management tool by providing students with access to detailed career guidance.

7.4 AU has implemented a robust information management system that effectively utilises data for decision-making and continuous improvement. The centralised role of OIPE, with its specialised units, creates a structured approach to information management that is functioning well. The regular production of comprehensive documents such as the Annual Fact Book demonstrates systematic data collection and analysis, and the public availability online of a summary version confirms a commitment to transparency.

7.5 The recent implementation of the Spider Impact software confirms that AU is investing in technological solutions to enhance its information management capabilities, making KPI related data more accessible to decision-makers and streamlining the process of tracking performance against strategic goals. This dashboard approach demonstrates support for managers and staff in visualising data for informed decision-making.

7.6 The University uses multiple channels through which to gain formal feedback from stakeholders, including faculty questionnaires, Chancellor's meetings with college faculty, Townhall meetings, and student feedback mechanisms. These diverse channels demonstrate an inclusive approach to gathering qualitative information, complementing the quantitative data collected through formal processes.

7.7 The Annual Effectiveness Reports for academic programmes provide convincing evidence that the information collected is being analysed and used to monitor progress and implement improvements. The role of the Compliance Unit in ensuring accuracy and quality of information across institutional documents confirms attention to data integrity, enhancing information management by ensuring consistency of data across all platforms.

7.8 The institution provides comprehensive evidence of how collected information directly impacts decision-making processes at multiple institutional levels. The Council for Admission, Registration and Enrolment utilises annual report findings to inform strategic enrolment planning and registration policies. Academic scheduling data analysis leads to evidence-based decision-making by the Council for Academic Affairs, as demonstrated in meeting minutes and presentation excerpts. At college level, the College of Dentistry uses assessment data to inform action plans and continuous improvement decisions. The Office of Information Technology systematically uses student satisfaction survey results and assessment reports to guide corrective actions and service enhancements. The OIPE provides achievement scores of key performance indicators and analytical reports that inform continuous improvement decisions at programme, college, and administrative levels, supporting development of annual programme effectiveness reports, strategic planning, and academic quality enhancements.

7.9 Overall, AU has well established, comprehensive processes for information management that function effectively in practice, with clear responsibilities, regular data collection, and systems for analysis and reporting. The investment in new technology solutions demonstrates an ongoing commitment to continuous improvement in this area, supporting data-informed strategic and operational planning. The review team therefore conclude that Standard 1.7, Information Management, is **met**.

## Standard 1.8 Public information

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

### Findings

8.1 AU provides clear information to the public through print and electronic formats, including on the AU website. As noted earlier, the University provides a series of programme and degree specific information which is clear, accurate, and objective through a series of catalogues, student handbook, policies, and procedures.

8.2 University policy documents are reviewed annually and updated regularly. AU follows a well-defined approval procedure to maintain the clarity and accuracy of institutional documents in accordance with the Publications Policy, and Institutional Documents Revision, Approval, and Archiving Policy. The Unit of Compliance within the OIPE is responsible for the periodic review, updates, and website publication of these documents.

8.3 The University shares an overview of the student demographic and success indicators via the aforementioned 'Fast Facts' webpage available to the public. In addition to this, there is a more comprehensive Fact Book – an overview of the university, which is accessible only to AU staff and students.

8.4 The University has a Policy on Responding to Requests for University Information. All communication activities are coordinated by the Office of Strategic Communications, Marketing, and Student Recruitment (OSCMSR) to ensure consistency and brand integrity. Requests for university information are addressed in line with the Policy on Responding to Requests for University Information, with OSCMSR and the OIPE managing the process. The Office of the Chancellor handles external requests for quotes or interviews.

8.5 The University website is easy to navigate and is regularly updated by OSCMSR. The quick links in the footer of the University website provide easy access to key resources. The Deanship of Student Services' Newsletters are disseminated to students, staff, and the public through social media platforms. Also, the University publishes the AU Roundup weekly for the AU community about various activities and achievements and the Achievement Newsletter shared on the AU LinkedIn account.

8.6 AU engages with staff, students, and stakeholders in decision making through Town Hall meetings gaining feedback and contributions to ensure transparency and accountability. It is clear through speaking with relevant stakeholders that these meetings are an effective way of both disseminating information and engaging with relevant public stakeholders.

8.7 Overall, the review team noted that AU publishes a wide range of information and data about its activities and programme. It also has in place policies and procedures to assure itself that published information is accurate and trustworthy and staff, students, and stakeholders met by the Team all confirmed that published information is accurate, trustworthy and readily accessible. The review team therefore conclude that Standard 1.8, Public information, is **met**.

## Standard 1.9 Ongoing monitoring and periodic review of programmes

**Institutions should monitor and periodically review their programme 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 AU has established comprehensive processes for monitoring and periodically reviewing their programmes to ensure they achieve their objectives and respond to the needs of students and society. The institution's commitment to excellence is realised through ongoing, integrated research-based planning and evaluation processes that systematically assess institutional effectiveness and drive continuous improvement.

9.2 The governance structure for assessment and continuous improvement is clearly articulated, with the APC and IEC at the university level, both led by the Executive Director of the OIPE. These committees coordinate with CECs and ACICs at departmental levels to ensure comprehensive quality enhancement across all academic programmes. The QAM thoroughly documents these structures and processes, establishing clear roles and responsibilities.

9.3 For academic programmes, AU implements both direct and indirect assessment methods as detailed in the QAM. The Annual Effectiveness Reports (AERs) demonstrate a systematic approach to 'closing the loop' by documenting assessment results, analysing findings, and implementing improvement actions. Administrative and support units are evaluated through a mature KPIs-based process that has evolved over seven years, with scorecard-based evaluations showing targets and achievements for each KPI.

9.4 External oversight is provided through the CAA, which requires AU to obtain initial accreditation for new programmes and apply for reaccreditation every seven years (previously every five years), this following its recognition as a High-Confidence Institution in 2023 (See also paragraph 10.2). This process involves SSRs and reviews by ERTs of international experts. Internally, the Course File Policy requires faculty to maintain comprehensive course files containing syllabi, teaching materials, assessment instruments, and review documentation, with the ICAR being a crucial component.

9.5 AU actively responds to changing societal needs by regularly updating programme content and developing new programme. Since achieving QAA accreditation in 2020, AU has obtained initial accreditation for numerous programmes addressing market needs, including specialisations in AI, Data Analytics, Cybersecurity, Digital Sociology, and International Commercial Arbitration. The University has also implemented a Teach-Out Policy to ensure appropriate support for students in case of programme discontinuation, as demonstrated by the successful phase-out of the BSc in Building Engineering and Construction Management programme.

9.6 AU maintains clear policies regarding students' workload, completion, transfer, and progression. The student 'study load' is well-defined in the Undergraduate and Graduate Student Catalogues, with appropriate provisions for full-time and part-time students. The Transfer Admission Policy ensures that transfer students are not disadvantaged and have

equal access to student services. Student progression is carefully monitored through the registration system and academic advisors, with reduced study loads for students. The Institutional Research Unit regularly generates and evaluates data on retention, progression, and graduation rates.

9.7 Assessment methods are diversified and aligned with course learning outcomes, as documented in course syllabi. The ICAR provides opportunities for instructors to evaluate the effectiveness of assessment instruments and propose improvements, comparing students' perceptions of their attainment of CLOs with measured results. Department heads and College Effectiveness Committees systematically review these reports to ensure continuous quality enhancement.

9.8 As shared in the SED and in meetings with staff, many examples were provided of programme improvements resulting from assessment and feedback. These include modifications to the Electrical Engineering programme based on stakeholder feedback, addressing ERT recommendations for programme accreditation, and significant curricular revisions in programme such as the MBA and MSc in Clinical Pharmacy to better meet market needs. Changes and improvements are documented and communicated to students and staff through several different channels including student participation meetings, meetings of the Dean's Advisory Council, the Deanship of Student Services News and the Chancellor's 'Town Hall' meetings.

9.9 Student feedback is systematically collected through various channels, including course evaluations, academic advising surveys and support service assessments. AU provides comprehensive student support services, including specialised support for students with disabilities, counselling, residential life, IT services, transportation, library resources, financial aid, health services, and career development. The effectiveness of these services is regularly assessed through satisfaction surveys.

9.10 AU demonstrates systematic involvement of external stakeholders and alumni in programme review processes. Examples provided illustrate how employers and alumni systematically contribute to programme review, ensuring that programme remain relevant to industry needs and market demands. AU alumni reinforced this when they met with the review team and spoke very positively about their ongoing engagement with the university, advising that even graduates from many decades ago still engage directly with members of the faculty, often returning to offer guest lectures and employment/intern opportunities to current students. In addition, the institution maintains comprehensive survey mechanisms specifically designed to capture alumni and employer feedback, with sample survey forms provided for programme such as BSc in Biomedical Engineering and Master of Public Relations and Corporate Communication. These structured feedback mechanisms, which enable systematic assessment and continuous improvement of academic programmes, ensure that both current market requirements and graduate employment outcomes inform programme development and enhancement decisions and are considered by the team to be a feature of **good practice**.

9.11 Overall, AU has established comprehensive processes for ongoing monitoring and periodic review of programme that is functioning effectively in practice, with clear responsibilities, regular assessment cycles, and documented improvement actions. The institution demonstrates a commitment to continuous improvement through responsive programme development and enhancement driven by both internal and external feedback mechanisms. The review team therefore conclude that Standard 1.9, Ongoing 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 AU demonstrates a clear commitment to undergoing external quality assurance on a cyclical basis, recognising it as an essential component of their ongoing quality enhancement processes. The institution views external quality assurance as a valuable mechanism that has consistently contributed to improving curricula, delivery methodologies, assessment instruments, learning resources and support services.

10.2 AU's first external quality assurance activity was in 1994 when it received its first institutional accreditation (Licensure), and since then it has participated in periodic reviews for Renewal of Licensure. The most recent renewal approval was granted in June 2023, with the licence valid until 25 May 2030. Following this review, AU was granted the prestigious status of 'High-Confidence Institution' in 2023, becoming only the eighth institution in the UAE (out of more than 100) to achieve this recognition from the CAA. This status confers benefits including an extended seven-year review cycle (compared to the standard five-year cycle) and allows for cluster-based reviews of programmes at the college level.

10.3 In compliance with CAA standards, all academic programme offered by AU undergo external review for reaccreditation on a periodic basis. The reaccreditation process is comprehensive, involving a detailed Self Study Report evaluated by an ERT appointed by the CAA, followed by an on-site visit. The ERT provides recommendations and suggestions, with AU required to submit response reports addressing these points.

10.4 Beyond local accreditation, AU demonstrates a commitment to meeting international standards through seeking international programme accreditation. Nineteen of AU's academic programme have gained international accreditation from bodies including ABET (formerly Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology), and AQAS (Agency for Quality Assurance through Accreditation of Study Programmes). Some programmes have also been reaccredited by these international bodies after an initial five-year period. In a meeting with external stakeholders the review team heard how the range of accreditations awarded are useful to business and industry partners in ensuring the quality of AU graduates in enabling their students to succeed in the workplace. Leaders in business and industry also commented how external awareness campaigns celebrating these successes are shared with the wider community on advertising hoarding and billboards, which in turn helps raise the reputation of the university to business partners.

10.5 AU is committed to the process of reaccreditation by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) five years after obtaining its initial accreditation, adhering to QAA's cyclical review requirements. Additionally, AU obtained initial accreditation from WSCUC in March 2024 for six years, with a progress report due by November 1, 2027, and a self-study report due in 2029 for reaccreditation in 2030.

10.6 The institution provides comprehensive evidence of specific improvements resulting directly from cyclical external reviews, demonstrating effective use of external evaluation to drive enhancement. The systematic approach includes Programme AERs that identify corrective and improvement action plans for unachieved CLOs and PLOs, with documented evidence of 'closing the loop' processes. Instructor Course Assessment Reports

systematically inform enhancements in teaching methods and course delivery through student feedback on learning outcomes. At institutional level, the University regularly evaluates effectiveness of all academic and student support services, with summary reports demonstrating how survey results lead to corresponding action plans and improvements. The institution's KPIs-based performance management system drives continuous improvement through systematic monitoring, with units developing action plans for unachieved KPIs and continuous improvement plans for achieved targets. This comprehensive approach to utilising external review outcomes was recognised when the Executive Director of OIPE presented AU's successful continuous improvement model to over 80 Quality Assurance Leaders from UAE institutions in a CAA organised workshop.

10.7 AU has a well-established framework for engaging with external quality assurance on a regular basis, both nationally and internationally. The institution values these processes as opportunities for enhancing quality rather than merely compliance exercises. The achievement of 'High-Confidence Institution' status suggests that AU's approach to quality assurance is recognised as effective by external regulators. The review team therefore conclude that 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 programme.

### Condition

Conditions set out action that is required. Conditions are only used with unsatisfactory judgements where the quality cannot be approved. Conditions may be used where quality or standards are at risk/continuing risk if action is not taken or if a required standard is not met and action is needed for it to be met.

### 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](http://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.

### Externality

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

### Facilitator

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



**Good practice**

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

**Lead student representative**

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

**Oversight**

Objective scrutiny, monitoring and quality assurance of educational provision.

**Peer reviewers**

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

**Periodic review**

An internal review of one or more programme of study, undertaken by institutions periodically (typically once every five years), using nationally agreed reference points, to confirm that the programme 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 programme 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 programme meet expected academic standards and that students will be provided with appropriate learning opportunities. It may also be applied to circumstances where a degree-awarding institution gives approval for its awards to be offered by a partner institution or organisation.

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