



This review method  
is ESG-compliant

# International Quality Review

## Reaccreditation

Higher Colleges of Technology  
(HCT) UAE

**Review Report**

May 2025

## Contents

<b>About this review .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Key findings.....</b>	<b>2</b>
Executive summary.....	2
European Standards and Guidelines .....	3
Conditions .....	3
Good practice .....	3
Recommendations .....	4
<b>Explanation of the findings about Higher Colleges of Technology.....</b>	<b>4</b>
Standard 1.1 Policy for quality assurance .....	5
Standard 1.2 Design and approval of programmes .....	9
Standard 1.3 Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment.....	11
Standard 1.4 Student admission, progression, recognition and certification.....	15
Standard 1.5 Teaching staff.....	18
Standard 1.6 Learning resources and student support.....	21
Standard 1.7 Information management.....	24
Standard 1.8 Public information .....	26
Standard 1.9 Ongoing monitoring and periodic review of programmes .....	28
Standard 1.10 Cyclical external quality assurance .....	31
<b>Glossary.....</b>	<b>33</b>

## About this review

This is a report of an International Quality Review conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Higher Colleges of Technology, United Arab Emirates. The review took place from 27<sup>th</sup> April to 1<sup>st</sup> May 2025 and was conducted by a team of four reviewers, as follows:

- Prof Vish Maheshwari
- Dr John Byrom
- Dr Harry Williams,
- Ms Chrystalle Margallo (Student Reviewer)

The QAA Officer for this review was Dr Andrew Thomas

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

1 The Higher Colleges of Technology (HCT), established in 1968, is the largest federally funded applied higher education institution in the United Arab Emirates with over 25,000 students and 2,000 staff across 16 campuses in five Emirates.

2 HCT offers 30 Applied Bachelor's programmes and 18 Vocational Diplomas at levels 4 and 5 in Applied Media; Business; Computer Information Science; Education; Engineering Technology and Science; and Health Sciences. All programmes are delivered in English except for the Arabic and Emirati Studies courses. All programmes are aligned with the National Qualifications Framework of the Emirates (NQFE) and are accredited by the Commission for Academic Accreditation (CAA). HCT maintains Commission for Academic Accreditation (CAA) institutional and programme licensure. In 2020, HCT was granted renewal of licensure for the five-year period 2021-26. In addition, a number of programmes maintain accreditation by international professional bodies. HCT, therefore, undergoes various review processes to maintain both its national and international accreditation.

3 HCT's Vision is 'to be the leading university of applied science, exemplifying Emirati excellence to the world.'

4 Its Mission is 'to develop learners by offering applied education and research delivered in coordination with industry.'

5 Since the last accreditation review, several key changes have been made:

6 Though previously men and women were taught on separate campuses, HCT is now co-educational, and all its programmes are co-educational except Bachelor of Education and Bachelor of Nursing though these are also intended to be co-ed in the future.

7 HCT has launched a Competency-Based Education model (CBE) which integrates academic programmes and career preparation, work-integrated learning, apprenticeships, and professional certification.

8 A move to outcomes-based evaluation to align with new CAA approach replacing Standards for Institutional and Program Accreditation.

9 In 2023, HCT introduced the vocational pathway, using an embedded apprenticeship model for Level 4 (Diploma – 90 credit hours or Award – 30 credit hours) and Level 5 (Advanced Diploma) offerings. These are recognised and approved by the National Qualification Centre (NQC)

10 In 2023, HCT initiated the Comprehensive Organizational Review and Evaluation Program (CORE) project across three pillars (Transformation of the Educational Model, Organisational Transformation, and Human Capital Transformation) to review its academic provision, administration, strategy, governance, and operational effectiveness in line with national development priorities and market demands.

11 A new Acting Chief Academic Officer - Dr Michael Koh - has been appointed to drive these changes forward.

12 In reaching conclusions about the extent to which HCT meets the 10 ESG standards, the review team followed the handbook for International Quality Review (October 2023). The review process is evidence-based, and the review team was provided with a self-evaluation and supporting evidence by HCT. The review team examined over 270 folders of evidence and more than 500 individual pieces of evidence.

13 During the five-day visit, which took place from 27<sup>th</sup> April to 1<sup>st</sup> May 2025, a total of 27 meetings were held (including site visits) across 5 HCT campuses (Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Sharjah, Al Ain, and Fujairah). The panel spoke with over 200 HCT faculty, staff, students, alumni, and employers during this time. The review team was also given access to the MyHCT VLE portal and app.

14 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.

15 In summary, the team identified two features of good practice beyond those previously identified by QAA and continuously followed through on by HCT.

16 The review team identified 2 areas of good practice.

17 The team was able to identify 10 recommendations for improvement/enhancement.

18 The recommendations are of a desirable rather than essential nature and are proposed to enable the HCT to build on existing practice which is operating satisfactorily but which could be improved or enhanced. The team did not set any conditions that HCT must satisfy to achieve QAA accreditation.

19 Overall, the team concluded that Higher Colleges of Technology, United Arab Emirates, **meets all Standards for International Quality Review reaccreditation.**

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

## European Standards and Guidelines

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

### Conditions

The team did not set any conditions.

### Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following 2 features of **good practice** at Higher Colleges of Technology

- The review team identified the use of MyHCT app features, including SHOREK planning, as a feature of **good practice**. (Standard 1.3)
- The review team identified the development of a comprehensive Continuing Professional Development system for staff as a feature of **good practice**. (Standard 1.5)

## Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following 10 **recommendations** to Higher Colleges of Technology.

- The review team **recommends** that HCT ensures that its policies for quality assurance subsequent reviews include appropriate external stakeholder engagement. (Standard 1.1)
- The review team **recommends** that HCT considers and implement further measures that support the development of a proactive and enhancement-focussed quality culture. (Standard 1.1)
- The review team **recommends** that HCT considers ways of further engaging students as active partners in the deliberative and quality enhancement processes. (Standard 1.1)
- The review team **recommends** that HCT ensures all meeting minute's capture salient points of discussion and outcomes in appropriate detail and that HCT establishes protocols to ensure ongoing compliance. (Standard 1.1)
- The review team **recommends** that HCT enhances initiatives to promote student awareness and engagement with the CBE model. (Standard 1.3)
- The review team **recommends** that HCT implements a formal, annually reviewed training programme to ensure all academic staff are equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to identify students at risk.(Standard 1.4)
- The review team **recommends** that HCT establishes formal mechanisms for regularly reviewing and adjusting the student-to-counsellor ratio, ensuring sufficient capacity for personalised support in line with the national vision that “no student is left behind.” (Standard 1.6)
- The review team **recommends** that HCT ensures that all relevant higher education policies and procedures are freely and publicly available. (Standard 1.8)
- The review team **recommends** therefore that HCT implements policies and procedures which ensure that the information it publishes online is accurate and up to date. (Standard 1.8)
- The review team **recommends** that HCT investigates how they might close the feedback loop from student-initiated calls for change, back to the student body, in a more structured manner. (Standard 1.9)

## Explanation of the findings about Higher Colleges of Technology

21 This section explains the review findings in more detail.

22 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

23 HCT is the largest federally funded higher education institution in the UAE. Historically, as a federal institution HCT did not fall under the auspices of the CAA which was originally established to look only at private institutions. This changed in 2013 and therefore, since 2014, HCT has been institutionally licensed by CAA. HCT achieved re-licensure in 2019 and are due to go through the re-licensing procedure again in October 2025 for 2026 onwards.

24 HCT's approach to quality assurance is outlined in their recently revised Institutional Quality Assurance Policy. The policy establishes a framework that seeks to "promote a culture of excellence, accountability, and continuous improvement, focusing on transparent and systematic mechanisms for assessing and enhancing program quality." The latest version, which is not currently available online publicly, was considered and approved by the Board of Trustees in February 2025.

25 Exploring the process for policy review, although the review team did see evidence that the new Institutional Quality Assurance Policy was considered by a range of internal stakeholders, evidence showing the involvement of external stakeholders was missing. Highlighting this during the review visit, the team heard from senior staff that the recent review of the Institutional Quality Assurance Policy did not include external stakeholder engagement, however, from Fall 2025 there would be an expectation to include external stakeholders in all academic policy reviews. The review team **recommends** therefore that HCT ensure that its policies for quality assurance subsequent reviews include appropriate external stakeholder engagement.

26 The President and CEO of HCT is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Institutional Quality Assurance Policy with the Institutional Effectiveness Department (IED) responsible for implementing measures and ensuring compliance on-the-ground. Deans, Associate Deans, and Division Chairs in place at each of HCT's different campuses drive local improvements with Academic Program Chairs (APC) responsible for looking after the quality of their academic programmes. The establishment of the IED was, at the time of the team visit, relatively new and so it was not possible for the team to fully explore the impact of its arrival. However, HCT did consider the IED an important addition to HCT.

27 Operationalising the Institutional Quality Assurance Policy is the HCT Institutional Effectiveness Manual, which covers the institutes quality processes in great detail. For example, the manual outlines the current schedule of internal and external quality assurance processes, as well as the institutions approach to programme design, development, approval, and enhancement processes. The current iteration of the Institutional Effectiveness Manual is developed with the CAA's 2019 Standards for Institutional Licensure and Programme Accreditation in mind. The team considered this central point of reference for HCT's quality procedures a helpful resource particularly given the distributed nature of HCT campuses, some of which do not have dedicated quality staff on-site.

28 To ensure faculty awareness and understanding of HCT quality policy and procedures, the IED conducts professional development sessions informing faculty of changes to existing practice as well as newly established procedures. During the team visit, the team heard from senior managers, faculty, and professional support staff who confirmed that where policy and procedure was changed, updates were communicated principally by email, the HCT



Portal and, in some cases, via townhall meetings suggesting these arrangements were effective.

29 Key regulatory processes include the national institutional licensure, and programme accreditation processes, both of which are undertaken by the CAA and occur every 5 years. Internally, all active programmes are reviewed on a cyclical 5-yearly basis through institutional Cyclical Comprehensive Programme Review (CCPR) process. Programmes not scheduled for a CCPR are then scheduled for an Annual Programme Continuous Improvement (APCI) review. The review team saw evidence of these reviews – APCI and CCPR – being scheduled though, at the time of the team visit a CCPR had not yet taken place. These processes, in particular their effectiveness, are explored in further detail under Standards 1.9 and 1.10.

30 There are clear roles for the institutions deliberative committees which are outlined in their terms of reference. At the programme-level, Programme Academic Committees (PAC), which are chaired by the relevant Academic Programme Chair, are responsible for ensuring the ongoing quality of the academic programme in question. Beneath this, at course/module-level, some courses convene so-called Course Councils or Course Committees, which are usually all-staff meetings, to ensure that everyone understands what is expected of them in the delivery of that particular course. PAC feeds into Faculty Academic Committee (FAC), which provides a forum for higher-level discussion. Academic Council (AC) is the senior academic authority at HCT and is chaired by the President and CEO. AC is ultimately responsible for overseeing the implementation of quality processes as they relate to academic programmes.

31 HCT has acquired international subject-specific accreditation from several well-known and established bodies. There is a risk however in this approach. That risk is that as individual programmes undergo accreditation with different bodies, there is the potential to generate a difference in views about policies and processes with implications for HCTs overall approach to quality assurance. Looking forward, the team felt that further opportunities for cross-programme deliberation could ensure that shared actions are identified so that their implementation may become more strategic and, importantly, allow HCT to act in a more proactive manner in line with the goals and aims set out in HCTs policy for quality assurance. Without these arrangements, HCT faces a risk that important recommendations are implemented only at programme or perhaps course-level without there being any formal opportunity for sharing insights across other areas. In the team's view, this would require HCT to more fully develop its quality culture so that it is not one purely of compliance but one inclusive of enhancement. Accepting that HCT is very much on this journey, the review team **recommends** that HCT considers and implement further measures that support the development of a proactive and enhancement-focussed quality culture.

32 There are many opportunities for students and student representatives to provide feedback to HCT and these are explored in Standards 1.4 and 1.6. There are, however, limited opportunities for students to engage with quality matters. For example, each PAC usually only has one student present, and they are permitted to remain in the meeting for certain agenda items. Further, student representatives for the PACs are selected by faculty, not their peers and, at the time of the team visit, there was no formal training or support provided to these representatives. Beyond PAC, student representatives are not invited to attend either FAC or AC and so the direct voice of students in HCTs quality framework is highly limited. In considering, this the team accepted in-part the view of HCT that students do have opportunities to feedback via course and faculty surveys (which are described in more detail in Standards 1.4 and 1.6), and that the student voice is present – at least sometimes – at meetings of PAC. However, the team is clear that HCT could do much more to actively engage and support student representatives in their quality structures and that this would be to the benefit of the institution. Therefore, the review team **recommends** that HCT considers ways of further engaging students as active partners in the deliberative and quality enhancement processes.



33 There are regular quality assurance audits conducted by the HCT Quality Management Team. These have the purpose of monitoring programme development and improvement, and to ensure rigorous adherence to HCT's quality standards. Programmes not scheduled for a 5-yearly CCPR will be reviewed under the APCI process. This looks at any programme changes needed in response to, for example, industry feedback. The implementation of these procedures is reflected upon in Standard 1.9.

34 At the course-level, there are semesterly course evaluations leading to the production of Course Assessment Reports (CARs). CRN-CAR (CRN is the Course Reference Number as it relates to iterations of the same course across different campuses) refers to the evaluation of a given specific course. As of spring 2025, the preparation of CRN-CARs has been executed on a sampling basis with a target of ~20% of courses (per programme) subject to the CRN-CAR process, per year. At least one CRN will be selected from each campus offering the course, and courses with single CRN will have a 100% CRN selection. Campuses with single CRN also will have a 100% selection from the campus for that course. The team reviewed a sample of recent CRN-CARs from applied media, business, computer and information science, education, engineering, general studies, and health studies and could see that faculty positively engaged with the CAR process often reflecting on potential areas for development where student outcomes data suggest there is room for improvement.

35 CARs feed into HCTs deliberative committee structure via PAC meetings. Sample minutes from PACs showed highly variable consideration of CRN-CARs and other quality outputs, such as APCI reports. While some PAC minutes showed comprehensive analysis of CRN-CARs, others showed none at all. Exploring this during the team visit, the team heard from quality staff that while minutes were brief this did not necessarily reflect discussion of quality matters at the time. The team considered the risk here is that discussions and decisions about whether to change or modify course components is not fully captured. For these reasons, during the team visit, senior managers told the team quite straightforwardly that they would like to see more consistency going forward. With this in mind, the review team **recommends** that HCT ensures all meeting minute's capture salient points of discussion and outcomes in appropriate detail and that HCT establishes protocols to ensure ongoing compliance.

36 Faculty also contribute towards SW-CARs, which refer to "systemwide" (here, this means HCT-wide) reviews of CRN-CARs. These SW-CARs are prepared by the Senior Course Team Leader (SCTL) who is responsible for consolidating feedback from all faculty who taught the same course across different campuses. The team reviewed a sample of recent SW-CARs across all faculties of study and found in many cases substantive reflection on both faculty feedback and student feedback coupled with clear plans to address areas of concern. Having said that the team did question whether HCT could do more to collate these SW-CARs and perhaps develop an institutional analysis which looks at the status of HCTs higher education offer in a holistic manner.

37 There are other quality management audits for example those looking at the consolidated Course Files, which review course syllabi, teaching materials, assessment instruments, and student work. Similarly, the Central Assessment Unit (CAU) conducts regular audits related to assessments looking at, for example, grade anomalies. The team reviewed the most recent report, published February 2025, which identifies – among other findings – that all but one faculty show grade inflation. The team also reviewed the latest audit report reflecting on the implementation of HCTs final assessment regulations. The report shows compliance against a checklist of 32 specific requirements and, where identified, highlights best practice at one campus for HCT-wide dissemination. The team concluded these were helpful exercises that allowed HCT headquarters to maintain oversight of its campuses at key points in the academic calendar.

38 The institution has a policy for quality assurance, and this underpins a quality framework that seeks to promote excellence and enable continuous improvement of HCTs higher education portfolio.

39 The review team therefore 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

40 HCT's 2023 'Shaping the Future' strategy represents a pivot for the institution towards greater emphasis on more applied areas of education, in support of the further development of the UAE's knowledge-based economy. This has entailed the integration of work placements and other applied elements into each programme, as well as the development of Competency-Based Education (CBE) which is being integrated into all programmes over time. Alongside this, diploma and advanced diploma programmes have been introduced with lower entry requirements. These programmes enable more choice for those students that do not wish to enrol on full degree programmes. The new strategy has further highlighted that programme offerings need to be shaped to meet the needs of different Emirates/campuses, and the roll-out of micro-credentials is also being planned. Three new programmes have been introduced recently: Bachelor of Design and Media Production, Bachelor of Digital Media, and Bachelor of Software Engineering, resulting in a programme portfolio at HCT of 30 degree programmes alongside 18 diplomas/advanced diplomas. With exit awards also now a feature of HCT's provision, the team formed the view that HCT had thought carefully at the strategic level about the development of its programme portfolio.

41 As one of the HCT QA Policy's four pillars, 'Program Development and Review' summarises the requirement for programmes to align with the needs of the market and educational standards. The importance of stakeholder involvement from industry, the research community and others are also stressed. In addition under this pillar, the role of regular programme review is highlighted, as is the need for programmes to have relevant learning outcomes relating to both programmes and their constituent elements, courses.

42 In terms of the design and approval process for new programmes, HCT's New Program Policy and New Program Procedures acknowledge the Chief Academic Officer's oversight of the activity. The procedures further set out the various individuals and HCT entities involved in the design of new programmes in terms of their roles and responsibilities, alongside discussion of the two stages through which proposed new offerings must proceed, namely Stage 1: Concept Proposal and Stage 2: Full Program Proposal. The team also considered the programme quality governance structure, as set out in the Institutional Effectiveness Manual. This revealed the 'nested' committee structure which in effect governs the programme approval process: following (presumably informal) feedback from stakeholders, programmes are considered first by a programme academic committee (PAC), followed by an Industry Advisory Committee (IAC) and a faculty advisory committee (FAC); prior to further institutional oversight by the Academic Council (AC) and ultimately the Board of Trustees (BoT).

43 The team scrutinised the composition and the terms of reference (or policy in respect of the IAC) for the PAC, FAC, and IAC. During a meeting with Faculty, the team was apprised of how a change to a programme would come through the PAC for consideration and deliberation. There would be a PAC for each programme, with faculty representatives nominated by Executive Deans. PAC members would consult System-Wide Course Team Leaders (SCTLs) regarding the nature of any potential changes.

44 In order to examine the provider's approach to the design and approval of programmes in further detail, the team reviewed a new program request form and a new program proposal form relating to a planned offering in Big Data and Finance. These provide detail on the rationale and approach to the development of this particular new programme. The team also reviewed other documentation relating to the development and approval of another new programme, the BSc in Software Engineering. A feasibility study for the programme provided a detailed overview of the rationale behind it. The team further considered the minutes from the PAC, IAC and FAC relating to this new programme. Scrutiny of AC Minutes revealed endorsement of another new programme proposal (Bachelor of Design and Media Production), although detailed discussion was not apparent. The team formed the view that these documents evidenced appropriate consideration of programme approval through different fora.

45 External oversight of the programme design and approval process is apparent in relation to the IACs which are established for every programme. As with the PACs for new programmes, IACs are established early in the programme development process in order to ensure that they are relevant to industry and other external stakeholders. During the meeting with external stakeholders, consisting of two alumni and two employers (one of whom was also an alumnus), it was confirmed that HCT had drawn on the views of employers and others when designing new programmes. Whilst attendees did not have direct experience of IAC membership, it was evident to the team that HCT harness local external stakeholder feedback effectively in the programme design process. Currently, external academic feedback is not drawn upon when programmes are introduced or revalidated and the team considers this to be an aspect that HCT might consider exploring further.

46 It was noted that a student representative sits on the PAC, which considers the design and approval of programmes, as evidenced in the terms of reference: the representative is appointed by the Chair (the Executive Dean or his/her nominee). With completely 'new to the world' programmes, where there was not an existing PAC, current students on an adjacent programme would be invited to join the newly-formed PAC, as all new programmes have an academic 'root' within a Division. However, there is no further formal input from students into the process beyond the PAC, and there is no student representation on the AC. During the visit, there was some evidence of student consultation in relation to the design of a new Artificial Intelligence (AI) programme, but evidence of wider student involvement was limited. The team therefore formed the view that HCT should consider involving students more fully as stakeholders in the design and approval of programmes (see Recommendation 3 under Standard 1.1).

47 The team reviewed the Programme Specification for BSc Nursing. This shows that the programme is structured in terms of programme goals and programme learning outcomes (PLOs). Credit hours are also incorporated, and the modular structure of the programme is also evident. The programme includes the date of initial national accreditation and refers to the National Qualifications Framework. The content is also consistent with the detail in HCT's IEM.

48 In summary, the review team confirms that HCT has suitable processes for the design and approval of their programmes. Programmes are designed so that they meet the objectives set for them, including the PLOs. The qualification resulting from a programme is clearly specified and communicated and refers to the correct level of the national qualifications framework.

49 The review team therefore concludes 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 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

50 HCT's Education-to-Employment ecosystem provides a diverse, adaptable, and learner-focused array of career pathways, underpinned by foundational pillars that align with the strategic vision of UAE leadership. It was noted that this carefully designed framework integrates thorough academic learning with practical, hands-on experience, equipping students with the credentials and competencies required to excel in professional environments.

51 The team was informed that by embedding critical thinking and practice-based adaptability, HCT ensures its graduates are well-prepared to address the evolving challenges of the global workforce. Furthermore, HCT places significant emphasis on establishing collaborative partnerships with industry leaders through IAC, facilitating practical training, internships, and exposure to advanced technologies, thereby enhancing employability and aligning educational trajectories with the UAE's priority growth sectors.

52 It was additionally noted that Artificial Intelligence (AI) competencies are integrated into HCT's programme offerings. For instance, within the Design and Media discipline, an AI course is available in the first year, which has been aligned with industry benchmarks to ensure relevance and applicability. Furthermore, students contribute to curriculum development on a regular basis through structured student forums, complemented by bi-semester meetings facilitated by the Divisional Chair (DC) and attended by the respective Executive Dean.

53 The team was introduced to the CBE model at HCT, which aims at fostering a student-driven learning environment, wherein individuals are encouraged to set personalised academic objectives, engage actively in self-assessment processes, and reflect critically on their progress. Faculty members play a pivotal role by offering structured guidance and facilitating opportunities for peer-driven collaboration, which further enhances the educational experience and cultivates a culture of shared knowledge.

54 This approach is underpinned by the strategic 5E's framework for CBE (Engage, Explore, Explain, Elaborate, and Evaluate), along with its 14 integral components, which collectively provide a unique opportunity for HCT to build applied curriculum tailored to empower students in taking charge of their learning journey. The methodology emphasises the development of essential competencies such as critical thinking, advanced problem-solving capabilities included simulated learning opportunities, and effective teamwork, thereby ensuring graduates are well prepared to meet the demands of dynamic professional environments. Furthermore, APCs are responsible for the ongoing incorporation of tools and practices from the HCT CBE Playbook, along with SCTLs, ensuring consistency and alignment with institutional goals while reinforcing the pillars of this innovative educational framework. However, the team observed that understanding of the CBE approach and the ability to provide examples of its application was limited. The team **recommends** that HCT enhances initiatives to promote student awareness and engagement with the CBE model.

55 HCT carefully designs programs to accommodate diverse student learning needs through flexible delivery modes, encompassing both face-to-face and online learning environments. To ensure quality and engagement in remote experiences, innovative teaching practices are implemented, such as integrating AI tools to enrich the learning process. The team was presented with some examples during the visit, for instance,

Education employs a digital portfolio; cases studies, mini quizzes, and use of Bloomberg terminals in Business are utilised, as are HIFI simulators for Nursing programme and the use of Virtual Reality and HoloLens in the boarder Health Sciences subject areas.

56 The team noted that the adaptive learning platforms, used by HCT, provide personalised learning pathways for students, to a great extent, and aids monitoring of their progress and performance. It also helps academic teams to assess student participation and comprehension, offering actionable insights for tailored interventions. This approach not only enhances student competencies but also aligns educational outcomes with evolving technological standards.

57 HCT supports faculty by offering comprehensive Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programmes that emphasise advanced pedagogical approaches, the integration of cutting-edge educational technologies, and the promotion of inclusive learning environments. This forms part of HCT's CBE approach – applied for training and staff development.

58 The team was provided with the examples of such CPD initiatives to include training on integrating Blackboard as LMS, flipped classroom strategies, digital assessment tools and simulations, blended learning strategies, sessions on utilising artificial intelligence in curriculum design, and training sessions focused on authentic assessment methods. The review team learned that each faculty member must complete 40 hours of CPD activities per academic year, which are included in their annual performance management and appraisal process.

59 The team noted the Assessment Grade Audit and Analysis report, prepared by CAU, reviewing the grades for Fall 2022 students. The report outlined relevant insights to the course final grades, coursework, and final assessment grades for this cohort, and made a range of recommendations.

60 To this context, HCT has implemented an Assessment Specifications Document (ASD) which serves as a comprehensive framework that clearly details the various assessment methodologies, cognitive levels targeted, allocated timeframes, and its respective weightages, for each defined Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs). This document plays a pivotal role in ensuring that all assessments are systematically aligned with the overarching program objectives and HCT's institutional quality benchmarks. A marking rubric, for each assessment, is made available for students, ahead of the submission schedule and is posted on Blackboard Ultra. By providing explicit guidelines and a structured approach to assessment design, the ASD promotes consistency and fairness across courses and assists HCT's faculty members to design assessment strategies that upholds academic integrity and rigor by fostering transparency in evaluating student learning outcomes.

61 The structured alignment, to the assessment strategy, not only facilitates the accurate measurement of student performance but also ensures that assessments are both pedagogically sound and reflective of the competencies required for the respective academic disciplines. Any changes to the assessment approach are taken through formal review and approval process involving respective APC, FAC where SCTL takes a crucial role of facilitation and effective communication.

62 HCT has developed a comprehensive approach to the assessment delivery. A pre-assessment moderation plan, established by APC, is shared by the second week of each semester. This detailed plan lays the foundation for ensuring consistency of delivery and constructive feedback across all major coursework and final assessments. The moderation process emphasises the importance of early alignment with academic standards and shared expectations. The academic staff members, with whom the review team engaged during the visit, thoroughly explained the assessment process.

63 The team established that assessments incorporate several types of designs, including conventional methods, competency-based frameworks, and alternative approaches tailored to specific learning outcomes but classified into coursework and final assessments. During the visit, the team was provided with the examples of coursework assessments to include assignments, research projects, portfolios or presentations that allow students to demonstrate their practical application of knowledge over time, while final assessments typically focus on comprehensive evaluations such as exams or capstone projects.

64 HCT employs marking rubrics for enabling clear criteria for evaluation of student assessments. These tools help both academic staff and students align with the expected standards, offering transparency in grading. Additionally, answer keys are often used for standardised assessments to maintain objectivity in marking. In line with HCT's academic policies, students are required to sign and acknowledge an academic integrity agreement, emphasising the importance of ethical conduct throughout the assessment process.

65 HCT has implemented a structured feedback system aimed at facilitating student development and academic progress. Following each assessment, students are provided with detailed and constructive feedback, which not only evaluates their performance in relation to the established course outcomes but also identifies key strengths and areas requiring improvement. The team noted that this systematic methodology ensures that students acquire a clear understanding of their academic trajectory, addressing gaps in their knowledge or skills while enhancing their overall educational experience. This system enables students to play an active and informed role in their learning process, which also aligns to HCT's CBE model of delivering educational excellence.

66 The team learned that HCT supports students with learning needs, identified as "Students of Determination." These students will be identified early during the admissions and scheduling phase. To assist with their learning journey, their exams will be scheduled according to the Students of Determination Policy and Procedure. Additional accommodations may include extended exam durations, access to assistive technologies, personalised exam environments to reduce stress, and the availability of student advisors, peer mentors and counsellors, to guide them during the assessment process. These measures aim to ensure all students have equitable opportunities to demonstrate their understanding and skills.

67 Students are made aware of the appeals procedure at the beginning of the academic term, ensuring transparency and accessibility. They are provided with detailed guidelines and instructions on how to submit a written appeal to the campus Academic Service in case of dissatisfaction with their grades. This system empowers students to express their concerns formally and ensures that their grievances are handled in a structured and fair manner. The review team found that the students were aware of the procedure, but most of them preferred to use direct communication channels by contacting their tutors to raise concerns and in most cases, were able to receive a swift resolution.

68 The team observed that HCT employs course evaluation surveys to gather student feedback on their learning experiences as well as for faculty staff. These surveys help refine teaching strategies and serve as an important part of the performance management system for academic staff.

69 HCT's faculty members use the feedback to identify strengths and areas for improvement, enabling targeted adjustments to their teaching strategies. Teaching resources and curricula are rigorously reviewed at the end of each semester to align them with institutional goals and to ensure the feedback loop contributes meaningfully to better academic performance and student outcomes.

70 The team was provided a demonstration of the MyHCT app, which contains all necessary information for students, including various student-facing policies and procedures.



Additionally, the app enables students to share feedback or raise concerns, which are recorded by the SES Department as part of the SHOREK initiative (an initiative empowering HCT students to share their experiences and ideas, ask questions, and engage with the HCT management team in a Town Hall style open and interactive forum setting.) The department categorises feedback into sub-themes, identifying advantages, challenges, and opportunities for proposed implementations as part of the SHOREK Brainstorming Outcome Plan. After consulting with departments and campuses, the SES creates an action plan based on feasibility. For example, a request for extended library hours would involve assessing staffing needs and costs before implementing changes. Both staff and students, whom the review team met during the visit, presented a thorough awareness of this. The team identified the use of MyHCT app features, including SHOREK planning, as a **good practice** .

71 The review team concluded that HCT has successfully implemented a student-focused approach in its academic offerings. The evaluation provided clear evidence that both academic and professional services staff at HCT rigorously plan their programmes, courses, and services to facilitate comprehensive student development. HCT effectively monitors students' achievement and progress through appropriate systems designed to identify students requiring assistance as well as high achievers. This ensures that all students receive the necessary support or enhancements, inducing an engaging educational experience.

72 The review team therefore concludes 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

73 The team determines HCT operates a transparent and inclusive admissions process aligned with national standards and regulatory requirements. The admissions framework is governed by the Student Admission Policy, which clearly sets out eligibility criteria irrespective of gender, including academic performance (e.g. General Secondary Certificate results), English proficiency, and programme-specific requirements. These criteria are publicly available via the HCT website and official.

74 The team learned that applicants are prioritised into three categories (P1, P2, P3) according to the Federal Higher Education Institutions Funding System. The Registrar's Office compiles applicant lists for P2 and P3 candidates, which are then used by the Finance Department to determine funding eligibility and seat allocations. Applications are processed centrally through the National Admissions and Placement Office (NAPO)/ Ministry of Education (MoE) platform, with final decisions based on priority group and programme requirements. Entry conditions are published online and in the Student Catalog, with most programmes requiring unconditional entry. Conditional admission is permitted for Diploma programmes.

75 Admissions staff provide active support to all applicants, including those with incomplete applications. Where a programme is no longer available at a particular campus, students may be offered places at alternative HCT campuses. Students seeking admission to Bachelor's programmes must meet all eligibility criteria in full. Candidates presenting conditional MoE letters may only be admitted to Diploma or Professional Certificate pathways.

76 Admissions staff work in collaboration with Marketing to conduct roadshows and outreach events that inform prospective students and their families about available programmes, entry requirements, and potential career outcomes. Further support is available via the HCT Call Centre and Registration teams.

77 Applicants who declare a medical condition or special educational need are reviewed by campus counselling teams. HCT is able to accommodate mild conditions (e.g. Type 1 diabetes); however, in line with MoE regulations, students with more complex needs (e.g. severe autism) may not be admitted due to limitations on curriculum modification.

78 The team was informed that in cases where programmes are not locally available, the Student Programme Change Procedure enables progression and mobility across HCT campuses. The institution has also developed a Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) procedure aligned with CAA standards, allowing for the recognition of prior formal, non-formal, and informal learning. However, the panel found that student awareness of this pathway remains low.

79 Orientation is provided consistently across campuses through a centrally designed programme to ensure equitable student transition. Students reported that orientation sessions were particularly useful in introducing institutional services, academic expectations, and available support. Information is delivered via presentations and email and covers policies, tutoring, mentoring, laptop support, and financial aid. Continued student awareness is supported through class visits and sessions with school counsellors.

80 Student records are centrally managed and audited regularly to ensure accuracy and compliance with confidentiality protocols. Academic progress is tracked using a standard GPA system (0.00–4.00), with a minimum cumulative GPA (CGPA) of 2.0 required for graduation. Vocational programmes follow the National Qualifications Centre framework. While students may appeal grades within six months, their understanding of the appeal process and timeline is limited.

81 The team learned that Academic Advising is available to all students, with advisors assigned by the tenth teaching day at a 1:15 advisor-to-student ratio. Advisors monitor student performance, provide academic guidance, support retention, and initiate intervention when required.

82 The panel also learned that support for mature learners and students with disabilities is integrated into HCT's admissions and academic structures. Working students may be offered flexible scheduling options, including afternoon classes and potential exemptions for relevant workplace experience. Career fairs and employer engagement events offer access to part-time employment. P2 and P3 applicants undergo a funding eligibility assessment by a central committee.

83 Students with disabilities or declared learning differences participate in an initial interview and, where appropriate, receive targeted support. Those formally identified as Students of Determination receive regular check-ins and may access subject-specific tutoring through the TuTrack programme.

84 At-risk students are primarily identified by a CGPA falling below 2.0. In Fujairah, the At-Risk Committee escalates complex cases to strategic leadership. At-risk students receive structured interventions, such as additional classes and continuous feedback. GPA referral lists inform targeted academic support. However, staff highlighted challenges in early identification, citing inconsistent and infrequent training. Not all staff are equipped to identify neurodivergence or undeclared disabilities. While *ad hoc* workshops are provided, there is no formalised training structure. During visit meetings, inconsistencies were noted regarding who receives training, who delivers it, and who holds responsibility for developing staff capability in identifying and supporting at-risk students. To address this gap, the review team **recommends** HCT implements a formal, annually reviewed training programme to ensure all academic staff are equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to identify students at risk.

85 The panel was informed that HCT offers structured employability support for students through both central and campus-based services. A one-stop employability platform provides CV advice, job postings, and career support. A mandatory work readiness course, delivered in multiple formats, prepares students for professional environments and is a prerequisite for apprenticeship participation, the course is placed on the student transcript as evidence of completion.

86 Graduate destination data is now sourced from the Ministry of Human Resources, replacing previous graduate surveys. This data is integrated into institutional dashboards to monitor employment outcomes.

87 On registration, students are assigned an academic advisor, a peer mentor, and a faculty contact. Orientation includes guidance on course registration and the introduction of student support networks. Students of Determination are supported by both faculty and counselling teams. Students confirmed that completing the required 100 hours of volunteering over four years helped to build soft skills and promote applied learning.

88 Attendance is monitored across all delivery modes. Students exceeding a 15% absence threshold face academic consequences. However, the panel suggests that HCT ensures there is alignment between the Attendance Policy and Mitigating Circumstance

Policy. Graduation requires a CGPA of 2.0 or higher. The Registrar's Office confirms eligibility by the twentieth teaching day of the final semester, with final award lists confirmed by Division Chairs. Graduating students receive official certificates and transcripts in accordance with institutional policy.

89 In response to recommendations from the previous review, HCT has made adjustments to ensure its admissions and progression processes better serve non-traditional learners. Tailored support has been introduced for P1, P2, and P3 applicants, including funding assessments, alternative programme placement, and increased outreach and advisory services. These enhancements support equitable access and successful transition to higher education.

90 HCT has established robust, transparent, and consistent procedures covering all phases of the student life cycle. Admission policies are fair and accessible, and progression is actively supported through academic advising, learning interventions, and tailored support for mature and disabled students. Recognition procedures, including RPL, are in place, though further work is needed to raise student awareness. Certification is systematically managed and aligned with national expectations. While staff training on supporting at-risk students requires strengthening, the institution's approach overall reflects alignment with the expectations of Standard 1.4.

91 The review team therefore concludes 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

92 All HCT appointments must adhere to the requirements established by the MoE, ensuring that each recruitment process is aligned with national educational standards and regulations. The recruitment processes are designed to uphold the quality of education and institutional integrity, providing a framework that supports HCT's mission to deliver educational excellence.

93 Operating within MoE regulations, HCT's staffing approach encompasses three interrelated and essential components designed to ensure the institution operates effectively and maintains a high standard of talent management. These areas include recruitment, which focuses on attracting skilled professionals who align with its values and goals; performance development, which emphasises continuous employee growth through training, mentorship, and skill enhancement; and applied research and monitoring of performance, which entails rigorous evaluation and data-driven strategies to ensure employees consistently meet and exceed expected outcomes.

94 The team established that there is an in-house recruitment system: Hire-In-Sight, which undertakes all aspects of staff recruitment for HCT, streamlining the entire process from the initial approval of roles to managing employment-related tasks. This ensures a centralised and efficient approach to recruitment operations.

95 Moreover, the Human Capital Development department supports the screening process by evaluating the qualifications and suitability of applicants before they proceed further in the hiring pipeline. Division Chair or Executive Dean will have the sight of the shortlisted candidates. Once interviews are conducted by a team appointed by the relevant departmental heads and Executive Dean, each team member provides comprehensive feedback on the applicant's performance through the Hire-In-Sight system. This feedback is essential for creating a well-rounded evaluation of the candidate's abilities and fit for the role. The team chair, usually the Executive Dean, then reviews this collective feedback to make an informed decision on selecting the most suitable candidate for the requisitioned position.

96 The review team noted recruitment processes are aligned with the specific needs of each campus and communicated to the Human Resources department throughout the recruitment cycle. This cyclical process occurs every semester, supported by an annual support services plan. Recruitment officers are designated to oversee and streamline these operations.

97 HCT takes pride in fostering an inclusive and diverse academic environment, reflected in its faculty composition that spans over 80 nationalities. This diverse representation ensures a rich exchange of perspectives and strengthens the institution's global outlook. Moreover, HCT upholds unbiased recruitment practices, offering equal opportunities to all candidates.

98 The review team established that the faculty workload and job responsibilities are systematically governed by institutional policies, including the Workload Policy, Employee Handbook, and Faculty Code of Conduct policy. The senior managers were able to assert that these policies and approaches to the workload planning, and management align with the institutional goals, facilitates equitable distribution of tasks, and supports the professional development of faculty members. Moreover, it enhances operational efficiency and promotes transparency and consistency amongst teams.

99 Furthermore, HCT employs practice-based and industry professionals as part-time and adjunct faculty members on a temporary basis to enrich the learning and teaching experience. The recruitment process for adjunct faculty is managed and supported by the Talent Acquisition team. In addition, several part-time practitioners are engaged through the faculties' industry collaborations and networks to specifically enhance students' applied learning experiences.

100 HCT provides extensive personal and CPD opportunities for all staff, designed to support growth and excellence in academia. This includes one week of dedicated professional development aimed at building knowledge and practice on advanced teaching methodologies and collaboration for scholarly activities. Faculty members must complete 40 hours of professional development training and activities annually aligned with HCT's CBE framework. There is a faculty CPD dashboard which keeps updated record of relevant engagement and training provision.

101 Additionally, HCT offers initiatives for teaching and learning enhancement, including specialised training in the effective use of educational technology and AI in the classroom. These programs equip faculty members with cutting-edge tools to engage students and adapt to evolving national employment demands.

102 The review team noted that orientation and onboarding processes for new staff members are extensive, ensuring a seamless transition into the institution by providing a thorough understanding of HCT's ethos, policies, and practices for teaching and learning. Each new staff member is paired with a dedicated mentor who offers guidance and support throughout the onboarding journey. Additionally, ongoing assistance is provided during the probationary period, including mandatory peer observations, to address any challenges and build professional growth.

103 Faculty members were able to confirm to the team that the institutional support to pursue Fellowships from AdvanceHE, which include certifications such as the Teaching Excellence Certificate and the Teaching Skills Enhancement Certificate is available. All faculty must complete the Essentials of Instruction Certificate (EIC), a series of thirteen mandatory online short courses. These opportunities highlight HCT's commitment to developing a well-rounded academic workforce capable of delivering excellence in education.

104 HCT has reappointed the Applied Research Committee, in 2023, to drive and monitor progress towards achieving its research agenda. Emphasising applied research and industry collaboration, HCT aims to align its research efforts with the UAE's advanced skills and innovation strategies. In support of these goals, several funding packages are made available to the faculty members, including institutional grants, departmental funding pools, and assistance for participation in external research conferences. Additionally, HCT encourages faculty members to engage in sabbaticals to collaborate with relevant industry partners. The review team were presented with examples of faculty participation in international and regional conferences, as well as attendance at research development programs in the UK and Europe.

105 HCT conducts annual evaluations of staff members using an online Employee Performance Management System (EPMS). This system allows for the submission of performance evidence and feedback from both the line manager and the faculty member. This method adheres to the CBE framework and facilitates the identification of achievements and development needs for all faculties. Faculty members' progression through academic and leadership ranks is based on performance evaluation.

106 Overall, the review team found HCT to possess suitable procedures for recruiting and selecting appropriately qualified academic faculty to meet its institutional requirements. Detailed and well-articulated procedures support the management and evaluation of faculty

performance, including appropriate mechanisms for recognising talent and potential for advancement. HCT demonstrates a distinctive strategic commitment to supporting the continual professional development of its staff, particularly in pursuit of educational excellence. The institution's extensive professional development offerings effectively enhance the learning and teaching environment. The review team identified the development of a comprehensive Continuing Professional Development system for staff as a feature of **good practice**.

107 The review team therefore concludes that Standard 1.5 Teaching staff, is **Met**.



## Standard 1.6 Learning resources and student support

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

### Findings

108 The team learned that HCT integrates student services and learning resources into its annual financial planning cycle, ensuring that these critical areas receive appropriate budget allocations. These allocations are focused on human resources, operational costs, and capital maintenance, with a particular emphasis on libraries and student support units. Budget holders collaborate with their teams to assess and define the resource requirements for the upcoming academic year, ensuring alignment with the overall budget approved by the Board of Trustees. This process is overseen through the Budget Planning System (BPS), with guidance from the Central Services Finance Unit. Regular reviews with budget holders, conducted by the Procurement Department, ensure efficient fund utilisation and address any discrepancies as needed.

109 Library resources are central to the delivery of high-quality education and research at HCT. In recognition of this, the institution allocates dedicated funding, providing budget holders with visibility of fund usage, with projections for over or under-utilisation reported to Finance.

110 HCT offers a comprehensive library service, both on campus and online. The facilities include study zones, collaboration spaces, reference support, and a wide array of print and digital resources. Students benefit from access to over 1.2 million eBooks, 270,000 e-journals, 123 databases, and a host of multimedia resources, all available 24/7 via a unified search platform. To enhance student access, services such as LibChat, LibGuides, MyHCT Support, and LibCal for room bookings are readily available. Information Literacy sessions are embedded within the curriculum, and libraries are staffed by 21 trained professionals, with each division assigned a dedicated liaison. Library staff complete a minimum of 40 hours of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) annually alongside other staff and faculty. Library services are regularly benchmarked against international standards. While some campuses focus more on digital access, offering round-the-clock online availability, others maintain a physical staff presence. During induction, library teams provide in-class sessions as part of the coordinated orientation programme.

111 The campus tours during the visit offered team members valuable insight into the range of specialist learning environments available to students. These tours showcased subject-specific resources, including flight simulators, a fully equipped aircraft hangar, and clinical simulation labs for nursing—resources that contribute to an enriched and professionally aligned student experience. Student feedback confirmed that they were satisfied with the quality and accessibility of these resources, noting their positive impact on both learning and career preparation.

112 The team was told that Academic Advising plays a vital role within HCT's student support model. Each student is assigned an academic advisor at the start of the academic year, informed by registration data and the student's individualised, programme-based Study Plan. Advisors track academic progress, assist with course selection, and identify at-risk students—those with a GPA below 2.0—who are placed on probation (levels 1 or 2) and receive targeted support. Structured initiatives such as the Golden Key Club (peer mentoring) and TuTrack provide further support for student development and progression. In Dubai, academic staff oversee peer mentoring activities. Students are matched with

mentors, and their performance is tracked before and after the intervention. Data from these activities is reviewed by Division Chairs and advisors for further action.

113 Despite the presence of these support mechanisms, students reported inconsistencies in the academic advising experience across campuses. In particular, the administrative workload placed on advisors has caused delays in course approvals and progression. In response, HCT is moving towards employing full-time faculty as advisors and increasing the frequency of support for at-risk students, from monthly to twice a month. Currently, the academic advising ratio is 1:15, which may be reduced to 1:12 for students facing difficulties. Time is allocated for advising varies, with meetings held both during office hours and beyond.

114 The team was informed that counselling services are offered at all campuses and are positively received by students. The service provides personal and career support, delivered confidentially by 10 qualified counsellors. Students can self-refer or be referred by academic staff. While students report valuing the service, the student-to-counsellor ratio varies significantly by campus, leading to concerns about equitable access. Campuses with larger populations, such as Abu Dhabi, have two counsellors, but most campuses, regardless of size, typically have only one. The review team **recommends** that HCT establishes formal mechanisms for regularly reviewing and adjusting the student-to-counsellor ratio, ensuring sufficient capacity for personalised support in line with the national vision that “no student is left behind.” This would strengthen early intervention and ongoing pastoral care.

115 Counsellors also play an active role in orientation, leading sessions on available services and conducting observational interviews to identify students with disabilities or additional needs. If necessary, family meetings are arranged. Support often begins during the first month of enrolment, with staff receiving ongoing training in soft skills—recently, counsellors completed project management training.

116 The team learned that Orientation is a structured two-day event, designed to familiarise new students with campus life, services, and academic expectations. Day 1 includes institutional overviews and presentations from various support teams, while Day 2 focuses on creating a welcoming environment and introducing key programme-level stakeholders. Students are provided with a welcome kit, including the Student Handbook, the Methaq Code of Conduct, the Academic Advising Handbook, and information on the Volunteering Programme. Student support begins early, often before students arrive on campus, and continues with in-class orientation sessions. Department Heads and advisors collaborate closely to identify and assist students with challenges or disabilities.

117 HCT also delivers structured student life activities through a dedicated team of 72 staff. These activities include career guidance, academic support, IT services, and personal development, all of which are provided through Student Happiness Centres located on each campus. Teams report centrally and convene fortnightly to address student concerns.

118 Student engagement beyond the classroom is strongly encouraged at HCT. Extracurricular activities include sports, clubs, and volunteer opportunities (see 1.4).

119 HCT ensures a safe and secure campus environment through a dedicated Environment, Health, and Safety (EHS) team. This team is responsible for fire safety, emergency response, first aid, and CCTV operations. Regular training is provided to both staff and students to maintain high safety standards.

120 Information security and IT support are managed through robust institutional policies. Students benefit from consistent access to learning technologies through the BYOD (Bring Your Own Device) model. Services include learning management systems, student portals, and digital resources. Students have confirmed their awareness of how to access these services and find them easily accessible.

121 HCT ensures adequate funding for learning and teaching, providing accessible physical and human resources, including libraries, study facilities, IT infrastructure, and student support services. These resources support a diverse student population, including mature, part-time, disabled, and international students, within a student-centred learning environment. Internal quality assurance guarantees resources are fit for purpose and students are informed about available services. The institution also prioritises the qualifications and development of support staff.

122 The review team therefore concludes 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 programmes and other activities.**

### Findings

123 The team learned that HCT employs a range of information systems to support the effective management of academic programmes and institutional activities, ensuring decisions are informed by reliable data. HCT shares data with external bodies such as Central Higher Education Sore (CHEDS), ADEK (Department of Education and Knowledge), and the UAE Ministry of Education to ensure regulatory compliance and support performance-based funding and accreditation requirements. Staff emphasised the value of having a single, centralised information source to guide their work. Institutional Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are made available via dashboards maintained by the Institutional Research (IR) Unit, which is one of four divisions within the Institutional Effectiveness Department (IED).

124 During the visit, staff highlighted several key platforms that inform their work, including the Programme Review Dashboard, Course Management System, and access to policies and procedures. The IR Unit is responsible for monitoring and reporting performance across the institution using these tools. HCT also aims to consolidate data access by establishing a single portal for apprenticeship programme information.

125 HCT integrates multiple platforms to facilitate academic, administrative, and student-centred operations. The IEMS is used to monitor KPIs and enhance process effectiveness. CourseLeaf, managed by the Programme and Curriculum Quality Management Department, integrates with the Student Information System (Banner) to support curriculum and Catalog management. Blackboard's Grade Centre enables instructors to track student performance, generate reports, and implement timely academic interventions. Banner functions as HCT's core system for student information, enrolment, finance, academic records, and HR management, ensuring seamless data integration across all functions.

126 Students confirmed that they are able to access all systems easily through the student portal and are familiar with the relevant policies and institutional information available to them.

127 Access to institutional systems is governed by the Access Management Policy, and Access Management Procedure, which establish consistent protocols for user access. Staff and students use a single internet portal as their main entry point to all systems. HCT also publishes a Fact Book containing core institutional data, including student enrolment, graduation rates, completion statistics, and other KPIs. This resource is updated periodically to reflect the most current institutional performance data.

128 In a previous review, HCT was encouraged to enhance the communication of system changes to academic staff and to close the feedback loop with users. During the current visit, staff confirmed the team that they are informed of any updates through email notifications from the President's Office. In addition, feedback is collected through the MySupport system and through department-level ticket resolution data, allowing HCT to monitor the effectiveness of its information systems and address user concerns.

129 HCT uses Annual Programme Continuous Improvement Reports (APCIR) to track graduation rates, student retention, and programme-level performance. These reports are informed by data from the Programme Review Dashboard and are evaluated by Executive

Deans with input from the IR Unit. Campus Directors meet fortnightly with the President, Chief Academic Officer (CAO), and other senior staff to review data and guide strategic decisions. Similar fortnightly meetings are held with CAO to review academic programme performance and ensure alignment with institutional goals.

130 The team heard HCT values stakeholder feedback as a means of informing continuous quality improvement and collects input from students, faculty, alumni, industry partners, and the wider community through a range of surveys. These include Student Faculty and Course Evaluations, which assess teaching and course delivery; Student Satisfaction Surveys, which evaluate academic resources and support services; and Employer and Alumni Satisfaction Surveys, which provide insights on graduate outcomes. Additionally, Industry Partner and Local Community Satisfaction Surveys help strengthen external collaborations. These findings are used to inform institutional policy and practice, and contribute to enhancements across academic and administrative areas.

131 In summary, HCT has developed a data-driven infrastructure that supports the management of programmes and institutional functions. HCT ensures that reliable information—such as KPIs, student progression and completion rates, satisfaction survey results, and graduate outcomes—is consistently collected, analysed, and used to inform planning and improvement.

132 The review team therefore concludes 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

133 The institution is committed to publishing clear, accurate, objective, up-to-date, and readily accessible information about its activities. This is mostly via the HCT website, but the institution also makes scrupulous use of various different social media channels.

134 As of 2025, HCT's new Communication and Community Outreach Department, which reports to the President and CEOs Office, is responsible for developing and implementing communication strategies, coordinating with internal departments to develop and update content, and oversee communication activities including outreach. Reflecting a recent restructure, HCT has appointed several new roles to their Communication and Community Outreach Department and adopted a new 1-year strategy which includes several key projects for example, internationalising HCT and its higher education offer.

135 During the visit, the team heard of opportunities for students to get involved with HCT's communication activities through, for example, the #HCTinfluence project, during which students are trained to make and present short-form social media content. The team also heard other opportunities for students to get involved, for example, by volunteering with local campus-based communications teams.

136 HCT also runs local and community-focussed outreach events, for example, career fairs and open days. Outreach activities are largely campus-based and in the Fall 2024 semester alone, HCT recorded over 500 outreach initiatives conducted across its various campuses. Recently, HCT established a 'HCT Student for a Day' programme in which final year school students attend their local HCT campus for a day and attend 1-2 classes with their parent's gaining insight into how HCT operates.

137 Prospective students, the public, and other key stakeholders can find information on the HCT's strategy and background online. However, policies relating to the student academic experience, including the *Student Admissions Policy* and policies which amount to *Academic Regulations (Academic Standing Policy, Grading System Policy, Graduation Procedure etc)*, are currently not available online unless accessed via the HCT Catalog (pages for academic policies are password protected for current students/staff only). Given the importance of these policies to the student academic experience, the team **recommends** that HCT ensure that all relevant higher education policies and procedures are freely and publicly available.

138 Curriculum overviews for each programme are available dedicated pages. Users are redirected to the HCT Catalog for more specific information, such as 'ideal' study plans.

139 There are processes by which HCT ensures the ongoing accuracy and currency of published information. According to the HCT Website Content and Management Strategy Procedure, the VP Education Technologies is "*responsible for... routine quality checking such as the quality of webpage content...*" They are supported in this by the HCT web team, which is based at the HCT HQ in Abu Dhabi and which is meant to conduct an overall website review every 6 months directing any follow-ups to the appropriate content owners. For example, in the case of programme-specific pages, these are owned by the Office of VP Academic Affairs, whereas pages for alumni are owned by the Director of Student Success and Engagement and the VP Shared Services. In relation to programme information, during the team visit, the team heard that the Communication and Community Outreach

Department asks APCs to check published information on their programmes every 6 months.

140 To explore how well these processes worked in practice, the team reviewed a sample of pages on the HCT's website and found them to be accessible, however, it was sometimes the case that information which should have been identical was in fact variable. For example, information for the Bachelor of Nursing on the main HCT website was not the same as that recorded on the HCT Catalog. Specifically, the HCT website records the nursing programme as a 134-credit programme, whereas the HCT Catalog indicates it is a 120-credit programme. The programme goals and learning outcomes are also different between the two sources of information clearly reflecting two versions of the same programme. Other examples of a mis-match come in the admissions requirements for several programmes, which differ between the HCT website and HCT Catalog when these information sources should be the same. Further, during the team visit, the team heard from students who reported also noticing that information on the HCT website did not always match up with information on the HCT Catalog further calling into question the effectiveness of procedures for the ongoing review of published information.

141 In response to a request for additional evidence, HCT did provide some evidence of staff checking whether information on the main website was still up-to-date, however, this evidence was largely in reference to academic biographies needing updating. Highlighting these discrepancies during the team visit, senior staff acknowledged the HCT website contained several errors and stated that a new policy to address this was currently being considered by the HCT President and CEO. The new proposed plan would include the establishment of a Communications Committee to provide strategic oversight of communications coupled with twice a month audits of website pages. The team considered that these new arrangements may well address the issues it flagged but, given that the policy was not approved or even finalised at the time of the visit, it could not assess impact. The review team **recommends** therefore that HCT implements policies and procedures which ensure that the information it publishes online is accurate and up to date.

142 Students are provided with the HCT's academic calendar and student handbook. These documents are freely available prior to enrolment via the HCT main website. Students can access information relating to institutional services, including information on student support, via the HCT mail website. On completion of their programme of study, transcripts and certificates are made available to students by the HCT Registrar's Office (for further information, see Standard 1.4).

143 Notwithstanding the recommendations in this area, the review team concluded that HCT publishes information about their activities, including programmes of study, that is clear, accurate, objective, and accessible.

144 The review team therefore concludes that Standard 1.8 Public information, is **Met**.



## Standard 1.9 Ongoing monitoring and periodic review of programmes

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

### Findings

145 HCT's Quality Assurance Policy (dated February 2025) provides a broad overview of the institution's approach to the management of quality. The policy sets out key roles and responsibilities for quality within the institution, with various facets outlined (e.g. in terms of the broad applicability of quality assurance activity and the role of key stakeholders, who are identified). The Course and Program Review Procedures are drawn upon by the provider to oversee the approach to the monitoring of courses and programmes. The procedures are complemented by further detail in the Institutional Effectiveness Manual on the broader frameworks which govern monitoring and evaluation, including activity that is to be undertaken on an annual and five-yearly basis. Quality is overseen by the Institutional Effectiveness Department (IED) – Quality Management Unit.

146 On an annual basis, programmes are subject to the Annual Program Continuous Improvement (APCI) process, as set out in the Institutional Effectiveness Manual, through which findings are captured in the Annual Program Continuous Improvement Report (APCIR). The three stages in this process are as follows: Stage 1 involves APCI preparation, Stage 2: APCI Validation, and Stage 3: APCI Implementation and Action. The team scrutinised a sample APCIR, which presents in tabular form a detailed list of 'improvement actions' with associated 'tasks to achieve action', 'owner', 'expected outcome' and other key variables. During the visit, it was explained to the team that Programme Academic Committees (PACs) prepare their ACPIRs, which are then reviewed at the higher-level Faculty Academic Committees (FACs), which as with the PACs, sit within Divisions (i.e. Faculties). Executive Deans then progress ACPIRs to the IE Department. Key statistical data relating to the programme are also included on ACPIRs (e.g. enrolment and graduate employability), alongside some consideration of how external stakeholders have contributed to the process. The Sample Program Register was also examined: consistent with the culmination of Stage 3, this lists the improvement actions, triggers, tasks to achieve action, and other relevant information across all programmes. The team formed the view that in the round, HCT had effective annual monitoring and review mechanisms in place.

147 At the level of the course (i.e. module or unit), a course review encompasses analysis of the content of courses and learning outcomes, involving self-evaluation by faculty members and drawing also on student evaluations (see next paragraph). This is brought together in a CAR. Following the individual course evaluations, this System-wide CAR aggregates data from various CRNs, including GPA, dropout rates, faculty and student evaluations, grade distributions, and CLO attainment rates. The SCTL reviews the data, identifies opportunities for improvement, and works with the course team to recommend changes for consideration by the PAC. This approach promotes an iterative cycle of assessment and enhancement across HCT's program offerings.

148 Student involvement is apparent in various ways, including through the completion of module surveys as well as those relating to evaluation of Faculty. These are then considered at the PAC meetings, which include a student representative. During the visit, the value of student feedback to HCT was explained to the team, including the example of how a suggested change to the exam in a course was communicated back to the PAC. It was explained that, whilst the PACs and FACs are administered by Faculty within academic

Divisions, the IED aims to bring in consistency at the system level in terms of templates, timelines, etc, although there is some flexibility. The role of student evaluations was considered further during meeting with senior staff, where the structured approach to the capturing of student feedback across the HCT system was explained to the team. Students are also able to provide feedback on other aspects of HCT's provision, including complaints and suggestions, through 'My HCT Support,' which is available on the dedicated HCT app, through a web portal, or on the telephone. The relevant administrative department reviews this feedback, which is then collated into action plans following liaison with campuses and consideration as to its feasibility.

149 During meetings with Faculty and other staff, staff members were able to articulate how the student evaluation and CAR process enabled appropriate changes to provision to be made. The team was apprised of how changes had been made to curricula, on the basis of student and other stakeholder (e.g. local industry) feedback; with these changes subsequently communicated informally to the following cohort of students, who are then further encouraged to engage in the evaluation process. This was apparent in the example that an SCTL provided of changes that were made to an accounting programme which involved introducing more practical accounting applications (e.g. including software). This was further investigated during meetings with students, where examples were given of changes that were made to curricula and elements of teaching and learning on the basis of informal feedback as well as formal end-of-semester student feedback. It was also apparent that minor changes had been made during semester due to students voicing concerns. A meeting with Faculty further indicated that, in the context of a programme in which technological aspects feature strongly, changes had been made. What was less evident to the team was how the 'feedback loop' was closed to students formally – for example in the manner of a 'you said, we did' format. The review team therefore **recommends** that HCT investigates how they might close the feedback loop from student-initiated calls for change, back to the student body in a more structured manner.

150 The process underpinning the periodic (i.e. non-annual) review of programmes is detailed in the IEM where it is stated that all bachelor programmes should be reviewed on a five-yearly basis through CCPRs. CCPRs are scheduled two years before the submission of the application for renewal of a program's national accreditation. Whilst no such reviews have yet taken place, the team were assured during the visit that CCPRs would commence imminently.

151 In addition to the processes outlined above, the IED's Quality Management Unit, situated within the wider IED, also carries out a series of audits relating to the provision. These are in effect standalone activities which sit alongside the annual and five-yearly reviews of programmes. The IEM indicates that such audits may take place at different levels (e.g. course, programme, course file – i.e. to include detail on syllabi etc), with the exemplar that was examined by the team representing the last of these. Relevant departments or Divisions are expected to respond to the audit process by commenting on each of the areas identified. Other types of audit are also apparent – for example in relation to assessment.

152 External stakeholder involvement in monitoring and periodic review is apparent in relation to the IACs. These meet biannually and the tabled minutes attest to there having been consideration of the suitability of curricula in respect of the new BSc in Software Engineering. This element was considered further during the visit, where meetings with senior staff and faculty set out how feedback had been captured from external (industry) stakeholders on the design of new programmes (as well as examples of changes that had been made to curricula) in the Divisions of Health Sciences and Business.

153 As an additional form of review, benchmarking of provision is apparent at HCT. The team's review of a benchmarking report relating to the BSc Software Engineering programme revealed that HCT considered key attributes of other programmes, both locally

competing ones (e.g. the University of Bolton's programme delivered in Ras Al-Khaimah) and more aspirational offerings that are delivered internationally across various regions (for example, at the National University of Singapore, Glasgow, and McGill (Canada)). The benchmarking report evidences sound and thorough consideration of the key attributes of other programmes and represents a useful potential element in any future evaluation of the provision.

154 In summary, HCT conducts regular monitoring and review of programmes in order to ensure that they are fit for purpose and achieve the objectives set for them, as well as responding to the needs of students and society.

155 Therefore, the review team concludes 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

156 HCT operates under the aegis of the MoE and CAA. This includes a rigorous evaluation of the Colleges' infrastructure, administration, information systems, and support services. HCT received initial institutional licensure in 2014 and then achieved re-licensure in 2021. HCT will reapply for CAA accreditation in October 2025. This will focus on the CAAs new outcomes-based evaluation framework.

157 HCTs involvement in QAA International Quality Review (IQR) is an example of its active involvement in external quality assurance. HCT initially acquired IQR accreditation from QAA in 2019/20, and this report speaks to their reaccreditation under the same method. There were several areas of good practice and recommendations identified in the initial IQR accreditation report as found in Standards 1.3 (Student centred learning, teaching, and assessment), 1.5 (Teaching staff), and 1.7 (Information management). Progress against these were explored during the mid-cycle review and during the team visit for this IQR. Overall, the team felt that HCT had made progress against the recommendations in their first IQR and concurred therefore with the mid-cycle review in February 2023 which concluded that HCT had continued to consolidate its position and develop as a mature HEI in the UAE.

158 In addition to institutional accreditation and licensure, HCT has received programme-level accreditation for a significant number of programmes. HCT's IED, specifically the Accreditation Unit, is responsible for overseeing its accreditation activities. Reports from accreditation activities feed into HCTs quality framework via PAC, FAC, and then ultimately AC and the Board of Trustees, who are kept apprised of any newly acquired accreditations. The outcomes of accreditation processes are implemented primarily by APCs and SCTLs at the programme- and course-level, and senior management where an institutional response is required. Thus far, HCT has acquired the following programme- or subject-specific accreditation.

- Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology – Engineering Technology Accreditation Commission (ABET-ETEC) for some of their engineering programmes (including Bachelor of Chemical Engineering Technology, Bachelor of Civil Engineering Technology, Bachelor of Electrical Engineering Technology, Bachelor of Mechanical Engineering Technology, and Bachelor of Mechatronics Engineering Technology). These programmes have been accredited since October 2017 and are due for renewal in October 2027.
- Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) and Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP) for many HCTs business programmes (including Bachelor of Accounting, Bachelor of Business Analytics, Bachelor of Finance, Bachelor of Human Resource Management, Bachelor of Innovation and Entrepreneurship Management, Bachelor of Logistics and Supply Chain Management, Bachelor of Marketing, and Bachelor of Tourism Management). These programmes have been accredited since May 2018 (for ACBSP) and August 2023 (for AACSB).
- Canada's Association of IT Professionals (CIPS) for information technology programmes (including Bachelor of Information Systems and Bachelor of Information Technology). These programmes are currently accredited for the period January 2023 – December 2025.

- Health Information Management Association Australia (HIMAA) for their Bachelor of Applied Science (Health Information Management) programme.

159 HCT acquired UK Accreditation Service (UKAS) for ISO 14001:2015 in 2021, however, this lapsed in 2024. HCT also acquired accreditation by the Abu Dhabi Public Health Centre (ADPHC) certifying that the HCT Occupational Safety and Health Management System meets the set standards. Approved in 2018, renewed in 2024, currently valid until 2027.

160 Looking to the future, during the team visit, the team heard of some plans to acquire further subject-specific programme accreditation. Examples include recognition by the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN) for HCTs nursing programmes and ABET accreditation for some of their computing programmes. The team looked favourably upon HCTs plan in this area but, due to the provisional nature, could not evaluate the potential impact at this early stage.

161 The institution is subject to ongoing monitoring and oversight by the UAE MoE and, by extension, CAA. Many of the institution's programmes are also accredited by professional or subject-specific bodies. These activities are not standalone but rather require HCT to reflect on its own performance and enact changes on an ongoing basis.

162 The review team therefore concludes 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 programmes.

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

**Programme of study**

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

**Quality enhancement**

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

**QAA officer**

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

**Quality assurance**

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

**Recognition of prior learning**

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

**Recommendation**

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

**Reference points**

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



**Self-evaluation document**

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

**Student submission**

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

**Validation**

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

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